



JAN 28 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Tim Harjo
Member
National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other
Populations

From: John H. Thompson
Director
U.S. Census Bureau

Subject: Census Response to NAC member views on AIAN Enrollment
Question Moderator Guide from meeting on October 13, 2015

Thank you for your detailed letter and feedback on the Census Bureau's Moderator Guide for American Indian and Alaska Native Enrollment Question Research. Your feedback and expertise are important to us, and we appreciate your service as a National Advisory Committee member.

I want to begin by clarifying that this Moderator Guide is not being used for research to determine revisions to the race question. The possible revisions for race and ethnicity are being tested in the 2015 National Content Test (NCT). This moderator guide you reviewed is being used to develop a potential new, separate question on the topic of tribal enrollment. There are two separate questions being tested at different times. The NCT was tested in the Fall 2015, while we are starting the tribal enrollment testing in January 2016. We are testing the separate tribal enrollment topic/question due to many of the concerns and issues that you raise in your letter, in addition to what you conveyed to us during the 2014 National Advisory Committee (NAC) meetings, last summer and fall. I understand your concerns.

Based on the NAC's input last year, we developed a series of focus groups last fall, to qualitatively explore American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) identity in preparation for the design of alternative race/ethnic questions for the 2015 NCT. Your feedback, and the advice from other NAC members, greatly helped us to design a robust plan for addressing a number of important topics with this research.

Below, I have provided an overview of this exciting mid-decade research on race and ethnicity, which was presented and discussed at the Spring 2015 NAC meeting. I hope that the details of this research will help address several of the concerns you have shared with us and contextualize the AIAN Enrollment Question Research and Moderator Guide. First, I will discuss how the 2015 NCT is collecting data on race for the AIAN population. Then, I will discuss our *separate* research endeavor on the potential for employing a question on tribal enrollment, as a distinct topic/question from the race question.

OVERVIEW OF 2015 NATIONAL CONTENT TEST

The U.S. Census Bureau is currently conducting the 2015 NCT. One of the main purposes of the NCT is to evaluate and compare different versions of questions that will be asked in the 2020 Census, such as race, ethnicity, and origin. Part of our NCT research is to examine different instructions to optimize detailed reporting within the AIAN write-in area of the race question. For example, the research will explore alternatives to the instruction “*Print enrolled or principal tribe, for example ...*”, which we know causes confusion for many AIAN respondents and means different things to different people. We are building upon the knowledge gained from the 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE) research, which your letter mentions; NAC member discussions and recommendations about AIAN identity; and the Census Bureau’s 2014 qualitative research with American Indian, Alaska Native, and Central and South American Indian respondents.

The overwhelming sentiment from 2014 AIAN focus group participants was that they wanted to be treated equally with other race, ethnicity, and origin groups. The use of different terminology in the race question’s AIAN write-in area (e.g., “enrolled,” “affiliated,” “villages,” etc.) was perceived as inequitable. To address this concern, participants were presented with alternative instructions and questions. The instruction “*Print, for example, ...*” (along with AIAN example groups) allowed the respondents to understand what the question asked them to report and did not limit their write-in response by confounding the instructions with terms that mean different things to different people (e.g., “tribes,” “villages,” etc.). This instruction (“*Print, for example, ...*”) presented a viable alternative for further exploration in our 2015 NCT research.

Given the findings and recommendations from the 2014 AIAN focus groups, the 2015 NCT is testing variations of the instructions for the AIAN write-in area to see how they perform. Figure 1 below (**First Experimental Version**) illustrates our testing of the instruction “*Print, for example ...*” on some of our experimental versions.

Figure 1 - First Experimental Version

American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.* 

Figure 2 below (**Control Version**) illustrates our testing of the instruction, “*Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example ...*” on our control versions.

