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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 7. The Coverage Improvement Program

(Page numbers here omit the chapter prefix, 7 - , which appears as part of the number of individual pages. The prefix indicates the location of the material in the final consolidated edition of the **Procedural History**.)

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	Page
<b>Background</b> .....	1
Definition .....	1
How Coverage Is Measured .....	1
Significance .....	1
Development During the 1960's .....	1
<b>Program</b> .....	1
Initial Steps .....	1
Subsequent Developments in the Program .....	3
Program Development .....	3
Steps Designed To Affect the Climate of Opinion .....	3
Changes in Census-Taking Procedures .....	4
Post-Enumeration Procedures .....	6
Program Changes .....	6
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	8
<b>Appendix</b>	
1970 Community Education Program .....	9

# Chapter 7. THE COVERAGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

## BACKGROUND

### Definition

A major objective of a census is to cover or count the entire population under study. The significant questions about coverage in a population and housing census are (1) whether the scope of the census includes all places where people are found, (2) whether information is obtained from every such place, and (3) whether complete rosters of persons are reported for each place. While the following and other discussions of census coverage in the United States focus on underenumeration, overenumeration is also a problem. Coverage improvement efforts are intended to prevent multiple counting as well as to avoid missing persons or housing units.

### How Coverage Is Measured

There are several techniques available for measuring the completeness of census counts. These may be classified broadly as (1) techniques which involve case-by-case matching with the results of sample surveys or with administrative records and (2) demographic analyses which involve the calculation of expected populations based on such data as those for births, deaths, and migration. In 1950 and 1960 all of these procedures were employed, but the currently accepted conclusion is that demographic analysis provides the best estimate of net coverage error. Accordingly, in 1970, demographic analysis was used almost exclusively to arrive at net estimates of coverage error. Research indicated that around 97.5 percent of the population was covered in 1970, or slightly more than in 1960. Estimates of error by age, sex, and race include both coverage and response errors--i.e., errors due to misreporting. These estimates indicate important differences in these categories with respect to the net census error; namely, relatively greater undercoverage of Negroes than of whites, particularly in the age span between 20 and 40, and greater undercoverage of males than of females, particularly of Negro males.

### Significance

Aside from the Census Bureau's own continuing commitment to coverage improvement, new pressures for better census counts were building in the 1960's. Census results are the basis for political redistricting, now often involving counts for areas as small as city blocks. In the past, equality in population size among the several districts of a particular redistricting plan generally was not emphasized, but, as a result of the Supreme Court's one-man-one-vote decision in 1962 and subsequent court decisions stemming from it, equal size became a prime consideration and thus greatly increased

the need to accumulate population counts for all types of areas. Census counts also are increasingly used in formulas for allocations of funds and other resources to States, communities, and neighborhoods. The counts are, for example, an important component of the formula for the general revenue-sharing program.

### Development During the 1960's

Throughout the 1960's, there were reports of increasing resistance on the part of the public to being interviewed, and growing hostility toward government was evidenced by the urban disturbances in 1968. As the time of the census approached, it appeared possible that organized resistance against it might materialize. Another development during the 1960's which affected the direction of the Bureau's planning was a decline in the proportion of people who traditionally have held enumerator positions; namely, well educated women, ordinarily not in the labor force, who were willing to take temporary enumerator assignments in their own and other neighborhoods. Changes in living patterns appeared to reduce the number of persons at home during daylight and evening hours (when interviews normally are conducted); and of those persons at home, fewer seemed willing to admit strangers.

In summary, neither historical evidence nor current prospects provided reason to believe that the requirements for data could be met without new and more intensive coverage improvement efforts.

## PROGRAM

### Initial Steps

By 1966, when the analysis of the 1960 census results by age, sex, and race were completed and accepted, two coverage improvement methods had already been incorporated in the design of the 1970 census, both of them to be employed in major urban communities and surrounding areas. These areas constituted a geographically small portion of the country, but about three-fifths of the population lived in them.

Use of the mail, rather than a personal visit by an enumerator, was tried first. Its desirability was enhanced further by the preparation of a mailing list in the form of a control register which, from the point of view of coverage improvement, is probably the more significant step.

