

**Census Scientific Advisory Committee
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road, Suitland, MD 20746
Spring Meeting, April 16-17, 2015**

AGENDA April 17, 2015

- 8:30 AM Opening Remarks**
Tommy Wright, Designated Federal Officer
Guillermina (Willie) Jasso, Chair, Census Scientific Advisory Committee
- 8:40 AM American Community Survey Content Review**
Presenter: James (Jim) Treat, Chief, American Community Survey Office
Discussants: Barbara A. Anderson, Member, Census Scientific Advisory Committee
Steven Ruggles, Member, Census Scientific Advisory Committee
Committee Discussion
- 10:00 AM Relationship Question Testing Update**
Presenter: Rose Kreider, Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division
Committee Discussion
- 10:45AM Public Comment**
- 11:00 AM CSAC Committee Session/Working Lunch (Moderator: Chair)**
Recommendations
Notes
Next Steps
- 12:00 PM Closing Remarks**
Guillermina (Willie) Jasso, Chair, Census Scientific Advisory Committee
- 12:15 PM Meeting Adjourned**
Tommy Wright, Designated Federal Officer

Tommy Wright: Yesterday was a productive day in which we talked about various topics for the Bureau, including the 2020. And as I was reflecting a little bit last night on the day's conversations, I thought about a game but perhaps it's not good to do a game during this scientific advisory meeting.

But I was - the game was, who said that. The title of the game was, Who Said That. But I won't do that today in view of the lateness of the hour. But I heard words like Innovate Don't Invent. Benchmark, evaluate, think about the unhappy path. Last six months, transformational.

Somebody said, wow. Real time usability evaluation. Plan B. In the cloud. Drone. Selective aggregation. What we measure effects what we do. Somebody raised the question, can we? You could change it around and say, we can. But it was phrased as can we.

Dictator will not make uncertainty go away. A big understanding. There are a few more things but we'll see how I've excited you now about this game, who said that, but. Today's proceeding look at promising as well.

If anyone intends to give public comment this morning and has not done so, please provide your name to the registration desk. A little housekeeping. I'd like to remind you do please clearly state your name at all times and speak directly into the microphone so that we can accurately reflect your comments.

Some committee members may still need to stop by the registration desk for travel reimbursement, please remember to do that. The bus is planning to leave promptly at 12:30 today, in front of the building at the same location. I understand the bus will make two stops.

The bus will stop at 1:00 at Ronald Reagan National Airport and at 1:30 at the hotel. If you need a taxi please also stop at the desk. Please we recycle badges so please remember to turn them in as you leave.

Just as a reminder, due to federal guidelines governing meeting and conferences the refreshments provided all for committee members only. Willie.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so much. And very briefly to echo some of what Tommy said, yesterday was an extraordinary day, spectacular day I think for the history of science and the Census Bureau.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank all the Census staffers, all the CSAC committee members and in particular the CSAC discussants yesterday for a fabulous job.

Now none of that would be possible without due attentiveness to virtuals, so this committee has a shadow virtualing committee. It has subject matter experts, in this case Sara and then a subset of the members.

And I would like to thank every especially the three who made it possible for us to get our virtuals last night. Doug Massey, Dan Atkins, Jack Dangermond. Thank you very, very much.

So without further ado let's turn to our first substantive matter for today, the ACS content review and I welcome Jim Treat and turn it over to you.

Jim Treat: Okay, good morning and thank you. Just a couple of things. There we are. Based on yesterday's opening remarks, we passed out this morning at each of your chairs the charter for the ICSP subcommittee. I think that was a point of action that you wanted to get a copy of that.

And then in addition there's another document, a one pager that we passed out that has some information around the content review and the work that the ACS has been doing around just content and respond on burden issue in general.

There's a link to the handbook on questionnaires and current uses in the federal government. We didn't print it because it's a fairly large document. It's 200 pages or more. And then in addition we provided the link to the technical documentation for the ACS content review.

As well it's a fairly large document. The NORC report that John talked about yesterday and the use of administrative records, there's the link for that. That will be getting posted very shortly, probably today.

And then we also provided the definitions of mandatory required and programmatic as part of the components of the ACS content review. So today I'm here to give you - to provide you some updates on the ACS on several different topic areas.

But specifically to talk about where we are with the content review, the ACS content review. Here's the agenda for the areas in which we - I plan to cover this morning. So moving on to just general updates, talk a little bit about the budget for ACS this year.

We had submitted our budget and it was reduced from our request by about \$15 million. And as a result of that reduction we had to look at components of the program to cut or scale back on.

One of the things that we identified in that effort was we looked at the - our data product line and we decided that the three year data product would be not released this year and in fact we're planning not to continue to release the data product.

Our goal, though, is, is to work with data users and stakeholders to see if there's a way to provide opportunities for alternative ways to producing this data product outside of the Census Bureau's direct involvement with this.

And in addition with the five year data product there is no gap in data for data users since all areas are covered by the five year release. In addition we produce a summary level 070 which is state, county, county subdivision place remainder. These are slivers of geography.

We're considering about not releasing that information this year because of the number of usages that we see from the data products. It's not budget related but it's really more trying to get a better understanding of what are the right data products for data users.

We're planning to put out a federal register notice inquiring about all - about the - from data user community if there's still a need for this. And if we see that there isn't we'll probably be dropping that from data product line.

In addition with the completion of the 2014 data collection cycle, we have been in production for ten years and what we were planning to do this was to do a five year non-overlapping comparison profile which would compare the 2005 through '09 data products to the 2010 through '14.

Unfortunately, because of the budget cuts we had to not - we had to terminate or cancel that project this year. We're hoping to reinstate it next year if we get our full funding requests. Some additions that we've added to the program.

Well the ACS is actively engaged in going to data user conferences, or different kind of conferences and attending the vendor fairs to do outreach to different types of future or current the data users.

And what we've created as part of our promotional materials is this postcard, which is a takeaway, if you go to the vendor booth. And what it does is it provides just some general information.

But mostly it shows on the back how you can access ACS data and the different formats and vehicles and channels that we release the information so that data users can have a quick tool at their hands when they get back to their office.

And then in addition the - we actually released on Monday a survey out to the data user community asking them to provide this feedback on our data product line and to give us information on what they like, what they don't like, things that they might be interested in adding to for example.

It was rolled out at 10:00 Monday morning. As of close of business Monday we had over 180 responses to the survey. So I'm excited about that. It's going to be up and running for about six to eight weeks and then we'll close it down.

We'll analyze the information. I think this is something we're planning to do on a regular cycle to sort of get input from the data users on our products and our product line. We're also interested in reaching to the business community. We find that we don't have a lot of reach into that area.

It's one of the data user sub communities that we want to have more interactions with. And so we're planning different initiatives and participations to go to a couple conferences this year, a big data summit this month and a small business development in September.

We're also working with the Census business development tool. I think it was earlier called the, Open For Business tool. It's still in its prototyping stage. ACS is providing lots of information into that application for the business community.

And then lastly working with the Department there'll be a report that either is coming out very shortly or is already out that it's on the value of the ACS to talk about what we provide to the nation in information so that it can be used as a sort of promotion tool.

And an opportunity for the ACS to better promote itself. So talking about content this slide just sort walks through the general content process that we've had for the ACS starting with the long form being created in 1940 all the way up to 2000.

ACS went into full implementation in 2005 with the goal to replace the long form. We had our first, I'll say formerly documented content policy put into place in 2006.

The former Director Kincannon signed that policy that provided us expanded flexibility associated with the ability to add and remove content from the survey.

With the establishment of that in 2008 and '09 there were additional questions that were added to the survey around health insurance, marital history, VA services, connected disability and field of degree.

And then in 2011 the ACS had its major - finally met one of its major final accomplishments with the release of the first five year data products and the small population products. And at that point it was an opportunity for us to take a step back and do a review of the program overall.

And we briefed this committee on that review. It was a multiyear review. And as part of that review there was an effort by OMB to reach out to the federal community, the federal data users to get reauthorization or a renewal of their usages of the ACS data.

That was very informative and helpful but it wasn't as thorough as what we would have liked to have for it. So that information fed into the what we are calling 2014 content

review, which was a much more in depth, thorough approach of reach to the federal data user community.

As well as the nonfederal data user community to gather information about how the ACS information is used in the program. Ultimately resulting with work continuing and starting up this year and continuing into the future. So the '14 content review is just the beginning stages of it.

And I'll talk a little bit more later in the presentation about some things that we have in mind. This is just a summary of our interactions with you as a committee. We've come multiple times and had multi interactions with you on the ACS content review.

As far as the '14 review and we look to continue those conversation with the additional work moving forward. So some background associated with this review. As I said earlier, our goal was to look at each question off the form to examine and confirm the value of it.

But we really went further than looking at each question. We actually drove down into components of questions to get a better understanding. We started with a 175 known usages, federal agency usages. And through this effort we expanded it to over 300.

So our partners and our points of contact within the federal agencies really did do a substantial effort to shake the trees and to find out as many usages as possible. So we went beyond what had happened before in the past where it was just confirming what we already knew.

We worked with 23 lead agencies but there were multiple contacts - multiple agencies below those lead agencies, diving down into the sub agencies or agencies within a department for example to gather the information. We wanted to go through an analyze the data with pre-specified criteria.

We worked through the subcommittee on the ACS within the ICS paid interagency, counsel on statistical policy and developed recommendations for the ACS content that would look at reducing the amount of burden to the public in completing the form. So that was the goal of the review.

If you're familiar with the questionnaire, it's kind of hard to count the number of questions on the form. I've said this before but if you look at the numbering of the questions you'll see that there's 24 housing numbered questions, 48 person numbered questions.

But ultimately we looked at 126 elements or components off the form so we really did dive down into subcomponents and sub questions. We utilized the ICS, the subcommittee on the methodology.

And through those efforts we identified five questions for candidates for removal. In addition through that effort we released the - a 60 day federal register notice on October 31 of last year that closed in December 30 that identified those five items for consideration.

What we did was is we've done a lot of review of the comments that we've received. Just as a reminder, I'm sure you're all familiar with this, is we looked at the question H6 off the form, housing question 6, which is the business or medical office on property.

Looked at the field of degree question, which is question 12 in the person section and then the marital history questions, which were 21, 22 and 23. Marital status was not one of the items.

I say that because we did receive comments from the Federal Register process where there was confusion between those two things. So from the comment period that we had

with the Federal Register notice, there were - we received 1693 comments to the Federal Register process, which was up to the point of our effort.

And the largest number that the Census Bureau had ever received to a Federal Register notice. We really tried to get the word out about the FRN being out in the public and looking for people to provide us comments and feedback.

This was the opportunity for the non-Federal data users to provide us feedback on the usages of the items open for consideration for removal. As well as the survey in general. They weren't limited to just commenting on those five questions. They could comment on other things and we did see that.

These are categories of comments that we received. They are not mutually exclusive. There's overlap because many times people commented on several things within their comment to us and so we categorized it in multiple groupings.

The big thing that you'll see is a common theme that we received a large number of questions related to the marital history questions. It was the biggest item for discussion and feedback from the public.

This is a distribution or an identification of the range of types of people that did respond to the Federal Register Notice. We were happy to see that it crossed a wide range of affiliations. And you'll see that we did receive comments from this committee under the Census stakeholders.

And thank you for your comments. So the distribution of comments, overwhelmingly - first of all this is also not mutually exclusive. Overwhelmingly 80% of the comments that we received were around the marital history questions, 37% of the questions came in about field of degree.

We had a very small number of questions related to the business - or medical office on property. For the field of degree and the marital history, I would say overwhelmingly the comments were about keeping the items on the form and retaining those.

The business on property there wasn't really anything going on there because it was such a small number. There wasn't really concerns one way or the other whether to keep or not - or to drop the questions.

And then we had a small number of comments on things not related specifically to those three items that are about 3% of the comments that came in. We also looked at the media coverage related to the Federal Register Notice process and the content review.

Starting in October, going through early January we identified 66 known media clips or stories about the content review. Similar to the feedback on the FRN about 91% of those were focused on the marital history. Only 9% or six of the clips were focused on field of degree.

