



JAN 28 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Desi Rodriguez Lonebear
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 very much for your comments to the Census Bureau regarding its focus group research on a possible tribal enrollment question. The research team and I found your comments very helpful towards improving the focus group research design and moderator guide. They raise several key issues regarding the sensitivity of enrollment among American Indian people, and the need to account for this sensitivity. The research team and I carefully considered your comments on how to improve the focus group research, and the following describes how we responded to your comments and suggestions.

Regarding your suggestion to not mix enrolled and non-enrolled participants in the same focus group, the research team and I considered the issue and decided to accept this recommendation. We will aim to have the focus groups with either all-enrolled or all-non-enrolled participants, with about half of the focus groups with all-enrolled participants.

On your suggestion to have some of the focus groups on American Indian reservations, the research team and I decided not to have any focus groups directly on reservations, because we are confident that many of the current focus group locations will allow for some recruitment of participants who live on a reservation. Some locations, such as Billings, MT, Pembroke, NC, and Oklahoma City, OK are near American Indian reservations or are near tribal statistical areas where we believe there are increased likelihoods of finding American Indian participants who live on reservations.

Thirdly, you asked how tribal engagement will be measured in an objective way. The recruitment contractor will administer a screener questionnaire that includes the following tribal engagement question:

At this time, what is your level of engagement with your main tribe?

- a. Very active as an elected or appointed leader, council member, or delegate*
- b. Active, but not an elected or appointed leader, council member, or delegate*
- c. Occasionally active in tribal affairs*
- d. Not active in tribal affairs*

The recruiter will read the question and response categories. Then the respondent will choose among the categories listed. Although the response categories are not an exhaustive list of tribal engagement levels, the question will serve its primary purpose of eliminating tribal leader representation at the focus groups. We aim to avoid the possibility of tribal leaders using their power to sway the opinions and feelings of the other focus group participants.

In response to your four comments on the moderator guide:

- 1. Page 4, Part B, Bullet Point 5.0: “To your knowledge, does an American Indian or Alaska Native need to be enrolled in a tribe to be considered a member of that tribe?” This is problematic. Considered a member of a tribe by whom?**

With this question, we aim to learn from participants whether, to their knowledge, a person has to be enrolled to be considered a member of a tribe. Because we want participants to answer this question from their personal perspectives, as well as give their perceptions of what their tribal members and leaders think, we added a follow-up probe to ask what their tribal leaders and members think about this issue:

5.1 [IF NOT ALREADY DISCUSSED] What about your tribal leaders and other members of the tribe? Would they think an American Indian needs to be enrolled in a tribe to be considered a member?

- 2. Page 6, Bullet Point 8.1: A “BIA card” is incorrect terminology. Tribal ID’s are issued by tribes. Certificates of Degree of Indian Blood are issued by the BIA.**

This question was deleted. Instead, the moderator guide now uses broad questions about enrollment and its meaning to generate discussion that will likely include a discussion of enrollment requirements.

- 3. Page 6, Bullet Points 9.0-9.4: These have the potential to invoke trauma. Need to reconsider.**

The research team and I certainly understand the sensitivity of discussions about enrollment and disenrollment. Because disenrollment is a reality for many American Indian people, it is important to discuss this potentially uncomfortable topic so that the Census Bureau has a better understanding of the nature of enrollment and how it varies across American Indian tribes. This improved understanding will be critical to have when the Census Bureau assesses the feasibility of measuring enrollment, which is one of the goals of this research. Thus, we kept one general question as the only question that asks about disenrollment:

7.0 Once a person is enrolled in your tribe, are there circumstances in which someone’s enrollment status might change? [IF YES] What are those circumstances?

As with all topics discussed in the focus groups, participants will have the freedom to discuss a topic as little as or as much as they wish, and will be required to respect each other and each other’s opinions. In addition, the focus group moderator can redirect discussions if they get too

intense. We think this intended focus group dynamic will create a safe space to discuss sensitive topics like disenrollment to the extent participants feel comfortable doing so.

4. Page 7, Bullet Point 2.0: What about importance of being able to mark being a member of more than one tribe?

Being able to mark being a member of more than one tribe is certainly an important issue when studying AIAN race and tribe reporting. However, because this particular issue is more relevant to the race question and not as relevant to tribal enrollment, the research team considered it too far outside the scope of the present research on tribal enrollment to include it as a discussion topic. Thus, no questions on multiple-tribe reporting were added to the moderator guide.

Again, thank you for your very helpful comments on how to improve this tribal enrollment question research. The comments pointed out key issues the Census Bureau must consider when investigating the highly sensitive topic of tribal enrollment.