**Step 1. Use of mail.**--The first coverage improvement method was the use of the mails for both sending and returning questionnaires in cities and their surrounding

areas. Tests during the 1960's showed that the great majority of the questionnaires were returned within a few days of the census date, reducing the number of personal visits necessary and, theoretically, reducing the loss of coverage due to movement of the population during the enumeration period.

Mails were used in four pretests and two dress rehearsals during the 1960's with varying but encouraging results. (See chapter 2 for descriptions of all the pretests and dress rehearsals of the 1970 census.) For a census dress rehearsal in Dane County, Wis., in the spring of 1968, 90 percent of the questionnaires were mailed back within 10 days of the census date whereas in Trenton, N.J., in the fall of 1968, approximately 65 percent of the questionnaires were mailed back within 10 days. The experience in pretests and dress rehearsals, in which the potential use of public information media was more restricted and the communities' stakes lower than during a decennial census, indicated the high potential of a mail-out/mail-back technique in 1970, which was in fact realized.

Another gain from use of the mails was that it permitted enumerator efforts to be concentrated where they were needed--in areas where undercoverage was likely to be high and/or response inadequate. Those households willing and able to complete questionnaires were counted at comparatively little cost. The savings, both in money and in available manpower, could then be focused on areas and population groups where enumeration was most difficult.

The 1965 Cleveland, Ohio, test census illustrates how personal visits by enumerators were concentrated in areas where they were needed. An area comprising 10 percent of Cleveland's population was identified as being potentially difficult to enumerate on the basis of 1960 census experience and discussions with local officials. Mail-back returns from the neighborhoods comprising that area were lower than for the city as a whole--approximately 60 percent as compared with about 80 percent for the rest of the city. In addition, the proportion of the partially or faultily completed questionnaires was higher in the neighborhoods from which there was a low mail-back rate. Thus, enumerator followup efforts could be concentrated in the difficult-to-enumerate areas.

Step 2. Use of address registers.--The second coverage improvement method already incorporated in the design of the 1970 census by 1966 was the use of address registers in certain portions of the country. In past censuses, enumerators were assigned pieces of territory delineated on a map and instructed to canvass the areas fully. Control on the completeness of their operation was not fully effective. The address-register approach involved giving the enumerator a list of addresses which he had to account for--i.e., for each address he had to have a completed questionnaire or specifically state that the address was not residential. This list, which provided the means for tight control of the enumeration, was constructed and augmented in several stages, as explained in chapters 3 and 4.

Two other coverage improvement procedures employed in the 1970 census were made possible by the

existence of an address register and can be seen as outgrowths or refinements of it. Both were techniques for adding addresses, based on information from two additional sources--the respondent and the enumerator.

a. Item A check: householders' contributions to the address register.--Item A on the 1970 census questionnaire read as follows:

<b>A. How many living quarters, occupied and vacant, are at this address?</b>	
<input type="radio"/>	One
<input type="radio"/>	2 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	3 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	4 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	5 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	6 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	7 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	8 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	9 apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	10 or more apartments or living quarters
<input type="radio"/>	This is a mobile home or trailer

Each respondent was expected to answer this question about how many living quarters, occupied and vacant, were at the address where he lived. Difficult-to-detect housing units tend to be in smaller buildings which do not have clearly defined, separate, numbered apartments. The item A check, therefore, was confined to addresses with fewer than 10 listings on the address register. For such addresses, a comparison was made between the number of census listings of units or apartments in the register and the number reported by occupants in item A of their census questionnaires. If any respondent at the address reported more units than were listed in the register, the enumerator was instructed to find out how many units there actually were. Any units which an enumerator discovered had not been in the address register were added and enumerated.

b. Precanvass: enumerators' contribution to the address register.--As a preliminary step, Bureau staff members who were responsible for the census in selected inner-city areas were instructed to identify enumeration districts likely to have buildings which had been "converted" so that two or more households occupied space originally designed for one. In neighborhoods where houses and apartments are occupied by more households than they were designed for, census population and housing-unit counts tend to be incomplete unless additional care is taken. Enumerators conducted a precavass of these neighborhoods ahead of the census. The precavass involved a systematic search for any units which were not shown in the address registers. Housing units identified in the precavass were added to the address register and questionnaires were mailed to those units.