There was no discussion that we could find related to the business on property. In addition there was tweets going on associated with it and some specific predominant stories were in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and public - National Public Radio.

I will say that similar to the federal - to the comments to the Federal Register Notice it was about the desire to keep the items, particularly the marital history and field of degree on the form.

For both the Federal Register Notice comments as well as the media clips I will say that there was some confusion in some of the comments that received between the marital

history and marital status question. And the marital status question is what's your current marital status.

They - some of the stories were confused or some of the comments we received, because they thought that we were pulling the marital status question off the form and so there's a little blurring there around that specific topic.

Our timeline, so as I said we had the Federal Register process in October through December of last year. We've gone through and we've reviewed and analyzed the data. We've worked on the next step in the process is to develop an OMB clearance package, which we submit to OMB.

It's in the works. We're hoping to get it fairly soon, this month - within the next couple of days, maybe even today to OMB as far as the clearance package. As part of the clearance package, which is a 60 day period where it sits at OMB there is another Federal Register Notice process.

It's a 30 day process where comments are provided based on what we proposed. Comments to OMB. Comments on that proposal go to OMB for consideration and I think Barbara, in your presentation you had the question about that.

And so the answer is yes, there's another public comment period to the final recommendation that the Census Bureau makes to OMB. And then after the 60 day period in June, OMB will give us final determination for the 2016 content, on whether we proposed.

Whether they've approved what we've proposed or not. And then we'll implement that content starting in the January '16 panel. So moving on to other work and beyond the content review that we haven't planned for the program, I think John talked a little bit about some of things yesterday.

So the content review provides us a strong base of an understanding of both the federal and the nonfederal users of the data. And what we want to do is we want to look at ways to reduce respondent burden while still maintaining the level of support for the data user community as much as possible.

And we have a wide range of research projects that we're mounting currently and moving forward with. The first is, is we want to look at administrative records data and alternative data sources to see if there are items that can be pulled off the form.

And where we could use administrative records data in lieu of direct collection. And part of that initial work was the NORC report that actually gave us some recommendations and suggestions on where to start and focus effort. So that's feeding into that research.

In addition if you're familiar with our content policy around making updates to the survey it's on a five year cycle. And part of the reason why it's on a five year cycle is so that we can remain stability with the five year estimates.

If we're constantly changing content every year it creates problems with our ability to reduce small area data for those items that consistently keep changing. But what we want to do is we want to have an annual cycle where we look at questions and we access the questions to look at revised wording.

It may see changes to the form more periodically than every five years, it may not. But it's an effort to look at wording to see if we could reduce the sensitivity, the level burden, if we could rephrase the questions while still getting at the same level of information.

And so that's something that we're going to be working on in the future on a more periodic basis, on an annual cycle. And then what we also received back from the Federal - from the 2014 content review was an understanding of how frequent do the federal agencies need data.

At what level of geography do they - the lowest level of geography that they use the data. And our goal is to assess all that information and look to see where there might be opportunities to ask the questions on a periodic basis, or less frequently.

So for example there might be items that we could ask every other year, instead of each year so that would reduce respondent burden. There could be items that instead of asking of the complete housing unit sample maybe we ask it of a subset of the sample but we ask it every year.

So these are things that we need to look at and we need to have a better understanding. With all of these elements and the other components of the research that we want to do we plan to engage the data user community and stakeholders.

Like we did with the content review to have an open forum, an open conversation and a transparent process so that we understand where we're going. Other efforts to reduce respondent burden - I don't think this is - there we go. Things that we've implemented.

We brought the Internet form in 2013 and that has helped. We made changes to our caddy operation and our calling strategy, reducing the number of call attempts from 25 down to 15.

We found that, that did reduce the level of perceived harassment by reducing the number of calls we make by 1.2 million each year. We're looking to field test later this year what we call our cappy stopping rules project.

To see if there's an upper threshold that we would - once we hit a number of contacts, we stop interviewing to reduce that perceived harassment or burden from the cases that are in the personal visit operation.

In addition we want - we're doing research and field testing of our mail package. John talked about this yesterday. This is the - I only brought one copy - but this is the initial mailing that has the card in it to go fill it out on the Internet.

And there's a box here that - it's not highlighted in yellow on the form, we highlighted it for this, but basic it says, your response is required by law. And what we're actually testing in the May panel in a subset of the panel is taking that off this package.

And just see what the impact would be. In addition with the replacement mailing that has the paper questionnaire it's the same - fairly the same envelop. We're going to remove that language.

We're going to keep the language that says, American Community Survey form enclosed but we're getting rid of this. Now within all the mail package materials there's references to the form being - to the survey being mandatory.

In the May test that's all staying but we're looking to research how to soften the language in those pieces to see what the impacts would be associated with the self-response rates. Does it increase, decrease, what effect does it have on the overall survey.

Other things that we're looking at is, you know, looking at messaging around this - around the program. We're looking at the implementation - the mail implementation strategy. We're actually doing a test right now where instead of sending the pre-notice letter, we're dropping the pre notice letter.

We're sending the initial mailing package with the invitation to complete the form online earlier in the timeframe that we did that. And then instead of sending a reminder post card we're sending a reminder letter that has the information to go - the ID information to go and complete the form online.

We're actually seeing really great analysis and benefits. We're seeing increased self-response rates from doing that. It also has some cost savings associated with the program, which is always a good thing. So these are the kinds of things that we're looking at to research moving forward.

Moving on to the respondent advocate, Tim has come - Tim Olson has come to speak to you on several occasions about that. Tim has moved on to become the Division Chief for the field division. I'm pleased to announce that we do have a new respondent advocate, Dave Waddington.

I think he's in the audience. He's joined the ACS family just this year. The goal is to continue the efforts that Tim started as well as to expand those efforts on reaching out to the Hill for example.

Talking about the program, being a support mechanism for respondents who are having challenges working with the Census Bureau, specifically around the ACS but other surveys also.

And then if you're not aware of it, we are having our second data user conference - well we have our data user community, we call it the DUG. It is to provide an opportunity for data user to network amongst themselves on different aspects.

We currently have over 1100 members that are part of our online community. Membership is free. If you haven't signed up for it, I encourage you to. The Web

address is there. We're having our second conference this May. It's free, so that's always a good thing.

It will be in College Park, the 11th through the 13th. We're planning to have 35 presenters on different topics. One of the things that we are planning to have on the 12th during lunch, we're having a round table discussion about the three year data product.

Warren Brown is going to lead that discussion to talk about ways that we could work together, partner together to bridge the gap with not being able to produce that product. Please, if you're interested in attending.

And then I already mention this but we put out this data user product - data product survey that went out Monday. We're hoping to get some great feedback from the survey. And then these were the two questions that we proposed. And with that I'm done. And Barbara seems to be next.

Barbara Anderson: Thank you very much. I wrote my comments before I heard your presentation. And that's all okay. What I do - okay, that's it there. What Jim said was very helpful.

To reiterate and to put in a little more detail essentially from the point of view of the CSAC members or of myself. CSAC and this doesn't contradict anything that Jim said - CSAC was first presented information about the ACS content review at the September 2013 meeting.

At that time CSAC concerns focus on the possibility of adding a parental place of birth question. There was a request from ACS for comments from CSAC members but that was difficult to satisfy due to a lack of information at that time about the detailed nature of the review.

CSAC was given a more detailed briefing on the content review at the April 2014 meeting. Although there was more information at that time about the planned review there was little detail on exactly how the review would proceed.

At the April 2014 meeting concerns were raised about the absence of any consideration of the importance of ACS items for research in the content review. At the April 2014 meeting the items targeted for possible removal were plumbing facilities, journey to work, some aspects of income and disability.

The items targeted for possible removal in the content review as of Fall 2014 were change in marital status and undergraduate field of study. And there was no overlap between the two group lists of questions. What happened? It died. Okay.

Several - as Jim said, several CSAC members participated in a conference call in Fall 2014 about the ACS content review where we were given more detail. And there was expressed concern by several members about the arbitrary nature of the content review and the specific questions targeted for removal.

There was a request at that time for the scores obtained in the content review for all ACS items. We were told that this would be impossible to provide to us at that time and that information was never provided. I asked again and never got it and I don't know if anyone else did, or not .

As part of the official comment process on the ACS content review as Jim said, CSAC submitted a letter in December 2014, which made the following major points and there was high degree of agreement across CSAC on the content of the letter and many, many people contributed their views.

There was a view that the review process was arbitrary and inadequate. That the value of the marital history question has repeatedly been justified. And that there was no other source for this information.

As noted that the undergraduate field of study question was added to the ACS in 2009 at the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences and that it has been key to studies of students in stem field. The results of that ACS question have been used in several thousand research papers.

It also argued yet again that there are good reasons for ACS to add a parental place of birth item. I had thought before this meeting that the recommendations had already gone forward to OMB and it's relevant to know that they haven't yet gone forward.

I don't know whether all the targeted items from Fall 2014 are going forward in that recommendation along with the item on business or medical office on property be removed.

And since these recommendations have not yet gone in it would be very useful if possible if when that submission is finalized and as soon as its finalized, if a copy of that submission were made available to CSAC members if that's allowed since I imagine that that's a matter of public record.

Although I don't know that for sure. Also in the content review there was a decision not to consider adding any items to the ACS even if items were removed.

Although my understanding, which may or may not be correct that in the content review that it was allowed to consider both adding questions and removing questions.

The questions that I have was, which we know a little bit more about was what was the process for taking comments on the ACS content review into account. Jim has provided

a lot of useful information about who responded and what the nature of the comments were.

But I still don't understand what affect that had on anything in terms of the content review at that point. It's useful to note that the OMB will be asking for comments on the ACS content review.

And I'll say for myself I'm 99% certain that CSAC will submit a comment in that comment period but I also don't know how likely OMB is to respond to any comments. I'm not an expert on the history of OMB responses to comments. Do they ever change anything as a result of this?

Or is this a - I don't know, or is this a bureaucratic procedure where they receive it, they say thank you very much and they don't change anything. I just don't know.

What I'd asked yesterday and it's still not clear to me, I understand the importance of a federal requirement for items to be on the ACS but I still - despite Director Thompson's helpful response, I still don't know if it was not allowed for importance to research to be one consideration in reviewing the usefulness of ACS items.

In September 2013 as I said, ACS asked for comments on the planned content review. And perhaps CSAC members should have been more aggressive and responded more extensively and more clearly at that time.

Advice from the Census Bureau would be very helpful to CSAC in terms of what can be done in the future by the Census Bureau and by CSAC to help ensure that CSAC advise is maximally helpful.

We probably were not diligent enough in pursuing what could have been done in terms of commentary back and anything that could be done from the Census to know what and when could be helpful would be a positive for all parties concerned.

I wasn't sure but I've heard now that it has been decided to discontinue the ACS three year estimates. Yes, there's a budgetary rationale but it's still unclear to me what the savings are.

I imagine that there's some kind of program that produces these things and I would seem to me that it would cost very, very little to produce the three year estimates but maybe I'm missing something. It seems that this is - to me that this would be absolutely trivial savings but maybe I'm wrong.

So thank you very much.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so much Barbara. Now Steve Ruggles.

Steve Ruggles: It's always good to begin with a little bit of history. From 1867 to 1940 the Census Bureau was responsible for statistics on marriage and divorce. And the Census Bureau got these statistics from by canvassing the states, which in turn got them from marriage certificates and divorce certificates.

In some periods the numbers were pretty good. In other periods they weren't. But at any rate after World War II, responsibility for collecting marriage and divorce statistics switched from the Census Bureau to the predecessor to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Well the main job of NCHS is to collect data on health and they did a very nice job with the vital records pertaining to mortality. But they just really didn't see marriage and divorce as central to their mission.

And gradually there was deterioration in the collection of marriage and divorce statistics particularly after 1990. And in 1995 NCHS reached a decision that they would - the statistics weren't really weren't worth that much.