Figure 2 - Control Version

American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.* 

One of the enhancements to our paper-based design for the 2015 NCT is of particular importance to AIAN communities. We have included an additional experimental version that tests each race, ethnicity, and origin category with major checkboxes, detailed checkboxes, and write-in areas. This design, which we cognitively tested with AIAN respondents in Spring 2015, presents a different format under the AIAN response category. In doing so, we follow the Federal government’s definition of AIAN, which your letter also mentions. As illustrated in Figure 3 below (**Second Experimental Version**), we provide an approach where each of the three major AIAN conceptual components from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definition has a dedicated checkbox, and then examples and a write-in area are presented to collected detailed responses.

Figure 3 - Second Experimental Version

AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE – Provide details below.

American Indian Alaska Native Central or South American Indian

Print, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.

These 2015 NCT designs aim to test different ways to optimize the comprehensive reporting for *all* American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Indigenous Central or South American Indian respondents. AIAN respondents in the cognitive interviews understood and responded well to this alternative design.

The 2015 NCT also presents a critical opportunity to compare the success of different question designs and determine how they perform using new web-based modes of collection, such as the Internet, smartphone, and telephone response options. **Figure 4 below (Write-in Screen for Detailed AIAN Responses)** illustrates the 2015 NCT Internet design which collects detailed AIAN responses. This is comparable to the Figure 3 design, which is being tested in paper modes. On the initial question screen, after a respondent reports that they are AIAN, they will proceed to a follow-up screen to report details about their AIAN identity, such as their tribe(s), village(s), or indigenous group(s). On these subsequent web-based screens, we are researching different options for collecting detailed AIAN responses.

Figure 4 below provides an illustrative example of one of the research designs:

Figure 4 – Web-Based Write-in Screen for Detailed AIAN Responses

Enter details in the spaces below. [\(Help\)](#)

AMERICAN INDIAN
Enter below, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, etc.

ALASKA NATIVE
Enter below, for example, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Orutsararmuit Native Village, etc.

CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICAN INDIAN
Enter below, for example, Mayan, Aztec, Taino, etc.

By capitalizing on the enhanced functionality of web-based data collections, we believe these new design approaches will help us collect data for both the broader OMB categories, as well as elicit detailed responses across all groups.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON POTENTIAL TRIBAL ENROLLMENT QUESTION(S)

Finally, based on feedback and requests that the Census Bureau has received in recent years, including the questions, concerns, and advice that you have shared with us, we are undertaking an additional research topic to explore the feasibility of including a question(s) on tribal enrollment. This research exploration includes the development of the Moderator Guide for AIAN Enrollment Question Research, to which you provided comments. As I explained earlier, this is a separate topic /question from what I have just discussed regarding the race question.

The moderator guide is designed to explore the potential of including a *tribal enrollment* question(s) in addition to the current question(s) on race and ethnicity. Each question solicits information on a distinct and important variable, which could lead to more comprehensive descriptions of AIAN populations, if determined to be viable.

The Census Bureau's examination of the topic of tribal enrollment came as a result of last decade's AIAN Consultations in preparation for the 2010 Census. During those consultations, some tribal leaders asked the Census Bureau to collect these data. We have also received requests from other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which advised that data on tribal enrollment would inform their programmatic needs.

As the moderator guide reflects, we are examining the *feasibility* of collecting tribal enrollment data in a census environment. The current expectation is for the Census Bureau to commission a three-phase research assessment to determine the feasibility for such a topic/question. In Phase 1, focus group discussions will be used to develop possible enrollment questions for qualitative exploration. In Phase 2, we will conduct cognitive interviews to explore the sensitivity and specificity of the experimental questions. Finally, Phase 3 will then field test the most promising enrollment question(s) on tribal lands in a 2017 Census Test. As part of all this research, a considerable part of our planning work is coalescing with this decade's AIAN Consultation meetings for the 2020 Census, as well as feedback and advice from our National Advisory Committee.

Thank you again for your letter and your response to the Moderator Guide for AIAN Enrollment Question Research. I look forward to meeting with you during the Spring 2016 NAC meeting. Your insights and expertise are valuable to the conceptualization and operationalization of both our research on race/ethnicity and tribal enrollment.