Evaluation of steps 1 and 2.--Although the evaluation program included measurement of completeness of the housing-unit counts in the 1970 census, there was no direct effort made to measure the specific effects on coverage of the use of mails and an address register. Evidence from the pretests indicated that these procedures improved one of the two components of undercoverage--missing the places where people live. Roughly speaking, about half of the persons estimated as

having been omitted from the 1960 census were not counted because their housing unit was not found by the enumerator. The new procedures were effective in finding some of these places. The other half of the persons were omitted either because they were not reported in the places they stayed or because they did not stay anywhere that the census was taken. (It might be noted that these two coverage improvement methods--use of mails and an address register--were not expected to be particularly effective in reducing age, sex, or color differentials in underenumeration, principally because they were not specifically designed to find persons in households which were only partially enumerated or in places where people generally do not stay.) The effects of the two additional inputs to the address register--respondents' replies to the question about numbers of units at the address and the enumerators' prec canvass--were evaluated in 1970. Measures of their effectiveness in adding housing units and persons who would otherwise have been missed in the 1970 census will be published in the evaluation reports on the census.

### Subsequent Developments in the Program

As the first operational directive of the 1970 census, a committee and two task forces on "difficult-to enumerate groups" were established in August 1966. One task force was given responsibility for continuing "evaluations of available data to improve knowledge of sources and areas of underenumeration" and the other for developing procedures for coverage improvement.

Having reviewed the history of coverage improvement efforts and the expected effect of the steps already adopted, and a number of hypotheses about causes of underenumeration, the committee and task forces developed a diversified program within a projected budget of about \$12 million. A number of features of the 1970 census program, described in detail in other chapters of this history, were incorporated initially and principally because of their potential contribution to coverage improvement. Those features were incorporated in census-taking procedures (chapter 5), the public information program (chapter 6), and the evaluation and research program (chapter 14).

The broadest possible approach to coverage improvement was employed, including activities ahead of the census itself, surrounding and within the census-taking period, and even some operations previously associated only with post-census evaluation. It included the Bureau's own activities as well as those of other Government agencies and private groups. Some of the activities could and did provide measurable coverage improvement. The effect of others was not measured, and in some instances could not be.

Following the steps which have already been described, nine more were adopted. They can be classified according to (1) the kind of coverage improvement effort planned or made; (2) where the effort was made; and (3) whether it was a general or focused effort. Under these general headings, the particular efforts described in the remainder of the chapter can be outlined as follows:

The kinds of efforts include those which affected the climate of opinion (to be described in steps 3 to

5); those which affected census-taking procedures (to be described in steps 6 to 9); and those which were employed as correctives for errors in preliminary counts (to be described in steps 10 and 11). Two programs were nationwide (steps 3 and 11). Others were designed for specific kinds of areas: the inner-city portions of large cities (steps 6 to 9) and predominantly rural portions of Southern States (step 10).

General coverage improvement programs were efforts to find any housing unit or person that might have been missed (steps 3 to 7, 10, and 11). Focused efforts were pinpointed to find members of particular groups which had a higher-than-average probability of being missed in a census (steps 8 and 9).

### Program Development

Under the assumption that the use of the address register and mail-out/mail-back procedures would improve coverage of housing units and households in the cities and surrounding areas, the committee and task forces turned their attention to rural areas (with the outcome described later in this chapter) and toward the other component of coverage; that is, persons who were unreported in or unattached to any enumerated places. In the effort to develop techniques to improve coverage of such persons, the committee enlisted the consulting services of a community relations specialist who worked throughout the planning period with the Bureau staff.

Starting with the kinds of hypothetical reasons for underenumeration which might be controlled most easily, the Census Bureau attempted to eliminate misunderstanding of census questions as a cause of underreporting. At the same time, an effort was made to deal with the possibility that social distance between enumerators and respondents might be contributing to underenumeration. In a field test in a small area of Philadelphia in September 1967 (see chapter 2), enumerators, selected principally from the neighborhood itself, were trained particularly to understand the importance of a complete census count and were given a separate coverage improvement questionnaire to use in every household, whether or not a questionnaire had been mailed back. They were paid hourly rates rather than piece rates to encourage them to take the time necessary to do a thorough job.