The quality had deteriorated and that they were going to stop collecting detailed statistics and publishing data on age specific marriage rates and duration specific divorce rates. And that program would be discontinued. So this created a huge problem.

I'm sorry - I've animations in here and if you're looking at the PDF they won't work but at any rate. So NCHS continued to collect from the states a raw count of the number of marriages and the number of divorces in each state but six states representing 20% of the population dropped out of that program including California.

And so NCHS hasn't reported any data on marriage or divorce since 2012. So we now know what we had long suspected which is that the NCHS numbers substantially undercount the divorce rate. And we know that because of the American Community Survey questions.

There's no other way to know and basically we can estimate that the number of divorce currently being published by NCHS is understated by about 20%. So basically, you know, before these questions were added to the ACS we simply didn't know how many American were getting married or divorced.

So why couldn't - why can't we use other federal surveys? Well there's two other federal surveys that demographers used during this interim period between 1990 and 2008 where we were operating blind in terms of the vital records.

And that is the National Survey of Family Growth and the Survey of Incoming Program Participation. Both of these surveys ask for complete marital histories, not just marriage in the last year or divorce in the last year.

They - and the problem is that sometimes people neglect to report previous marriages and divorces and this problem is particularly severe in the Survey of Incoming Program Participation.

Because people are reporting about the marital histories of - one respondent of each household reports for the whole household and sometimes they don't know, and sometimes they forget. And at any rate 50% of the - almost 50% of the date of divorce in the SIPP is imputed.

So the SIPP very substantially underreports divorce. Even compared to the Vital Statistics its 20% lower yet. So the SIPP is not a useful - is not useful substitute for this and so what about NSFG? Well the problem with NSFG is that it's a very small survey first of all.

But then it only covers women who are 15 to 44 years old. A lot of the action is taking place in the above 45 - 45 and above category and this category is especially important for projections related to social security and Medicare.

So the reason why we fundamentally need these statistics - I mean there are many reasons. The Census Bureau cited 28 laws when the - that used these questions when they first introduced them.

But the fundamental thing that I think is most important is projection of the expenses for social security and Medicare. And which depend on marital status and without a specific rates of - and duration specific rates of marriage and divorce you really can't do a projection.

So both CBO and Social Security depend on these numbers for that purpose. So the Department of Health and Human Services in 2004 decided to pursue this alternative strategy to provide reliable, timely and cost effective data that would meet the needs of federal agencies particularly Social Security.

And DHHS requested Census Bureau investigate these questions that are on the screen. So the key is that the large size of the ACS offered the opportunity for a new measurement strategy.

Instead of asking like SIPP and NSFG for complete marital histories, you could just ask about marriage and divorces within the last year. And so this has huge advantages.

First of all it reduces the impact of recall bias that leads to undercount in the SIPP but second and more important it provides information about current demographic behavior. Instead of over the whole life course, and so it provides a direct substitute for the vital statistics data that no longer are useful.

So with the addition of two additional questions on year of marriage and number of times married, this suite of questions allows calculation of age specific and duration specific rates for marriage, divorce and widowhood. These are the raw materials that we need for population projections.

The questions on year of marriage and times married have a long pedigree. They were first asked in 1900 and 1910, respectively. So this gives us everything we need to build marital status life tables and that gives a detailed look at marriage patterns over the life course.

And it allows us to estimate for example the percentage of marriages that will end in divorce. So the result of these questions was much more powerful than the vital statistics ever were.

And the reason for that is that we could study correlations of marriage, divorce and widowhood with other variables like hours work, fertility and other social and demographic and economic characteristics.

And so these correlations quickly became incorporated into both the Social Security and the CBO models of projecting future populations, increasing their accuracy greatly.

It was also a gold mine for demographers even though the data have been available just for five years, they've led to a series of major publications that have reshaped our understanding of marriage and divorce.

But there's one cost to asking about events in the previous year instead of complete marital histories as was done with NSFG and SIPP. This measurement strategy requires ten to 20 times as many cases as if you're going to get comparable precision.

And the ACS is the only survey that we have that's large enough to support this measurement strategy. So if these questions were so badly needed and so successful why are they being targeted for removal from the survey. Well the answer is a very badly flawed cost benefit analysis.

The analysis of cost is pretty reasonable. And these are the costs that were evaluated and there were six criteria based on survey of interviews and some testing and the results seem pretty plausible. All of the marital history questions and the college field of degree question proved to be low costs.

The big problem with the analyses was on the benefit side. The Census Bureau identified 13 benefits, all of which focused on the uses of the data by federal agencies. And the critical flaw in this is that 8 of the 13 benefits they identified focused on uses of the data for small geographic areas like tracts or counties.

So who ever designed this cost benefit analysis apparently assumed that the only reason why a question would ever be on the ACS would be to generate small area statistics because the ACS is the only survey big enough for small area statistics.

And so, you know, the assumption is that if a questions isn't used to analyze small geographic areas it should be removed from the ACS and put on a smaller survey.

But if the questions on marriage in the past year were moved to a smaller survey they would be useless. Only the ACS has enough cases to use this measurement strategy.

Because the number of times married and the duration questions are necessary to interpret the data on the incidents of marriage, divorce and widowhood. There's an inherent need for a large sample for all five marital history questions. It's an interdependent package of questions.

So the benefit analysis concluded that no agency was using the marital history questions for small area analysis so this should have been self-evident. Most of the marital history questions can't be used for small area analysis.

So the measurement strategy focusing on marital events in the last year requires a large number of questions and the cases and only the ACS provides that. So the calculation of the overall benefit was very crude - there was equal weighting of all the factors.

Every one of the 13 factors had a five points so there was a maximum of 65 possible points and but if a question was not used below the state level then the maximum number of points was just 25.

So when they calculated overall benefit there was no indication of the number of federal uses or the importance of federal uses or federal uses for small population subgroups except for small areas.

There was no consideration as Barbara indicated of non-federal uses and most important perhaps there was no consideration of alternative sources or the cost of developing some alternative to keeping it on the ACS. So this is what I mean about sub state analysis.

This is a selected, the number of marriages and divorce in the 2013 ACS for selected states. And as you can see we've got 45 marriages in Vermont, 32 divorces in Vermont. How are you going to do a lot of sub-state analysis? How are you going to slide and dice that? It just doesn't work.

These questions are not designed for sub-state analysis. So they did what they called a quadrant analysis. They had the scores of on costs and the scores on benefit and they plotted those on a graph and the marriage questions all fell into quadrant three, which is low costs but low benefit.

Now there were a lot of other questions that also fell into quadrant three, low benefit including migration, residence five years, one year ago, weeks worked in the last year, school enrollment, educational attainment, Food stamp benefits, hours worked last week.

As well as the marriage questions and the field of degree questions. All of these were considered to be low benefit. Now I would submit to you that any analytic method that comes out with education attainment being a low benefit question is a bad analysis.

But any case, they couldn't get rid of these questions, obviously. And so they added another rule. And the other rule was simply to exclude any variables - any questions that had required sub-state uses from consideration for removal.

And so since all those question like educational attainment and what not did they ended up with these, only the marriage questions and the field of degree question. So the marriage questions were targeted for removal simply because they have no official sub-state uses.

And they aren't designed for sub-state analysis, they can't be used for that purpose so in the end the cost benefit analysis was irrelevant to the outcome of the review. Costs were not a factor in the outcome because all of the questions targeted for removal are low cost.

So the cost calculation became irrelevant. Only one benefit ended up determining the outcome. Whether there were required federal uses for sub-state geographies.

So, you know, as I mentioned these are needed for projections of future entitlements for Social Security retirement and disability benefits as the baby boomers retire and, you know, you've just got to take marital status into account.

And that requires that you've got current rates broken down by age, marriage duration and marriage order. And Social Security and CBO are using these now in their models.

So if you consider not just whether or not there are any federal uses but the importance of federal uses you could make an argument that these are among the most important questions in the survey. So now but there is also important scientific uses.

Why do we need data to understand changes in marriage behavior? Well look this is what's happening to age at first married. It's gone up since 1960 to unprecedented levels.

The projections of the proportion of U.S. women who are ever going to get married are - are never going to get married are going up drastically. Census Bureau's own estimates based on the ACS are that about 35% of young women now are never going to get married. Divorces continue to rise.

Once we controlled for age, which we can do only because we have the ACS and of course of the decline of marriage 40% of children are now born outside of marriage. So it does not seem to me that this is really the time to stop measuring marriage and divorce. This is a crazy idea.

Now let me just say a few things about the undergraduate field of study. This has been wildly successful. It's been used in hundreds of publications on the impact of education and the stem workforce. At (IPUMS) we've received 22,000 requests for this variable.

It was proposed by the National Academy of Sciences and one reason was because it allowed a major redesign of the scientists and engineers statistical data system. And so as you can see the NSF dropped one of their surveys. The completely redesigned the way they did the survey.

It took them five years but in 2013 they revamped all of their operations to monitoring the STEM workforce to build on the ACS and use the ACS to identify recent STEM college graduates.

And I'm a member of the National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for the Social and Behavioral Sciences and I was - the day that we were meeting, the day that the Federal Register Notice was published last Fall and, you know, the staff there was furious.

They had had like we had a Web briefing a few days before that but it was absolutely clear, nobody at NSF had been consulted about this. It's just amazing. Just like we weren't consulted. No experts were consulted on the marriage questions. It was done entirely in house based on silly criteria.

So this was the same kind of quadrant analysis as was done for the marriage questions that P12 is the undergraduate field of degree question. It also was low cost. But it had no required sub-state uses so it's gone.

So the criteria for inclusion in the ACS, you know, now is really just comes down to one thing, required sub-state uses and it doesn't make any sense because you need a big survey not just for small area analysis but for analysis of any small population subgroup.

Small population subgroups include people married, widowed or divorce in the last year. And it also include recent college graduates in STEM fields. So I have some other suggestions, which also appear in the NORC report that my sister wrote.

And the one that I think is the prime candidate is this cost of utilities. It's one of the highest costs questions. The - we could do much better by - better accuracy by imputing the data because people don't know their cost of utilities and they just make rough estimates and this one should go.

Acres in agricultural production there are other sources for this kind of data, too. We could substitute administrative records. And there's a lot of places where things could be streamlined. For example the number of rooms question where they ask how many bedrooms, that's pretty reliable.

People know what a bedroom is but the number of rooms is not that reliable because there's different concepts of what is a separate room and it's not clear that the number of rooms adds anything if you already know the number of bedrooms.

So in some the Census Bureau is proposing to remove six lower cost, highly successful, crucially important questions just because they're not being used to study small geographic areas even though they were never intended for that purpose.

And so my question for discussion are why didn't the ACS content review process include consultation with experts in the relevant subject areas and is there any thought, I mean to go ahead and propose to remove these questions without a plan for how you're going to replace the information just seems irresponsible.

So is there a plan? How are we going to get information on marriage and divorce? Or are we going to be the only industrial country in the world that does not collect information on marriage and divorce.

And wouldn't it make sense to get rid of these eight separate small area usage criteria in the benefit analysis and substitute a single criterion, is there a need for a large sample. That is the important thing.

And finally in light of the profound flaws with the content review and the methodology shouldn't the OMB submission simply be cancelled? Thank you.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you very much Steve. And again thank you Barbara. We have until 10:00 for committee discussion and this is as everyone here knows questions of the greatest importance have been raised.

So I wonder if it might be useful to begin perhaps with looking at some of the facts whether there is something, some new information perhaps that we need to incorporate in this discussion. I'll ask Jim to help us out with this. Jim Treat. And then we'll go on and ask for CSAC members to weigh in.

Lisa Blumerman: So actually I'm going to start if that's okay?

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Yes, of course it is.

Lisa Blumerman: Wonderful, thank you. So first of all I just want to thank the discussants and thank the committee for their comments. As someone who has worked on the ACS since it's full implementation the survey is incredibly important to me just as I know from the comments received it's incredibly important to all of you.

And so the comments are very timely, they're very important and they're very relevant and I thank you for those. I also thank you for recognizing the invaluable source of information that the ACS is. It is the only source of information we have that provides us with small area data.