In debriefing meetings, enumerators agreed that their respondents understood that they were expected to report lodgers, transients, and visitors as well as all family members; but respondents who did not do so were motivated by fear or suspicion not to report anyone they wanted to hide from the landlord, the authorities, their neighbors, or their creditors. Enumerators' best efforts failed to convince such respondents that information given in the census is held confidential and cannot be used to hurt anyone. Subsequently, greater emphasis in the program was put on trying to affect the climate of opinion in which enumeration occurs.

### Steps Designed To Affect the Climate of Opinion

Step 3. Special public information program.--Traditionally, there has been a large-scale public information

program for each decennial census. In the 1960 Censuses of Population and Housing, the public information program employed a wide variety of media; e.g., magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and leaflets. The 1970 program was as extensive but also included some special, intensive efforts to reach people likely to be missed. Leaflets and brochures (described in chapter 6) were written by and for Spanish-speaking and Negro groups. More than a year ahead of the census the Public Information Office, as part of its contribution to coverage improvement, encouraged radio programs, articles, and editorials which appealed for group and self-interest in obtaining a complete census count. Another innovation undertaken to improve coverage was an extensive word-of-mouth campaign which involved Census Bureau staff members participating in meetings, conferences, and exhibits held by minority groups.

Step 4. Employment of community educators.--To employ the word-of-mouth campaign most effectively, the Bureau also organized a staff with knowledge of and ties to the inner city communities where the problems of conducting the census had been most severe. The principal job of these people was to identify effective local leaders ahead of the census date, explain the uses of census statistics, convince them on the confidentiality issue, and enlist their advocacy at the time of the census. They also served as recruiters and public information liaison staff.

The idea of employing community educators was initially tested in the Philadelphia pretest. Community education was a last-minute effort there, but staff enthusiasm for its potential advantages kept alive the proposal which had initially been made by the consultant. For the decennial census, a timetable of activities for the positions was prepared to provide proper lead time and integration of community education efforts into the other census programs.

With one exception, community educators were Negro (13), Spanish American (5), and Chinese (2) people. Their coordinator was based in Washington, D.C., and the headquarters cities of the educators were as follows:

<u>Regional office</u>	<u>Number of educators assigned</u>
Total	<u>21</u>
Atlanta	1
Boston	1
Chicago	2
Dallas	3
Denver	1
Detroit	2
Los Angeles	3
New York	2
Philadelphia	1
St. Paul	1
San Francisco	4

Step 5. Involvement of other Federal agencies and local governments.--At the national level, the Census Bureau met with other Federal agencies which had local programs, such as the Office of Economic Opportunity Community Action Agencies and the Housing and Urban

Development Model Cities Program. The Bureau asked that local representatives and grantees of these agencies (whose budgets and program locations were frequently allocated on the basis of census statistics) advocate cooperation with census takers in their own interest. With the assistance of the Office of Management and Budget, regional interagency meetings were also held.

Assistance in recruitment of enumerators was sought at the national and local level from employment and job training agencies--those already described above and others. As one result, the Manpower and Career Development Agency of the New York City government recruited and trained many people, 114 of whom were subsequently employed as enumerators. In some places, people on welfare were encouraged to apply for enumerator positions with an agreement that their welfare eligibility would not be jeopardized.

Evaluation of steps 3, 4, and 5.--The efforts involved in steps 3 and 4 were not measured in terms of cost, nor can the effectiveness of the programs be measured. The budget for step 4, the community education program, was \$500,000, but not all of that amount was spent. The final report of the coordinator of the community education program, which is appended to this chapter, describes its organization, operation, and accomplishments, as well as some of its shortcomings. Overall, the community education program was considered valuable.

### Changes in Census-Taking Procedures

General efforts.--Almost half of the coverage improvement budget, and the largest single portion of it, was allocated to changes in census staffing and procedures employed in 45 selected inner-city district offices in the cities listed in appendix A of chapter 5 under the heading of "centralized." The staffing and procedural changes made in these places are described in chapter 5 as "centralized procedures." Many of these changes were initially planned and budgeted as part of the coverage improvement program. Their specific objective was to reduce the undercoverage among Negroes and other minorities. The areas selected for special procedures were, therefore, predominantly minority neighborhoods. The following steps were taken in those neighborhoods:

Step 6. Enumerator recruitment.--Efforts were made to induce neighborhood residents to become enumerators. In addition to the efforts of community educators and outside groups to involve communities in census taking, the Census Bureau took two specific steps to encourage local job applicants:

a. The selection aid tests for enumerators were revised to put less emphasis on educational attainment and more on learning potential. In the process the tests were made more specifically job-oriented.

b. A high school diploma was not required in these areas for employment of persons who could pass the test and were otherwise qualified.