There is no other source that provides the level of accuracy that we have and the level of completeness that we have. And it is a critical resource for us, for all of us.

Not just in the statistical community, the federal statistical community, but in the research community and I thank you for that. I truly appreciate the thoughtfulness in the comments and the passion that you bring. This survey right now more than ever needs that passion.

And we need you to help us with that. And we need you to provide the comments you're providing. Not just to us but to help us communicate just how valuable this survey actually is.

With that said, it is really important that when we think about the value of the ACS and what the ACS brings that we also recognize that a survey as large as the ACS with 3.5 million addresses in sample every year has its own share of challenges that it must address.

And a lot of those challenges really right now result - reflect our need to be respectful of our respondents and to address those respondent concerns. And Jim and his staff and the ACS program have put together a very thoughtful, very thorough, very detailed action plan on how we're going to address those responding concerns.

This 2014 content review that Jim was talking about is just the first step in that process and the results presented today as you all know going back to the many presentations and consultations that we have had on reducing responding concerns was just the first phase in our content review process and...

I'll talk more about that in a moment. But it is really important that we do all we can to respect those concerns. I wanted to start with just a few points. I'll start with some of the comments that Barbara raised.

And hopefully address a couple of things that we do have additional information since the papers were sent out and then I'll turn to a few of Steven's points as well.

Unfortunately due to the process that we go through I can't fully address what you want to hear.

And so what I can give you are my assurances and a little tidbits. And I recognize that will only go so far until you see the final process. But I do hope that it is the beginning of that path.

So a lot of your comments and your questions, and I truly appreciate them were about what the process was for taking comments - the comments received, the 1700 comments, nearly 1700 comments received into consideration.

I can assure you that we spent days, perhaps weeks. I spent days, I'm sure the staff spent weeks thoroughly reviewing each and every comment that was received.

I have a stack on my desk and I can only imagine what the staff have that's this high reflecting the work that went into looking at all of those comments. They were incredibly thoughtful.

There were some that were incredibly personal and it just demonstrated the full user community support for the survey, for the program and for the data that we collect.

The impact, the results of reading those comments factored heavily into the process that we went through, into the documentation that we put together, into the Federal Register Notice that will be coming out shortly.

And it begins to - it helps us taking the foundation that we've built through the content review into new levels. I can tell you that during that process additional information that we weren't aware of as we were working with the federal agencies on documenting needs was discovered.

That additional information was helpful to us. I can't tell you what it is yet but I can tell you that we did discover additional information. You've raised the point several times about research being the consideration.

And while I'll really, I respect and appreciate that comment I think the challenge that we have within the program and within the Census Bureau really is about the principal need for the collection.

The principal need for the information we're collecting on the ACS is to help the federal statistical community - and not just the federal statistical community, but the federal community in making the programmatic requirements that they need to do.

So part of the analysis was to really understand the legal requirement, whether it was - the mandatory programmatic or required use of the data, research and I don't mean any offense by this statement but the research uses are a byproduct of the very rich dataset that we put out.

We want the research uses to be there. We work actively with the research community but in terms of the cost for the program, in terms of the conduct for the program it's a consideration but certainly it's not one of the prime criteria that floated to the top.

And I do appreciate how that feels, having not spent my entire career only most of my career at the Census Bureau I do appreciate what that feels like. On the - I did want to, and maybe I'll come back to it at the end, I did want to talk a little bit and maybe Jim does, actually I'll do it now.

There was a lot of - you asked a lot of questions about the ACS three year, and perhaps what appears to be a trivial cost savings from it. Jim or I would be happy to walk through that. It's not a trivial cost savings.

When we looked at - it was a little bit about \$15 million that we had to save, which in reality was much more than \$15 million. Because the cost of the ACS, the funding we

had available for the ACS for this year was equal to the funding we had available for the ACS for last year.

But last year we only had 11 months of data collection so we were tasked to collect 12 months of data collection on a fixed budget so it's a little bit more than what that dollar was. It's more like, I don't know \$22 million, \$23 million. We had to find those savings.

And as you all know the ACS really contains three critical components. We have the household collection, we have the group quarters collection and we have the Puerto Rico collection. First and foremost, for all of us our thoughts were about preserving the integrity of the entire survey.

So what does that mean when we say preserving the integrity of the survey? We all worked so hard to raise that sample size to 3.5 million addresses. We needed - and we need that large sample.

Preserving the integrity of the survey so that we could ensure that the survey had the same level of quality, had the same future benefits and that we could continue to improve it was our first priority.

So if we were going to affect sample, which is the flip side of that where do we go to find - to fill that gap. That funding. We looked at the components. We did not feel again preserving the quality of the survey was first and foremost in our mind.

So that means we're not going to stop collecting group quarters data. We're not going to stop collecting data in Puerto Rico. And we're certainly not going to stop collecting the household sample. So then what do we have left?

We looked within the program for very important but ancillary complete activities that we could suspend. We could suspend again, failed edit follow up. And this I believe is

the third year we've suspended failed edit follow up, perhaps the fourth year. We've streamlined it somewhat.

Not completely suspended it. But as a result of that we have seen increases in our missing data rate, which is having an effect on the program but we did suspend that again. That bought us a little bit.

We suspended an activity that the name doesn't help - it's the general performance reviews, which is not what it sounds like. These are activities that are conducted in the field where we do observation visits to understand how well our numerators are performing their functions.

And understanding the questions they're asking. We suspended a number of other things that we could do. It still didn't bring us to where we needed to be. That left one component that we could look at. And these decisions are never easy and they're - they're never easy. They're very hard.

And in this case it was done in a - it had to be done in a very - we had about a two week window of opportunity. It left us with product. So looking at the product what could we do. In a perfect world we would have had alternatives already thought of.

We would have had, you know, ideas for new data dissemination plans that we could do. A different thing we could find or do but we didn't have it. So we looked at the product.

We recognized that the five year data does provide everyone, all communities with full access to information and we have the one year product for the larger communities. And that was the decision that we made. The cost estimate for that was about \$2.5 million for us in savings. So it's not a trivial amount.

It's more than a computer program. It's a lot of staff - I see Tori. It's a lot of staff in her division that review these data before they go out. We have disclosure considerations. We have - there's a lot.

I do believe that if we take - and Jim mentioned this - if we take a lot of the advantages that we have coming, a new data dissemination tool, Rebecca talked about this yesterday.

We have tremendous opportunity to reinvent the product line from the American Community Survey and we're fully committed to working with all of our stakeholders on how we do that.

In fact I believe at the upcoming data user workshop, the DUG workshop in May we have a preconference round table just to this very point where we'll - I think Warren Brown is hosting there - yes, Warren Brown is hosting that with (unintelligible).

And so we're looking forward to that conversation and to hearing the ideas that come from that. So we are very excited about the opportunity but we recognize that with any change we made to our program it is difficult and challenging.

Enough about that. I do want to comment and provide some information on a few of Steven's points as well. I just made a few notes as you were talking so they're probably not in order but I think the most important of all of them is the recognition that the content review is a process.

So what has been done now, isn't the end all, be all. And a lot of what we had to do - I shouldn't say had to do. A lot of what we chose to do and a lot of the process we employed was a reflection of the time we had available so that we could implement changes for the '16 collection beginning in January '16.

With that we focused the initial scope on a very small piece of the analysis, which was why you noted the change, I think Barbara did from what was originally proposed, which are still highly sensitive items that have potential for improvements to where we've ended up focusing as a result.

And it was because, and Jim can speak specifically to which quadrant it was, it was one of the lower two. But it was the way we re-scoped the analysis so that we could implement changes in - some changes in time for the '16 collection.

Again this is only the first step in that process. We have a very robust plan of continuing that work. And Jim began to talk about some of that. You also touched on some of that with the discussion of the report from NORC around potentially using administrative data.

You focused on the utilities questions. These are all prime. The plumbing question certainly is one. But these are all prime for us to look at and we have an action plan that we're working towards for our next phases on that.

You specifically stated that we targeted the marital history because there aren't sub-state uses. And I just really want to clarify, not just about marital history but about the process in general.

That the ability for the data to have a mandatory - for the collection to have a mandatory, a programmatic or a required item at small levels of geography has always been part - or at least going back as far as I go back with the program. Part of the core of the ACS, I recall the 2006 content policy.

It was one of the items that was called out is that sub-state use. I take pause with saying that the marital history variables were targeted because they didn't have sub-state use.

In our initial proposal as was clearly documented in the Federal Register Notice it wasn't because of the sub-state use, it was because we could find no documented - at the time we could find no documented legal requirement that helped us understand whether it was required programmatic or mandatory for the collection.

Certainly sub-state use again is a factor. But the principal factor is the required use of the information and that's true in general. I think I've touched on a lot of these other comments. The one other comment that I would like to make has to do with consultations.

Again that's something that I personally take pause with as well, respectfully. The American Community Survey staff office and myself, and many of us at the Census Bureau consulted extensively both internal to the federal statistical community.

As well as externally with both the private sector and public sector participants throughout all stages of the content review process. I believe Jim and the staff could provide you with somewhere between a three to five page document that isn't words.

It's just lists of the consultations that we had through this process. All of our partner agencies were consulted in this process. And I assure you that any agency that had a particular question in that Federal Register Notice was posed as potential elimination was consulted with long before that Federal Register Notice went out.

They were aware of what we were doing and they were aware of what was there. Those consultations were extensive. They were intense. And they were very fair. We recognized the value that this survey has to everyone.

And we recognize the partnership that we need to have with everyone to retain the survey for all of our uses. And that's very important to us. And I think I'll stop with that and let you all have an opportunity for discussion.

Irma Elo: Thanks to Jim and you, I really appreciated the comments from Barbara and Steve. And I just want to make some general points. One is that when you talk about research.

And it's being divorced from the programmatic purposes I think that's a very narrow view of the contribution of research to running federal programs. Because the research informs policy. The research informs congressional decisions potentially on the policies.

We can't - you cannot think of ACS as being just programmatic so that we produce these data source for this area and it shows this many people received food stamps in this local area. And ignore all the research that goes around that, that helps inform future programs, implementation programs.

So I think that's too narrow view for you to think about research being outside the criteria that you should use. So that's one. Everybody appreciates that this is the only survey that provides local, small local area estimates. I don't think you have to defend that or inform us about that.

I think what you don't take into account, that it's the only survey that also provides estimates for small populations. And that is very important as those small populations ultimately may be growing or may be changing in nature and we don't have that data from anywhere else.

So ignoring that and not putting as part of that criteria is also a mistake I think. And finally, you know, you said about respondent burden. The things you propose to eliminate are not respondent burden.

You eliminated things that are not the most critical or the most important and so that's also hard for me to accept that, that was a major criteria that you used. And finally I think you have the potential of alienating users.

You keep telling us that we have to help you sell the ACS and that you want to think Congress and we are very important for that but you also risk alienating the users when they feel like they are not being listened to.

And I think that sometimes that's been an issue with CSAC that we feel like our voice is not heard. And I think that's a danger for the Bureau as well. So those are the three points I'd like to make.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you. More comments, questions. Noel Cressie.

Noel Cressie: I'd just like to address the importance of the ACS for the small areas that you're referring to. When it comes out with its five year estimates it does so at the small areas upstate.

But the one year estimates are at the state level and so there's this interesting interplay between what you might call a temporal variability and spatial variability. And I'm a space time guy so I can sort of put it that way and I think perhaps you can resonate to it.

Steve Ruggles really referred to this and in our comment to the ACS we made this case that trends are as equally important as small areas. And what has happened when these criteria were used to determine which questions to delete is the trending.

The change in time was given less emphasis than the change in support, or spatial aggregation. And that really is a value judgment, which was made by your team.

And I don't think it's supported by anything other than a strong feeling that anything that does change of aggregation is more important than anything that looks at trends.

And of course what you want is both but you can't get both necessarily and some of the questions were designated for deletion were not giving you the small areas but were giving you the trends and will give you the trends.

And the sort of figures that Steve put up extremely important in that trending. Thank you.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you. Bob Hummer.