Step 7. District office staffing.--In past censuses, it had taken longer to complete the census in the cities and neighborhoods selected for "centralized" procedures than in other places. Efforts were made to complete the work

in the selected district offices more expeditiously. The rationale was that a relatively short census would provide lower risk of missing or double-counting people who move within the census period. Moreover, staff morale and effectiveness have traditionally suffered from prolonged enumeration. The devices employed were:

a. The workload per district office was reduced by about half by setting up about twice as many offices as would otherwise be required on the basis of expected population counts.

b. The 45 "centralized" district offices were headed by Census Bureau permanent professional staff members who were likely to be better motivated and trained at the outset than temporary local employees.

c. Crew leaders in these areas were expected to supervise about half as many enumerators as other crew leaders.

d. Enumerators' assignments were smaller than assignments in other offices.

e. Higher piece rates than paid elsewhere were established as incentives to complete the fieldwork.

Evaluation of steps 6 and 7.--In general, the 1970 census was not completed more rapidly nor with less staff turnover in the large cities than in past censuses. By that measure steps 6 and 7 cannot be seen as successful. If, however, conditions for census-taking were worse than they have been historically, these steps, augmented by others described in chapter 5 which were taken in response to the slowed rate of census completion, may have prevented even slower progress and more staff turnover. Consequently, these steps may have helped prevent deterioration of coverage.

Focused efforts.--None of the methods for coverage improvement thus far described was directed toward improving the census counts for the age, sex, and color groups traditionally subject to census inaccuracies. Throughout the planning period, however, a number of direct approaches for improved enumeration of young men, particularly Negroes, were considered and investigated.

What these approaches had in common was reliance on an independent outside source of information which could be checked against census rosters. If there was proof or a strong presumption that persons on an independent list really existed and had not been enumerated, they could be added to the census.

Of the many kinds of record checks considered, some were never tried; for example, the use of Selective Service rolls. Some were tried and found deficient; for example, the use in 1967 of police records in Gretna, La., as described in chapter 2, or the use of lists of unemployed or job-seeking youths which was tried in the New Haven, Conn., test, also in 1967. Two kinds of record checks, however, were employed in the 1970 census on the basis of promise demonstrated in tests:

Step 8. Use of Post Office change-of-address information--movers operation.--Pretests in Louisville and New Haven indicated potential coverage improvement of young

men as a result of checking lists of people who submitted change-of-address cards to the Post Office just ahead of and during the census enumeration. Chapter 5 describes the procedure as it was employed in 1970.

Briefly, the procedures included checking the Post Office change-of-address cards against the census rosters to see whether the movers were enumerated; an enumerator visit to the new addresses for persons not already enumerated; and, finally, the addition to the census rolls of persons who were not previously listed.

Step 9. Augmented "missed persons" campaign.--At the time of the New Haven pretest and again in a separate New York City test, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor conducted what it called "interviews in casual settings." These settings were street corners, bars, pool halls, barber shops, and the like. By prior arrangement in the New Haven pretest, the Census Bureau checked the names and addresses given by persons interviewed in these settings and estimated what proportion of them were enumerated. The results indicated that the method provided some potential coverage improvement. Consequently, in connection with the Trenton dress rehearsal, a group which had received private funding to try methods of improving cooperation with census taking was asked to provide names and addresses of persons it had contacted, principally in informal settings. Again, some potential coverage improvement of the target group of young men was indicated. The basis for any success of the operation was thought to be the relatively large number of persons identified, the newness of the list which included only persons currently in the area, and mostly the unofficial auspices of the project.

Accordingly, the program was described to groups which offered to cooperate with the Census Bureau in 1970 as a potential contribution they might make toward achieving a complete count of their community or constituency. At the time of the census several hundred thousand cards were distributed in the cities in which intensive coverage improvement efforts were being made. These were captioned "Please Make Sure I Am Counted in the Census" and had spaces to enter name, address, sex, race, age, and marital status. They were printed in Spanish and Chinese as well as in English.