Bob Hummer: Thank you. Bob Hummer. I just wanted to echo a couple of comments that I've heard along the way as well. And perhaps add one more. First I think the issues that were brought up about subgroup data and small population data are huge.

And I think the lack of consideration of those is a real mistake in this process and it's going to result in a real mistake in the outcome. Second I think to echo earmark to consider as a byproduct is a mistake as well.

And, you know, we're called the Census scientific advisory committee and, you know, I think if research is considered a byproduct, I mean maybe we should be the Census technical advisory committee or something like that.

I think, you know, a big part of what we do and what we think about has to be the research uses of the data that are collected. If that's considered to be a byproduct or clearly secondary it seems like maybe we're the wrong people to be doing this.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you Bob. Yes, Ken Simonson.

Ken Simonson: I was intrigued to hear that you have a catalog of the complaints or at least the interactions you had with Congressional offices and I think it would be useful both to this committee.

And those of us who hear or meet with Congressional staff to know what the respondent complaints are so that we would have a better sense of where the points of friction are and perhaps provide the expertise here on ways of reducing those while still providing scientifically useful information.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Barbara Anderson.

Barbara Anderson: Thank you for your comments Lisa. You have hinted that what comes out will not be what we've seen. I still wonder and I ask this will we and when will we see what's being submitted to OMB. As I said, I gather that once it's submitted it's not secret anymore.

So it was - Jim said it was going in maybe today. But it sounds like it's really close to being finalized. Will we be sent this right after it's submitted and then we don't have to be quite so vague about what's - I'm not criticizing you, I mean I know there're requirements what you can and can't disclose.

So this is not meant as a personal attack. But I just wonder since we're all sitting here when will we get what you're submitting to OMB?

Jim Treat: So our goal is - our plan currently is that once we submit it to OMB and OMB publishes the Federal Register Notice that we're going to send out communications through the gov delivery process for example.

Our different data lists are to inform - our data user community that what the Federal Register - that the Federal Register Notice has been published so that people can look at that and see what the results are of what we're proposing to submit to OMB.

So that was always our plan and our intention to communicate with our stakeholders.

Barbara Anderson: When do you think that's going to happen?

Jim Treat: As soon as OMB publishes the Federal Register Notice, that's when we'll submit the - we'll send the email message out to our different contacts to let them know that.

Lisa Blumerman: So I know you're looking for an estimate of time and so just one piece of the process that might help, it's very difficult for us to predict what that time is because it's essentially out of our control. It's communication between our agency, the Department and OMB.

And so we've done what we can do. We're actively monitoring it. As soon as we have a sense though, we can share that sense of timing. We just don't know it.

And watching the process recently for many of these not related to the ACS but for many of the Bureau programs there's - I can't even give you a good estimate. Based on the recent conversations that we have, we believe it could be as soon as today.

It likely won't be until next week. But I don't know. Yes.

Jim Treat: I mean I just have to add. We work closely with our policy office that works with the Department in the review. And my office is contacting the policy office every day to say, where does this clearance package sit at the Department, where is it?

We have been making phone calls to the Department. We've been having conversations, emails to understand the status of the package because we know the sensitivity.

And the interest in this to the point where I think the policy is finally going to at some point yell at me because we keep literally, every day we keep pinging them to say, what is the status of this? We want to make sure that as soon as it gets posted that we can let the message get out there.

That it's up there so that the day users and stakeholders can see what we're proposing to OMB.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Steve Ruggles.

Steve Ruggles: So one thing I don't understand, for 200 years we know exactly how changes in the Census content were done and it was a completely public process. It was done and it was done in, you know, in close consultation with the American Philosophical Society, the American Statistical Association.

It was a, you know, it was that the nation experts came together and advise the Census Bureau. And there was an open discussion. We have the minutes of all these things. And the correspondence. But now it's all like a big secret thing.

It's somehow you guys have to, you know, keep us from knowing what you're going to propose. I mean when we were here last Fall, you knew exactly what you were going to propose. We asked you and you wouldn't tell us. Why?

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Babs Buttenfield.

Babs Buttenfield: I wonder if it would be possible for a subset of CSAC members to meet with the Department to discuss this issue?

Lisa Blumerman: I don't - I'm sure it's possible. I don't know that it's necessary. But if it's something that you all want to do. The issue right now we have is one of timing of the package. That's an administrative issue.

The concern that you all have is that we haven't been able and haven't apparently done a good job communicating information. That's a Census Bureau issue.

Jim Treat: I'd also like to add to those Steve your comment, when we made changes to the content in 2008 and '09, we followed actually a less open process when we added the questions to the survey. When we made changes in 2013 and '14 we had a less open process to what we currently have for this effort.

We have gone beyond the normal communications path to outreach to all of the stakeholders, as many as possible to get to networks so that they can get to networks to conform - to inform them of what we were planning to do with the content review and multiple steps along the way.

Where we are today is, is that because it's in review within the agency we cannot release the information until it's been final approved and it's at OMB. And that's just the administrative process. But we have had an open and transparent process as much as possible.

And well and above beyond the changes that were implemented in '08 and '09, and in '13 and in '14 that we've had in - to this effort.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Willie Jasso. I'm sorry, do...

Steve Ruggles: The additions in 2008 and '09 were, you know, extensively discussed in the National Academy of Sciences and in the, you know, these were recommendations that came to you from the scientific community.

And, you know, then maybe you did some, you know, the decision making process may have been secret, but of - there was no secret about what changes were being proposed.

We don't know - don't even know what changes are being proposed because you're keeping it secret.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Willie Jasso. I'm going to jump in here for a minute. Before I say what I really want to say, let me do the preface that I have this sense that perhaps we are all going to converge at the same place.

And that something about constraints and processes are hindering or being able to reassure each other as much as we would like. I hope that's true. Now let me say what I'm going to say. I'm holding here the ACS postcard, Measuring America.

The Census Bureau advertises itself, the persona of the Census Bureau is that it measures America. I want to say two things about that. The first thing is that as anyone at NIST, National Institute of Standards and Technology will tell you, you can't measure without theory.

And if you can't measure without theory then you need to talk to theorists. So when we talk about talking to researchers, the research community, national science foundation, et cetera, the kernel of that, the core is that we need to talk to the theorists in order to measure correctly.

And we know that when we measure kilograms, when we measure a yard, an acre, et cetera. Okay. Second thing about this postcard. It has beautiful logos and symbols,

icons, the things that it measures include one of these little icons has a cap and gown and books. All right. That's educational attainment.

This is one of the glories. This is field of study. This is the DNA of the Census Bureau. Another of the icons, the one in the center, there's five. The one in the center is a family. It's two parents and a little child.

Now we're not going to learn much about those families unless we learn about this marital and divorce history. So talking about these questions, marriage, divorce, field of study is more than just questions. It's the very identity of the census bureau and that's what's at stake.

And by the way there's also among the uses of the ACS, guess what, research grant proposals. Well, if we lose these questions we're going to have a hard time - many of us will have a hard time with our grant proposals.

So I truly hope that my intuition is correct that we're all going in the same direction, perhaps because we face different constraints, we're getting there in different ways. But whatever we do let's not forget the DNA of the Census Bureau.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More discussion...Peter Glynn.

Peter Glynn: I guess I have one question having to do with something that Steven brought up earlier, which is in the event that these questions were dropped is there a backup plan with regard to the Social Security Administration and the necessary data that they need in order to do accurate projections going forward?

Lisa Blumerman: So we're in ongoing conversations with the Social Security Administration. It is part of the - we're in ongoing discussions with I believe it was the 24 - 24 or 27? Twenty-three?

Well, you know, plus or minus one, the 23 agencies that we worked with on all of the questions from the content summit forum that we had, all the way through, so those conversations are occurring. We talk very frequently. The essence of it will come out shortly. But they're ongoing.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More discussion?

Tommy Wright: This is Tommy Wright. I'm absolutely moved and grateful to be in the midst of this discussion. I really am. However, the next item on the agenda is the relationship question, testing and update. The presenter is Rose Kreider.

I should also mention that public comment is scheduled at 10:45 and I may need to interrupt.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: While Rose is coming up I want to take this opportunity to thank Jim Treat, Barbara Anderson, Steve Ruggles and all the members of CSAC for a truly enlightening discussion.

Rose Kreider: Good morning everyone. I am Rose Kreider, the Chief of the Fertility and Families Statistics Branch. And I am here to give you an update on the relationship question testing that we've been doing.

Let me start off with a little bit of background for any of you who aren't yet familiar with the work that we've been doing on the relationship to householder question. In the past seven years or so we've been focused on improving estimates of coupled households.

Unmarried partner was introduced as an answer category for the relationship question in the 1990 census. In 2000 we changed the editing procedure so that those who

reported being same sex married couples were shown as unmarried partners rather than switching the gender of one of the reported same sex spouses.

Census 2010 was the first decennial census to show estimates of same sex married couples. These estimates were released in a special report and tables that were posted on the Census Bureau Website.

That report also details error that we found in the estimates. Essentially it's a statistical problem where low rate of error in a very, very large group creates issues in the estimates for the very small group.

So there's some 56 million opposite sex married couple households in a very small number of same sex married couple households. One a small proportion of those opposite sex married couples need to mismark their response in order to completely swamp the estimates of the smaller group, the same sex married couples.

This graph illustrates an estimate of the error in both the 2010 Census and 2010 ACS. What we did was to match the survey data to administrative data to the Social Security record and then we compared the report of sex on the survey to the sex entry on the Social Security record.

The graph shows you the percentage of those who reported as same sex married couples in survey data but who's sex entries in the Social Security file did not match their reports on the survey. As you can see the error is very high.

Overall 73% of those who reported as same sex married couples in decennial 2010 data, 57% of those in ACS 2010 data were probably not same sex couples.

Since the June 2013 Supreme Court decision on the Defense of Marriage Act, there's an increased need for estimates of same sex married couples for federal agencies who administer programs that depend on marital status.

Throughout the process the Census Bureau has been in conversations with other countries who already have very similar questions to the one that we're developing, they already have been using them.

We've been testing the new question wherever we can, in smaller scale surveys but the 2015 National Content Test that we'll have this Fall will be our first chance for a truly large scale test. I skipped my other slide.

Just to remind you that the - we've been part of an interagency group measuring relationships in federal household surveys along with some 20 other agencies and so our development work has been in that context and we conducted focus groups and cognitive testing to develop the new relationship question.

That's where I skipped ahead. And this shows you the questions that will be tested in 2015 Fall test. On the left you'll see the blue, the old question, which you can't read all that well but I think most of you are pretty familiar with the question.

The only change we've made is to move unmarried partner up to appear after husband, wife. This is something that came out of the cognitive testing and focus groups because they are seen as equivalent categories.

And we're also adding foster child back into the list, it was not there in 2010 due to space concerns on the - space problems on paper form. But in order to be the same as ACS that is back.

Then the second version, which is in the green on the slide is the new question and that modifies those husband, wife and unmarried partner categories to distinguish between same sex and opposite sex couples.

So it's explicitly - the categories are explicit about opposite sex, husband, wife, spouse, same sex husband, wife or spouse. So even though it was smaller than the planned 2015 content test we were able to test the new question in parts of the 2014 Census test.

Overall based on that test we conclude that the revised relationship question did not create any noticeable problems in terms of survey nonresponse or nonresponse to the relationship question in particular.

And it did provide an equivalent distribution of coupled households to what we got in the old question. The error rate that we estimate is lower with the new question. We think that's mainly due to self-response. Self-responders apparently do better than the FRs sometimes.

Nonresponse follow up tends to be - have more error in it. And we are estimating probably about 28% of those who reported same sex married couples - they have been consistent responses.

So they picked same sex husband, wife or spouse but the sexes that they reported for those two people do not agree. Given that we still see inconsistencies in reporting of relationship and sex with the new question we're testing an electronic consistency check.

So if the respondent or the field rep indicates that the relationship is same sex husband, wife, spouse but one of these people is marked male and one is marked female for instance, a check will pop up asking whether they'd like to correct an item.

Of course we can't add a check like that to the paper form but we are working to reduce the error in collection wherever we can. We had a similar check in the American Housing Survey 2013 test.

Now American Housing Survey is all field rep administrator unlike the decennial tests. Overall error was higher in American Housing Survey test than we saw on the 2014 decennial test, which again was mainly self-response.

Our evaluation of the American Housing Survey test showed that the check did help reduce the error. Field reps did use it to change sex or relationship values, mostly relationship. There are three separate tests in 2015. One will test nonresponse follow up.

One tests contact strategies to see which one results in highest response. And then the largest test in the Fall will be a content test. That will be a panel test of our old and revised relationship questions. And we will have the consistency check in electronic modes.

The nonresponse follow up portion again will be tested in that early test in Spring, going on right now I believe. And that will also have the consistency check.

Sort of on a little bit different strain, cognitive testing that has been going on in preparation of the 2015 tests and so on has showed us once again as we always see during cognitive testing that people find the roomer/boarder and housemate/roommate categories very confusing.

They don't know what we consider to be the difference or how those might be distinguished. So in 2016 we would like to test dropping at least maybe both of those categories and see how we come out.

The earlier research that we've done as we've been developing the new question is available on the Census Bureau Website. I've given you the link there. It's if you hover over the I believe it's topics on the page you'll see families and households and you can get to a same sex couples page.

And we're also planning to give some presentations at upcoming conferences and we usually post those on that Website once they have been presented. Thank you very much.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so much. We're now open for committee discussion. Let's begin with Barbara Anderson.

Barbara Anderson: That was very interesting and I have informational question. I don't quite understand what you're - really it's fine. I'm just asking a question about dropping - possibly dropping the housemate/roommate, the roomer/boarder, I mean I think I understand what a housemate/roommate is if someone is that, where do they go?

I mean what relationship to head of household are they supposed to tick off and are you thinking that roomer, as the second part of that, are you thinking that although I would think housemates and roommates are certainly part of the household that maybe roomer/boarders aren't.

I think - it may be totally fine. I just don't understand what your thinking is.

Rose Kreiber: There's a category that just says, other nonrelative. So that is where people who are not related by - in Census Bureau related is related by birth, marriage or adoption. So if they don't fall into those relative categories they would be other nonrelative.

Barbara Anderson: So you think that there's no difference in terms of relationship between a roommate and a boarder?

Rose Kreiber: People don't understand what we believe the difference should be. Also roomer/boarder conflates the idea of payment with the kind of relationship. And the purpose of that question is really to get the relationship, not financial arrangements within the household.

Barbara Anderson: Do you think they're both - both of those are going to be dropped, or do you think roomer/boarder is going to be dropped? Or what's your guess?

Rose Kreiber: I'm just trying to get the ability to test it right now. I think that the easiest one to drop based on the cognitive testing is roomer/boarder. People don't know what we mean. They don't know how it's different from housemate/roommate. So it seems pretty clear that we should let go of that one for sure.

And that would maybe just leave housemate/roommate and other nonrelative for those sort of remainder, other nonrelative category.

Barbara Anderson: So they don't know what a roommate is either?

Rose Kreiber: Not in relation to roomer/boarder.

Barbara Anderson: But if - I'm sorry. But if you've got - this is interesting is why I'm asking you. But if you've got - I guess you'll more after the testing so I'm asking for your crystal ball. So if you got rid of roomer/boarder you wouldn't necessarily get rid of housemate/roommate. And it's possible there'd be less confusion?

Rose Kreiber: That's the idea.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More comments, questions? Yes, Steve Ruggles.

Steve Ruggles: So the difference between roomer/boarder and housemate/roommate of course is that the roomer/boarder is somebody who's paying money to the householder to live there, which I guess, you know, whereas housemate/roommate is presumably is more of a shared relationship, right?

Rose Kreiber: That's that the help text says. But I think a lot of people use those words housemate/roommate even when they are paying the owner of the house from whom they rent their room, that kind of thing. I think roomer/boarder is kind of a term that is not used that much in, you know, in our usual speech.

And so people are confused by what that might be or how it's different from housemate/roommate.

Steve Ruggles: Yes, I'm just looking at the numbers here and they've been pretty stable. But anyway, it probably would be fine.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More discussion? We can hand off copies if one wants to know what a rumor looks like.

Tommy Wright: You may have noticed that there's no breaks scheduled on this morning. We noted that after this had gone to press. We could take a break now. We were planning to possibly take a break at the point of public comment and then be back at 11:00 for back on the agenda.

Is there some sense of the committee to take a break now? If we do we should be back a little bit before 10:45. Can we be back at 10:43 maybe, 10:43. There are three clocks, but 10:43. Thank you very much.

Tommy Wright: Tommy Wright. It is now time for public comment. Do we have anyone who would like to make comment? We don't have anyone registered.

But if there's anyone in the audience, please proceed to the microphone located in front of the audience seating and before making your comment please state your name and affiliation clearly.

We have no registrations but if there's anyone in the audience who'd like, now is the time to do that. I don't see anyone moving and so I'm going to turn the meeting over to Willie and we're a little bit ahead of schedule I guess.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so much Tommy. Yes, we are a little bit ahead of schedule. Now I think a lot of committee members may think that our session doesn't begin until 11:00. So the question is, is there anyone to round up so that we can start now. Irma.

Well, in the interest of time because we are going to stop when the box lunches get here. Why don't we at least have a little warm up. And the warm up is as you know this is the session when the committee takes stock of the meeting, makes its initial recommendations for what will go in the formal recommendations.

This includes any comments on the Census responses to previous recommendations. It also includes recommendations that are linked to the sessions during the meeting and then finally any additional recommendations substantive or procedural. Barbara.

Barbara Anderson: I hope I'm okay but I have a couple of comments. One is if there's some way that we could in a nice way ask the Census Bureau if they have idea about how we could be more completely informed by them.

And how we could in the future respond in an earlier or more timely manner to stuff they're planning to do so that there can be more constructive interaction. If that's the way to put it. On the content review maybe we misread it.

But these earlier things, I know I and perhaps other people - well we weren't very fully informed of what they were doing and also when they were talking about taking off the plumbing question there wasn't a lot of reason to get concerned until we saw the later recommendations.

And if we could be more interactive in the future that would be great. If I can say something else and I don't know if I'm out of order or not. As many of you know, I headed the - or I am the head of the working group on group quarters in the ACS where the other members were Irma Elo and Bob Hummer.

And some people thought that the working group was done but we want to be not quite done. Two years ago we submitted recommendations and then quite a bit later, I think at the last meeting the ACS, although it wasn't discussed they submitted responses to our recommendations.

And then yesterday, Irma and Bob and I had an informal lunch with the main ACS people that went very well. What we would like to do would be to submit a final working group report at the next CSAC meeting, which would incorporate results of the thing yesterday.

And the ACS staff people were quite open to us having like two more conference calls with them to see where we're at. And we think that could bring this working group to a close with a final report from it, which I think we actually accomplished quite a bit.

The other thing was it was recommended before and Willie solicited interested committee members in a potential new working group on the ACS more generally. And the three of us were interested and also Noel Cressie was interested in that.

When I asked Willie where that was at, because I thought it had kind of happened I was told no, that it wasn't official. And we would - that's fine. But we would like to know - we still think that would be a good idea.

And would like to know what else has to happen for that in completing whatever has to be done to complete the process of that request and what else would have to be produced to move that forward?

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you. This is Willie Jasso. On the first thing, extending the life of the ACS group quarters working group, my sense is that given that - and I'm going to ask Tommy Wright to correct me if I'm wrong. But given that the formal guidelines for working groups had not yet been formulated.

And therefore there has not been a real closure, which according to the new guidelines includes inter alia thanking the working group. My sense is that the life of that working group is ambiguous enough that we can declare it living.

Barbara Anderson: For one more meeting that's all.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: My sense is that, that should be completely easy. No problem at all. The second, this committee recommended an ACS working group to the best of my knowledge, maybe more than once and exactly as you said, we asked for volunteers.

And we got the three original members of the ACS group quarters plus Noel Cressie. All this information was communicated and at that time when this happened, which

coincides with the time when the guidelines were being formulated and crafted, and these guidelines.

It's the same document that we already called attention to yesterday, standard operating procedures for the committee and embedded in it for the committee's working groups. At that time I think we all thought that the next step would be there would be a new working group.

And then it never happened. So my suggestion would be two fold. One is we reread carefully those standard operating procedures so that we know exactly what the committee is recommending.

And then secondly, I think if memory serves about those standard operating procedures, be cognizant that the - and again, Tommy correct me if I'm wrong, but the working group has to be chartered by the Census Bureau. Right, Barbara, I think we...

Barbara Anderson: That's my understanding. And I just wonder if there's anything else we still have to do before Census makes whatever decision they make.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: I think it would be entirely appropriate and desirable for that to be one of the recommendations issued after this meeting. Thanks. Okay. I'm sorry Steve.

Steve Ruggles: Yes, I just wanted to raise this issue of - I'm having a little trouble understanding this concept of that the Census Bureau for some reason can't discuss with us what they're considering.

You know, they're certainly no more important thing than the content of the ACS that we could provide input on and it does seem like we can't provide input unless we have some notion of what the plans are and what the methods are and what not.

And there seems to be some thought that there's some legal requirement that they can't talk to us about it. And that just seems - I mean they talk to us about their plans in other respects. Why is this topic forbidden.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: That's a very good question and I certainly do not know what the standard operating procedures for Census staff are in this respect. We can certainly think about asking this in some way in our recommendations.

For example, we could ask for an information briefing at the next meeting, at the September meeting on to further elaborate. Barbara had some very good language five or ten minutes ago.

Very sensitive, tactful language to figure out ways where - and also Peter Glynn during the break where they would figure out ways that the committee could be most helpful to the Census Bureau. And these ways might include some additional and formal conversations.

I think before we put anything in writing we need to read very carefully every word of the standard operating procedures and then keying off of that we can then submit either a request for information or an outright recommendation at the time we submit our recommendations.

Let me take this opportunity to add something that Barbara brought to my attention during the break. As you know normally we leave these meetings knowing who has what responsibility for drafting which section of the recommendations.

And usually it's cut and dried the discussants have the primary responsibility for drafting the sections for the sessions that they discuss. So in this case they would Barbara and Steve for the ACS content review, it would be Noel Cressie.

And with Ken Simonson's input on the working group on big data. And then anything else we want in the past committee members have volunteered to draft a section on one topic or another topic.

Now what Barbara brought to my attention is that this time it would probably be wise not to submit the recommendations until after we know exactly what's happening with the OMB submission.

And so we need to take this into account as we set our time table for our - and in that submission may lead not only to altered form of the recommendations on the session on ACS content review but in fact further recommendations or requests for information such as the one we've just been taking about.

About having mechanisms for discussing these topics that are very critically of mutual interest to Census and to the committee. Bob Hummer.

Bob Hummer: Thank you Willie. I wanted to follow up with Barbara's comment about timeliness of meetings and notifications and so forth. Last meeting we had in September under point number 5 of John Thompson's summary of the responses.

There was a recommendation from CSAC, because I made this recommendation that the specialists meetings be held for the income poverty and health insurance statistics.

They followed up with that and they had a meeting just a couple weeks ago, maybe even a week or two ago, which was great. The issue there is that I was actually then invited to the meeting, I think it was 18 days before it was held. I couldn't come.

I mean - so I think again it was great to have that follow up but at the same time I think it would be really useful for the Census Bureau folks to keep in mind there are

schedules and they should at the least give as much notice as possible before doing something like that.

You know, I think - I heard that the meeting went well and fine, but at the same time this is a recommendation that came out of this committee. I don't think anyone else attended that meeting, the specialist meeting and I think more notice is necessary.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: A little committee memory. I can remember making procedural recommendations - this committee making procedural recommendations such as tell us exactly when the CSAC meeting will end before we get our airplane tickets. Some of you remember that, right?

What you're saying strikes me as perfect material for a recommendation on some kind of supplement to the standard operating procedures on timing of exchange of information.