Evaluation of steps 8 and 9.--The records check procedures were not as successful during the census as pretests indicated they might be. Both procedures required attention during the busiest time of census-taking and, to be successful, both required screening large lists of names. Efforts to limit the workload resulting from the Post Office change-of-address cards and to include the field check with the followup enumeration apparently resulted in a relatively low yield of additional names from the movers check.

Only 324 of the several hundred thousand special "missed person" cards were returned to census offices. The success of such a campaign appeared to depend on close liaison between the census staff and the groups who planned to conduct it. However, these groups appeared to have only peripheral interest in its success.

## Post-Enumeration Procedures

In the absence of knowledge about specific areas where coverage was poor, an assumption was made that these were generally places where enumeration was most difficult, i.e., the large cities. There was, however, evidence of undercoverage in rural areas and, from the start, the program included some special rural coverage improvement efforts.

There also was hope that several of the general programs might have more-widespread impact than just in the cities. For example, public information materials were distributed generally, certain meetings and conventions which Bureau staff attended had rural membership or participants, and the Department of Agriculture Extension Service was among the Federal agencies offering to help with census taking.

The two programs which were specifically not urban-oriented were the Post Office and vacancy checks. Both were undertaken on a sample basis after the regular census field activities were largely completed. They provided estimates of proportions of missed housing units or missed households. On the basis of these estimates, the population count for a number of enumeration districts in the United States was adjusted by computer imputation. Characteristics of persons added in this manner were those of enumerated persons.

Step 10. Post-enumeration Post Office check (PEPOC).--Analysis of 1960 census results indicated that the rate at which housing units were missed was higher in rural areas and very large cities than in towns and small cities. There was also evidence that, as a region, the South received poorer coverage than other sections of the country. The hypothesis was that in rural areas of the South there were relatively more inaccessible housing units than in other parts of the country--small buildings far from mapped roads or on paths or trails which do not conform to any regular geographic patterns. The initial coverage improvement program, therefore, included a general plan designated as the post-enumeration Post Office check. (See chapters 5, 8, and 14.)

The check was made in those portions of 16 Southern States in which the census was conducted by the conventional method--that is, enumerators canvassing their districts. In addition to filling the appropriate questionnaire for each unit, the enumerator was instructed to fill a special card for every unit. These cards were sent to the local post offices where the letter carriers were requested to list any addresses they thought enumerators had missed. A sample of the addresses thus listed was checked to see whether they were missed by the enumerator or already included in the census. On the basis of that check, an estimate of the proportion of missed units was made.

Step 11. National vacancy check.--Among the coverage improvement measures considered but not implemented for the 1970 census was a crew leader check to ensure the accuracy of enumerator classification of housing units as vacant. The proposal was to require enumerators to provide their crew leaders with names and addresses or phone numbers of persons who could verify the fact that

units so classified were actually vacant. The basis for the proposal was the observation during the pretests that some occupied units were erroneously classified as vacant by enumerators, presumably because they did not find anyone at home after repeated visits. When preliminary population counts for the first few States in which enumeration was completed were a little lower than anticipated, field investigation of possible causes indicated that a vacancy check would be desirable. Accordingly, a nationwide survey was made for a sample of 15,000 units classified as year-round vacant by census enumerators. The interviewers who conducted the survey were trained professional staff members who determined what the occupancy status was for the entire period from April 1, 1970, to the date of the interview. All units occupied during the entire period by the same household were considered to have been erroneously classified as vacant. The interviewer also reported the number of occupants at such units as of April 1.

On the basis of survey results, an estimate was made of the proportion of units misclassified and persons consequently missed. Computer programs were designed to change the occupancy status of a percentage of vacant units and to give occupants imputed for them the characteristics of occupants enumerated in a neighboring unit.

Evaluation of steps 10 and 11.--Evaluation studies (see Evaluation and Research Program report series PHC(E)) show that both steps were very effective in adding persons presumed to have been missed in the enumeration. The vacancy check had the greatest impact on the census count of any measurable coverage improvement program. Both programs are, however, subject to the qualification that they depended on imputation of persons not specifically identified in the field.