Bob Hummer: Yes.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Would you volunteer to write a little section, a little paragraph? Irma.

Irma Elo: I've been on this committee now for - I don't know, three, four years. It seems like often it comes up again and Peter just raised it again, being a new member, what is our role and how we can best serve the Bureau?

And it seems to me that, that's a repeated theme that we visit every once in a while. And so have we really heard from the - I mean, I guess the Bureau wants our advice but that seems vague and the timing of the information we get for the feedback seems to be late or very early.

Or we presented it by decisions already made. So do we - it would seem that if we were going to be the most effective we should be brought into that process early before those decisions are made to get some feedback on plans rather than feedback on decisions.

And that I think it would be more satisfying for me at least if I felt that I came here and I could give feedback on plans.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Again, this is perfect material for something to be included in our recommendations. Barbara.

Barbara Anderson: One thing I don't know and maybe Tommy could answer since he knows a lot, is in terms of - and I just don't know whether some reluctance on the Census Bureau's part to tell us about plans. Is - this is just I'm wondering.

Is this because of the open meeting aspect of this that if they tell us about their plans, they're telling the whole world about their plans. And then they're reluctant to tell the whole world about what they're considering but haven't totally decided? Is that what's going on?

I'm not saying this could be changed. It can't be changed. But I'm just trying to understand. Tommy, maybe you know or could enlighten us.

Tommy Wright: Tommy Wright. I do not know. I will - but I can comment here and I'll try to be factual. I was comment to Bill Bostic when that discussion was going on about, you know, when we released the economic indicators. There is a literal lock up here at the Bureau. I mean it becomes intense.

You just don't want to go near these people. I mean it's really intense the day before and when these things are carried down to Commerce. So there's really a sense of that - I'm

unaware of what just went on about the ACS and I could only speculate but please don't let me speculate.

I mean we are aware of the Director did comment about the coming meetings with the Senate and ACS is at the top of his head right now and a life of ACS. And this is - but I cannot comment on that.

A second, just a point of information - you are aware that I did serve on a committee like this in the '80s. It was the American Statistical Association, the Population Association, the American Economic Association and I think the Marketing Association, that version of the committee.

And I did actually chair it in the 1988. How best to communicate to the Census Bureau was also a topic of interest at that particular time and my own observation as I have been at the Census Bureau since 1996 is just the conversations are helpful to the Bureau.

It sometimes it's not always what's written down, but the conversations and the exchange and how we respond to it is very helpful to the communication - to the Census Bureau and that's - don't underestimate just the conversation.

It's important. That's my own comment from being associated with the Bureau since 1980 and also attending almost all of the Advisory Committees including the other two, I generally tend to sit in on them. But, just a comment.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so much, Tommy. That's very, very useful. More, Jack Dangermond.

Jack Dangermond: Yes. I found this document that was prepared by the Bureau to be very useful and very responsive to the questions that we actually wrote out last time and also I think it definitely affected the presentations yesterday on systems that they were planning.

And so I found this is a very effective way to communicate and get feedback in a deliberate way. So I would say that some of these questions that are a little vague on process could be structured in such a way.

And Barbara, I guess you're going to have to take the lead on this as the discussant and our new leader to structure questions like we did before or comments like we did before and have them respond to us in six months from now.

I think that not only is very useful for us and we had a lot of complaints that, that didn't happen before this last meeting and they were very responsive. But I think it also helps them in their thinking process so I think some of these criticisms Steve about the three year, blah, blah, blah.

If we structured the questions correctly they have to write them out in black and white and just if we ask the questions to demystify some of the process or to make suggestions about having a more open process or like that, I think it would be useful. That's just my comment on this.

Barbara Anderson: I want to say that Irma and Bob and I talked and I think we all agree and they can say whatever they want to say that things that we say and what working group say do effect the Census but it's very slow. We made our recommendations and comments two years ago.

And they got their comments back six months ago. And then as I said we talked about it at lunch yesterday. And I think our comments two years ago did effect what they've done and have improved and been cost saving for the ACS.

And we're going to move forward keeping on talking to them and it has had a positive influence, frustrating at times but positive. But the nature of the process is it's slow.

I think it's too bad also that we don't know what those OMB suggestions are going to be and I think it will be - and Lisa was saying, we should know within a week and it will be - I'll kind of be waiting on the edge of my chair to see what they're actually recommending.

And hoping that it's somewhat different than the last thing we've seen.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: I have the sense that the comments that we - the recommendations that we submitted after the September meeting, to which Jack Dangermond alluded were actually extraordinarily useful for the Census Bureau.

And I may be wrong but it's my sense that they helped bring about this extraordinary transformative set of plans that we heard yesterday for decennial. Doug Massey.

Doug Massey: I think we need to realize that we're not in normal times right now. The ACS has been a huge demographic, statistical and scientific success providing immense amounts of information for small areas between censuses.

It's a huge boon to a lot of people but it's created a huge political problem for the Census Bureau. It was one thing when you had a long form every ten years administered in conjunction with the Census.

But now you've got a long form administered every single year to 3.5 million people and this runs against the American grain, there's a lot of complaints about, conservative members of Congress see it as federal intrusion into people's lives so it's created a big political problem that they're grappling with right now.

And they're afraid that the whole thing is going to be defunded or made voluntary or somehow undermined. So they're mind is really in one of damage control and crisis prevention.

And I haven't been harping on place of birth of parents because I don't think they're in a position to move forward on anything. And what we see are their attempts to maybe jettison a few questions, a bone to some of the politicians to reduce the respondent burden.

I mean that's where we are at right now and that's the bigger picture. And, you know, the complaints of a bunch of scientific social researchers are one thing and they care about us but their eyes are on the much bigger picture, ensuring the survival of the ACS itself.

And it's got really serious political problems on the Hill and it's an unanticipated unexpected consequence of the broader success of the ACS because every year it's in the field.

Generating complaints to some Congressman somewhere who wants to know why we have to ask all these questions of Americans on an ongoing basis. And that's just the political reality that we're in right now.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you very much. Steve.

Steve Ruggles: Well, I agree completely with Doug but that's all the more reason why they ought to do an intelligent cost benefit analysis that actually gets rid of the questions that people object to and, you know, there are plenty of questions in there.

There's the - the ACS if full of crap. And, you know, you could streamline it very, very well.

Doug Massey: But it federally ended in crap though.

Steve Ruggles: Well except that those things are very squishy. You can get things substituted. And so, you know, I think that it makes it all the more important that they do a good job at this and not a terrible job.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Yes, Peter Glynn.

Peter Glynn: Yes, I just want to second what Steve just said. And I think one of the issues that came up with regards to this whole question about which questions on the ACS get dropped has to do with the cost benefit analysis.

And, you know, I do find it striking to see the types of questions that actually ended up being considered for being dropped. And there is a clear economic value and a clear value to the government, to the Social Security Administration in terms of having those marriage questions on.

It is fundamentally important to doing detailed predictions with regards to Social Security outlays in the decades and years ahead. So the fact that the cost benefit analysis that the Census Bureau is using ended up with those particular questions as being seriously considered for being dropped.

You know, raises some questions in my mind as to the whole cost benefit approach what they're using. There are lots of different ways of doing it. Some ways are better than others. And I'm wondering whether maybe that's something that should be discussed at a future meeting of this committee.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More to consider for possible inclusion in some way or other in the - in our recommendations. More discussion. All right, I heard Doug say something that I wonder if there might be further discussion about.

And that is Doug reminded us that in the old era it was only once every ten years that this kind of political problem was generated. And now it's constant. Now what's the future of this? Perhaps we should also be thinking about what does it mean to have a Census Bureau that is under continuous attacks.

Barbara Anderson: Well I agree with Steve and with Doug that they needed to - or it would have been wise, I'd say if they really looked at the questions that people find very irritating like the utilities questions. I think I said at an earlier meeting my family was an ACS household about a week ago.

Not a week ago, a year ago. And I filled it out on the Internet. And I know anecdotally and I think it's probably supported by the data if we actually got the scores for all the questions, which I don't think we ever did as far as I know - at least I never did even though I asked various times.

And the things that were the most irritating were the detailed questions about exactly how much you spent on this, that and the other thing in the last month for which you either had to spend forever going through bills or you did what I think I did and most - you just made guesses.

And I think those were bad questions. I think they're very irritating. I about went through the ceiling over them and I think that those are the questions that ACS needs to think about. What do they really need to know about this and what can they ask about in a reasonably valid and reliable way.

And those appeared nowhere as far as I could tell in the consideration for modification or elimination.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Yes.

Woman: I had a bit of a side bar conversation with Lisa. And I think the Bureau understands the issues that there was a problem. So I think what Barbara said earlier that we should wait and see what comes out of the OMB.

And see what the recommendations might be and what might be the most appropriate way to follow up after that. It may be the same. It might not be the same.

But I get a sense that it might be helpful for us to follow up and then we can formulate a very informed response and think about how we move forward with - I think with Peter mentioning about the review process.

And how it was conducted and how we could avoid something like that in the future where we could have more input into that process earlier. So I guess that's - I think it's probably worth wait and see based on what I heard. But I could be wrong.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: I don't want us to forget the question that Ken Simonson asked of Jim Treat about seeing something - about these complaints, right?

Ken Simonson: Yes, Ken Simonson. I did have a conversation with the respondent advocate for ACS during the break and he said he would look into what he could provide.

He said that he gets a very small percentages of the complaint or comment letters that others go from Congressional offices to the Office of Congressional Affairs but most respondent contacts are handled at the District level of the Census.

And he said he would find out if he could whether there's any kind of compilation of those sorts of comments. So I do expect to hear back from him.

He also mentioned that there's a respondent advocate for business surveys also and I hope to meet her soon and can report to this committee on what sorts of issues there may be regarding friction over the business surveys. Because I think that could be the next thing we hear from Congressional offices about.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thanks. That would be extremely useful. Yes. We can have Barbara's utility anecdote and some hard evidence from the compilations. Bob.

Bob Hummer: Yes, Bob Hummer. It seems like to me there's kind of two related recommendations that may come out of this ACS discussion. One is waiting for the recommendations for the OMB like we all talked about.

But a second is a potential session at one of our next meetings on this kind general issue as well regarding how questions in various surveys are either added or removed.

And the procedures by which that's done, how that's worked in the past, how we can weigh in on how that could work better in the future? So we've a lot of expertise on survey research and these kind of processes.

And so I think the more general issue is something I think I'd like to see on the table given the procedural issues here that I think both Barbara and Steve really brought to the forefront.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thanks. That would be another candidate for information request to be submitted as part of our recommendations. Peter Glynn.

Peter Glynn: Yes, this may be taking us a little bit further of field but it does seem like there's many electronic mechanisms or digital mechanisms available these days to try to understand which questions are causing problems to respondents.

And for example you could look at how long it takes for people to actually input, you know, what the delay is and how long it takes somebody to actually respond to a give question on the Internet form.

Or you can also add to a certain subsample, you can ask questions at the end of the form about were there any questions on this form you found particularly irritating. I mean there are zillions of things that you can do in the Internet space that you couldn't do conventionally.

And I guess I'm wondering whether the Census Bureau has considered adding those kinds of things to the - maybe it's already doing data collection of this kind.

Tommy Wright: I think I'm correct in saying that there are efforts underway along those lines and it might be good to ask for some - I think we use the word, para-data sometimes but in terms of face to face.

But we are also collecting some of that information. Might be good to ask for a report particularly with the ACS.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: So again, this is the prime candidate for inclusion in this document with our recommendations. Thanks. More. Dan

Dan Atkins: Just to let you know that when we are ready to move on to another topic I have another topic - but I don't want to interrupt this.

Jack Dangermond: So can I clarify, is somebody going to write these questions out or are we going to get a transcription of this session and then abstract the questions out like we did last time? I just want to not get these questions lost.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Why don't we do two things. One is each of you who has made these wonderful comments write them up, we're talking two or three sentences for each.

And then concomitantly I imagine that we will receive as we did last time, the transcript of this session and then that transcript will be useful to us just in case we forgot anything.

Jack Dangermond: And just so like we did last time, structuring the question like your comment just right now is trying to abstract it into what would like the Census Bureau number one to do and then what would like the Census Bureau to report back to us in the next session.

That's what was so remarkable and effective about this meeting, is that there were real questions that they could provide real answers. So for example we would like a process with better transparency, Steven, to address that issue, right.

Or we would like to have, Peter, a cost benefit assessment process for evaluating every question across the whole business. So we're - we'd like to see a presentation about how in the future.

And perhaps regressing on the past you would evaluate different questions without going back and hearing about well we have our Congressional things and then we have - so in other words a transparency process.

I don't even know what the words are but I think I'm - those would just simply be suggestions in those two categories. How do you do it? And then, here's our

recommendation and we'd like - or like we did this time, we're worried about the IT mechanical stuff and would like you to do blah, blah, blah.

And I'm with you Doug. These guys are under severe pressure. And they're our best shot for getting research data, right. If you thought of us as the board and they're running like crazy trying to make these tradeoffs. That's kind of the cartoon that I have in my head.

They're being diplomatic but they're doing their best. They hear us but they've got this looming thing that they have to manage. That's sort of my interpretation broadly of it. They're running a business in a way and trying to make the trades in a way that keeps the whole thing afloat.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Barb Buttenfield

Barb Buttenfield: Just following on from Jack is saying, I'm looking at the standard operating procedures, we could couch this in terms of Section A where it says the committee will address Census policies, research and methodology test operations.

And so and other activities to ascertain needs and best practices to improve census, surveys, operations and other programs. So instead of coming at it from a confrontational position we can say this is in our scope of operations and we want to help you.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Anything else on this topic before we move on? Dan Atkins.

Dan Atkins: I have three things briefly. In the spirit of critiquing this meeting and talking about future agenda items. First I would just underscore what Tommy Wright said about the value of conversations from these kinds of committees.

I ran a very similar group under FACA at the National Science Foundation and it was kind of like, you know, I was also the director of the activity that was being, you know, reviewed and just the conversations with these experts and many of the colleagues in the world was really useful to me.

And a lot of the hallway conversations and then I don't know if I was supposed to or not, but I would occasionally just call them up and use them as a sounding board for things. So you can't underestimate I think the power of that kind of out of formality kind of interaction.

We - I think we're all blown away by the 2020 update and the obvious chemistry of the team involved. I guess I'd like to think that we had something to do with both the appointment of that leadership team and so forth.

But now that we at least have - we have a framework and we know who's in charge and we have a deeper understanding of what's going on and the systemic issues, I think we should have a 2020 update every meeting.

And I would encourage those doing that to not just make it one way, you know, here's where we've gone but try to use this board to - with some targeted questions or problems or issues that they have, you know, propose things to us.

So I would like to see a 2020 interaction kind of a design review, with particularly targeted questions for us as a regular agenda item. I would also personally be curious at some time in the future if the Bureau could give us a little presentation on their educational outreach.

Or engagement or the use of Census resources, you know, in support of education across the whole spectrum. I think I would be personally interested in that and I think, you know, despite the experience that Barbara had with her driver.

I think people ask me when I tell them that I'm on this board, you know, why are doing that and what's the Census do besides count heads every ten years. So and I've learned it does a lot more that could be very useful. I guess I'll just say one more thing. I hope this doesn't sound petty.

You know, we haven't had our usual discussion about travel issues and I'm not bringing that up but I think maybe if - and this is not anything personal for (Sara) or anything else - if we could have a practice of an official of the Census Bureau kind of serving us as a host to get us in and get us out.

I mean we had this incident yesterday of the bus not being there. And uncertainty about whether there would be a bus. And then we had this morning the line being blocked by an individual who didn't know where they were going for a long time.

And just whether there's anybody - if there was somebody else there they could just kind of shepherd things around a little more efficiently. I don't know whether anybody agrees with me or not but I think that would be a nice practice if we could do that.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: I'm very glad you brought that up Dan, because one of the things that I wanted to ask the committee was following up on the experience at the September meeting. So the first question is, were there any problems with any aspect of the travel arrangements? Barbara Anderson.

Barbara Anderson: Yes. I got this email on Friday that it hadn't been approved yet, and the thing it said, not done 48 hours in advance that the airline will cancel your reservation. And then I thought well it will be taken care of by early Monday, don't panic.

But then I spent most of Monday morning calling people and that was because there were internal Census Bureau procedures that had changed and on the AdTrav profile the person they had to contact at the Census Bureau was wrong.

And I contacted that person who said, well kind of not my responsibility, you're not one of my people. So I went through all these various people and finally someone intervened and got it approved. And AdTrav's person I talked to said, well this bothersome email shouldn't have gone to me.

But if it hadn't gone to me I think I wouldn't have had a ticket when I showed up at the airport on Wednesday. And I suggested to people and I was very happy to meet Thomas White today.

And I suggested to him that they go back, and since these have changed and apparently the contact person has changed that they go back and look at all of our AdTrav profiles to make sure the right contact person is there. And at AdTrav someone said to me well who is your contact person.

I said, heck if I know. But I came - I was really worried about showing up at the airport on Wednesday and not having a ticket, which actually came very close to happening.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More comments? More stories? Noel and then Peter.

Noel Cressie: I come a fairly long way to get here and it works just fine when I find another way to pay for my ticket and sometimes it's frequent flyer miles and sometimes it's somebody else who gets me here and I make a little short hop to Washington D.C.

But I know in September I'm going to - as I've been doing this for four years and I've cost the Census Bureau very little money, but I know in September that I'm going to hit

their budget because I have no other way of getting here except asking for an international ticket from the Census Bureau.

Tommy, I'm putting - and Sara, I'm you on notice that for this and I do not want to show up at the airport not knowing whether I have a ticket from Sydney to Washington D.C.

I need a ticket in my hand with sufficient notice and I just want to put that on record. There is an issue coming up and we're going to stay on it. Or I won't be here. And I'd really like to be here.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Before going to Peter. Our lunches have arrived. And so you can feel free to get up and get your box but we can continue the conversation. Peter.

Peter Glynn: I'm going to have to leave in a few minutes in order to get my plane out of Dulles. But I want to say that I found the last couple of days very interesting. I've enjoyed working with all of you and I look forward to more interaction with this committee in the months and years ahead.

A couple of things from yesterday. One in the - actually a couple of things in the big data area. So one thing that would help me a lot as a member of this committee.

And as a member of the working group in the big data area is understanding a bit better exactly what the objectives are of the Census Bureau in the big data space relative to the Bureau's long term strategic plan.

And for example, the question of what the research agenda should be for the center and the potential big data space. And that really should be informed to some degree about what the longer term objectives of the Bureau are.

And so it would help me at personal level in terms of being able to contribute to this discussion to know what exactly the Bureau's longer term objectives are particularly in the context of business data. What is it that the Census Bureau sees its role as being ten years, 15 years from now in that space?

That will inform a lot of things that I think Bureau will need to do in the big data space in terms of how Census data gets integrated with business data that may be acquired from other sources like credit card companies and so forth.

The second thing that I guess wanted to just raise that I was also very interested and excited by the things that the Bureau is doing in preparation for the 2020 Census.

I guess I also take the view that software solutions and various types of applications are changing rapidly, devices are changing rapidly, functionality of devices are changing a lot, I understand the value add that you get - the utility that you get from not getting to aligned too early with specific software and hardware solutions.

On the other hand I think if those things don't get locked down, you know, at some point appropriate, being able to roll out things for the 2020 Census with a high degree of reliability in terms of field use and so forth, that can also be - raise a different set of issues.

So, you know, I'm sure that the Census Bureau is thinking through this issue with a - in a lot of detail that I wouldn't be - I mean I think the question of not locking things down too early has to be balanced against the question of you do need to lock things down early enough that you have a highly reliable solution when it rolls out to enumerators and so forth.

Tommy Wright: Tommy Wright. I'm embarrassed to apologize yet again on these travel issues. I did some travel myself both in the country and outside of the country and well as my 35 plus colleagues. We also are able to bring people in from California.

We're working out with someone coming in - a researcher is coming in from India as well as Israel. I don't know what to say here with the travel office. We do have an administrative person in my own division who works individually with people and it seems to go all right.

I would like to approach the conference office on the behalf of members on the committee but you know we have been down this road before. Is there something very clear that I could communicate with them?

Part of the strategy I think before was to take maybe to have fewer people in the process of making your travel arrangements. That is having each of you and Kim's in the room - and having each of you in direct contact with AdTrav.

And I don't know if fewer people in the kitchen but that was the philosophy there. But I deeply regret this. I don't want to - I don't know if want to ask you to collect the list of - I would like to do something but Noel is raising his hand.

Noel Cressie: Yes, Noel Cressie. I drafted something that talked - followed up in an idea of Jack Dangermond's to have a concierge who would - we would simply go to when we're having troubles. Somebody who will be a go to person and I use Sara this time around and she did a great job.

But I'm not sure if that's her job. So I asked Sara to guarantee that I could have a hotel room this evening as well though I didn't have to get on another plane after such a long flight and she did a great job. And I'm not sure it is her job but I simply had to have somebody who could look after it.

I had no time to make five emails, which is what were involved in the previous time when I wanted an extra night's accommodation. And our Chair got involved in it and she was pleading with other people but (Sara) did a great job.

And I think that notion of a go to person to simply look after us works really well. The issue with the Census Bureau, I have found is that people feel that something is not their responsibility and so the hand off is really poor.

Tommy Wright: Thank you. Barbara.

Barbara Anderson: I totally agree. Monday Sara was not in, which is not a problem. She has a right to take a day off. But I went through all these people who thought were the right people to call who basically said, not my responsibility and they could have cared less.

And Thomas White finally came in and made it work. And it was - he was great but it was extremely frustrating to be not knowing what in the world to do.

Dan Atkins: I guess one rhetorical question I would raise Tommy is when the extent to which the travel policies in the Bureau are creations of the Bureau itself versus outside and the reason I raise that question is that I've worked with many other federal agencies and been an officer at one.

And I've never found travel restrictions as inflexible as here. And so I just - maybe somebody ought to look sometime - you know, how practices get established. Nobody where they came from and they just keep perpetuating even though they're not actually strictly required.

I mean case in point is for various reasons this time because I had the requirement to be in Florida and I had a - I booked a three legged flight and asked for reimbursement for

half of that, which was considerably less than a round trip ticket that the Bureau would have paid.

But was told that because I didn't go through the travel people I can't get reimbursed more than \$100. So I know in other agencies they would have said, oh, that's - they would have reimbursed the half and be thankful that I saved them money.

So I just raise that question as something that you might want to look into.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: More comments? More discussions? In addition to the sections of the recommendations that we've already discussed I wonder if there should be one commending the Census Bureau for the update on the decennial plans? Could we have a couple of volunteers to draft it? Maybe Jack and Dan?

You'll do it? Jack Levis will do it. Fabulous. Thank you. Thank you. More comments? Questions?

Ken Simonson: Well I certainly want to express the - I'm sorry. Ken Simonson. My own appreciation and I know it's shared by the rest of the committee for the fabulous job you've done, Willie of making sure that all of us have a chance to express ourselves.

And also working so closely with people in the Census Bureau to try to get them to be as responsive as possible to the concerns of this committee. I think you've really set a high standard as Chair. Thank you.

Guillermina (Willie) Jasso: Thank you so very, very much Ken and everyone. This committee is fabulous and every person who sits on the committee is fabulous. And so you make it a joy for me to work with you and I know it's a joy that Barbara will experience.

And I will be very happy in September to be somewhere in that part of the room and Barbara will be here and the committee will thrive. Thank you so much.

Tommy Wright: We're about to end the meeting with food before you unless there are additional comments. There's just a reminder, the September - the meeting in the Fall is September 17 and 18. Thanks to everyone. Sara and Kim, communications.

Directors of the IT, both the conference and travel office we will visit that yet again and of course all the presenters and for sure each and every one of you. Thank you very much. The meeting is ended.

END