## Program Changes

The initial coverage improvement program underwent four revisions arising from improved knowledge or estimates of potential cost-benefit functions. In the course of these revisions, many more suggestions were made than could be adopted. Two such suggestions have already been described: One was an inquiry tried in the Philadelphia pretest (see p. 3) to be sure that each respondent understood that all persons in his household should be reported on his census questionnaire, including specifically roomers, boarders, persons who stay occasionally and have no other regular place of residence, etc. The other suggestion was a crew-leader check of vacant units.

Following are examples of other ideas which were discussed and considered but not adopted.

1. To speed up census-taking in cities (to avoid direct coverage loss and loss because of failing staff morale), two procedures were tried in selected neighborhoods in a Memphis, Tenn., special census. First, advance letters were sent to tell respondents when enumerators would call. The time of the call was set for days and hours that people were likely to be home. Second, the initial assignments were covered by enumerators working in teams to allay their fear of entering some buildings alone and thoroughly canvassing them.

Although results of the test indicated that there was some improvement in coverage, the precise prior planning required for the preannounced call was considered impractical for a national census. Team interviewing for initial assignments was tried again in the Philadelphia pretest where it was both inefficient and very expensive, probably due to lack of precision in planning necessary to make it work.

2. Payment of hourly rather than piece rates was recommended for the program. It was considered too risky from the budgetary view and, when tried in the Philadelphia pretest, did not show promise for coverage improvement.

3. A proposal to change the census date to mid-April or early May in order to have longer evening daylight hours in which enumerators could work would have required approval from Congress. Concern that the existing legal deadline for completion of the State population counts (December 1) would not be comparably postponed, and therefore might not be met, was one reason such approval was not sought.

4. Efforts to improve and extend de facto aspects of census-taking were considered: Enumerating missions, flop houses, and small hotels in the morning rather than in the evening and making two or three visits there rather than just one; leaving census forms at stations, terminals, all-night movie houses, and other such places; and listing all rather than just

long-term occupants of general hospitals, and then checking to see if any had been enumerated elsewhere. These proposals were dropped because they appeared to be relatively expensive for the potential improvement they might achieve.

5. Simplification of questionnaire design, even at the cost of requiring an extra step of transcription to machine-readable documents, was recommended for self-enumerative use. Some format tests were conducted in May 1967, and individual sheets rather than household forms appeared to improve mail-back rates. However, there were no definitive indications that the alternative format might be worth the extra cost.

6. A number of individuals and firms offered to take the 1970 census in inner-city communities on a contract basis. The suggestion was that hiring, training, and supervising enumerators might better be carried out by local agencies familiar with local conditions and practices. Aside from legal requirements that the census be taken by sworn Government agents, there were other considerations which would have prohibited adoption of this proposal. First, there was fear that communities might have reason to provide upwardly biased counts for themselves. Second, there were questions about the ability of the groups to mount as large-scale an effort as a census requires. And thirdly, there were budgetary limitations which would economically preclude such contract agreements.

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## APPENDIX. 1970 COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

This report is a summary of the 1970 Census Community Education Program. Details relating to this summary may be found in the Community Educators' weekly and final reports and in the video film of the Community Educators' debriefing sessions held October 8 and 9, 1970. Also included in this report are some observations and recommendations from the Community Educators for future censuses.

### Initial Community Education Program

#### I. Outline of the Program

The Community Educators started with an assignment to:

1. Attend meetings of organizations and various groups to explain the need for an accurate count and the benefits that it could provide the community.
2. Ask for advice about how best to get information across to members of minority, low-income, and ethnic groups.
3. Distribute informational materials from the Census Bureau.
4. Improve the public image of the Census Bureau (provide credibility).
5. Make a weekly report to their regional director to keep him informed on their progress.

#### II. Beginnings of the Program

The Community Education Program was initially undertaken on an exploratory basis. Beginning in May 1969, six permanent census employees were detailed part-time to the Community Education Program. They were told that they could allot up to 3 days per month to community education. All personnel selected were black and were chosen because of their ability to relate to the people in the areas in which they were to work. It became apparent immediately, however, that 3 days per month was insufficient time to contact a significant number of leaders of organizations and to follow up on these contacts.

As a result, regional directors were asked to recruit full-time Community Educators.

#### III. What Happened

##### A. Accomplishments:

The Community Educators were able to secure the endorsement and assistance of a variety of organizations and individuals representing many facets of American society. During meetings, the Community Educators asked for assistance in setting up meetings with other groups or individuals whom they thought could be of help. The Educators solicited and received many offers of assistance in recruiting census workers, offers of free space for testing and training, and offers to set up voluntary assistance centers to help people complete their census forms.

The National Football League made available athletes to promote community interest and cooperation with the decennial census. Most of these men served as assistant district managers in a number of temporary census offices. Their ability to make contacts and to create interest in the census was apparent in the areas where they were assigned.

The Community Educators felt that one of their more effective functions was to recruit enumerators for the district offices in the areas that were assigned. They utilized contacts with such diverse groups as State employment agencies, welfare groups, religious organizations, and civil rights

groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League; that is, they were able to introduce previously untapped sources of help. For example, the sisters of a Roman Catholic parish proved to be dedicated and conscientious and had the ability to obtain entry into households that had refused other enumerators.

Another effective means of recruiting enumerators was the use of mayors as honorary census takers. Mayor Gibson of Newark was televised as he went to several houses and this generated a lot of publicity. The mayor also sent out a letter asking the citizens of Newark to cooperate with the census. This contributed greatly to a rise in the morale of census workers and increased cooperation in very-difficult-to-enumerate areas.

Most groups contacted by the Educators were very cooperative; however, a few groups and individuals proved to be hostile to the census because of fear that the Government would use census information to put black people in concentration camps. Others feared the census because they thought it might have some adverse effect on their housing or welfare benefits. The educators also faced opposition from some Spanish-speaking groups, who felt that the Bureau was insensitive to their needs because of a lack of a Spanish-language questionnaire and absence of a question which would permit all Spanish Americans to be identified on census forms. Because of these complaints, a number of the Educators were given the opportunity to answer specific complaints and counteract misinformation about the census. Some felt they could sense a change of attitude toward the census in the community after such confrontations.

In addition to the Community Education Program based mainly in the Field Division, the program also consisted of a task force of other Bureau personnel. This task force made contacts with many intergovernment agencies and compiled a list of diversified national black organizations. The leaders of these groups and organizations were contacted and their support was solicited. As a result of these contacts, Census Bureau staff members were invited to make speeches at their conventions and to show exhibits and distribute literature.

Another result of these contacts was the formation of the "Coalition for Black Count" under the aegis of the National Urban League which became active in publicizing the census. Also, agreements were made with many national organizations to have them send census publicity materials to their affiliates. Included were the National Negro Business League, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, National Medical Association, National Association of Market Developers, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., and the National Council of Negro Women. Many of the organizations included supporting letters from their presidents.

Bishops of the Methodist denominations and presidents of various Baptist conventions sent letters to their ministers urging them to support the census and to inform their membership of the importance of being counted. Over 100,000 pieces of publicity materials were sent for distribution to the churches' membership. The leaflet, "Do Your Thing," was produced by the Census Bureau and written by a member of the Howard University publicity staff.

## B. Problems

A consideration of the achievements of the program requires that its problems and drawbacks also be considered. The efforts of the Community Educators to find organizations and individuals willing to participate in voluntary Missed Persons Campaigns toward the end of the census were largely unsuccessful. Although some local groups volunteered to conduct Missed Persons Campaigns, very few followed through. This aspect of the census coverage improvement effort failed largely because the Community Educators were not required to monitor the project after an organization had committed itself to doing it.

During the course of the census, the Community Education Program generated some negative response from some groups and individuals, including at least one highly placed local government official. Among other complaints was the one that existing statistics had not been used to improve the lot of their constituents or neighbors, making it useless to obtain new data which would also either not be used or be misused. The Community Educators' ability to neutralize or negate the effect of this counterpropaganda is questionable. A continuing community education program which includes some demonstration projects involving the use of statistics would be the most effective answer to such criticism.

Low mail returns from many of the areas where the Community Education Program was concentrated were attributed by the Educators to failure to follow up initial contacts with many local groups and community leaders. Two reasons for lack of followup were, first, that the areas assigned to each Community Educator were much too large and, second, the necessity of learning the job as he worked, rather than while he was in training, made for some early trial-and-error and consequent inefficiency.