GENERATION X SPEAKS OUT ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE DECENNIAL CENSUS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

FINAL REPORT

This evaluation reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is part of a broad program, the Census 2000 Testing, Experimentation, and Evaluation (TXE) Program, designed to assess Census 2000 and to inform 2010 Census planning. Findings from the Census 2000 TXE Program reports are integrated into topic reports that provide context and background for broader interpretation of results.

Melinda Crowley
Statistical
Research Division

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U
Helping You Make Informed Decisions

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My aim here is to honor the influence of the people most closely connected to this research for their commitments and contributions that have impressed this research. I am grateful to Paul Draus, Victor Garcia, Laura Gonzalez, Norma Gonzalez, Suzanne Hanchett, Alex Stepick and Carol Dutton Stepick for their ethnographic expertise, authority and activism. I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked with a team of such passionate and dedicated researchers.

There are also many Census Bureau colleagues who have shaped this research both before and over its duration. I appreciate the infinite patience, wisdom and time that Yves Thibaudeau provided. I also appreciate the suggestions that Eleanor Gerber, Manuel de la Puente, Elizabeth Martin, Cleo Redline, Susan Trencher, Tom Mayer and Rich Hoffman offered. I would also like to thank Safiya Hamid, Barbara Palumbo, Rochelle Proctor, Gloria Prout and Lorraine Randall for their administrative assistance and technical support. I am most indebted to all of the respondents who gave their time and shared their hopes and struggles along with their failures and successes to bring about the knowledge contained within this report. However, none of this research would have come to fruition if not for project funding and sponsorship support. I would like to take a moment to thank both Ruth Ann Killion who heads the Planning, Research and Evaluation Division (PRED) and Tommy Wright who heads the Statistical Research Division (SRD) for their generous endorsements.

It is my hope that the data presented in this paper can nourish our current knowledge and future dialogues about the way GenXers experience civic engagement in American society. It is essential that we continue to learn about and understand the culture and behavior of respondents. Respondents are the key to the stories less often told and represent the voices much less heard. It is important to pay careful attention to the messages respondents have shared, and in doing so, perhaps some insight may be shed on the ways in which the Census Bureau can overcome obstacles encountered with decennial enumeration and survey participation.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... *v*

1. BACKGROUND 1

2. METHODS 3
   - 2.1 Respondent Recruitment 3
   - 2.2 Ethnographic Questionnaire Protocol 4
     - 2.2.1 The Introduction 4
     - 2.2.2 A Mixed-Mode survey 4
     - 2.2.3 Civic Interests, Activism and Causes 4
     - 2.2.4 Card Sort Activity 5
     - 2.2.5 Government Participation 5
     - 2.2.6 Demographics and Background 5
   - 2.3 Focus Groups 5
   - 2.4 Participant Observations 6

3. LIMITS 9

4. RESULTS 10
   - 4.1 Society & Self: Core Values and Issues 10
   - 4.2 To Be Or Not To Be Involved: GenXers Speak Out 13
   - 4.3 Hope & Despair: The Meaning and Role of Community Among GenXers 21
   - 4.4 Alienating Immigrants: The Impact of Citizenship on Civic-Mindedness 24
     - 4.4.1 Afro-Caribbean Haitians 24
     - 4.4.2 Afro-Caribbean Jamaicans 24
     - 4.4.3 Afro-Caribbeans Collectively 25
     - 4.4.4 Southeast Asians Collectively 26
     - 4.4.5 Cubans 29
     - 4.4.6 Mexicans 30
     - 4.4.7 Nicaraguans 34
     - 4.4.8 Hispanics Collectively 35
   - 4.5 Distrust, Skepticism and Discontent: Government, Politics and Police 36
     - 4.5.1 Government Agencies and Institutions 38
     - 4.5.2 Politics and Politicians 39
     - 4.5.3 Police 42

4.6 Decennial Compliance as a Civic Quest 43
4.7 Means, Motives and Barriers to "Stepping-Up" 48
4.7.1 Means and Motives 48
4.7.2 Barriers 48

5. RECOMMENDATIONS 49
5.1 Recommendations to Decrease Census Nonresponse and Respondent Undercoverage 49
5.2 Recommendations about Decennial Census Privacy and Confidentiality Policies 50
5.3 Recommendations to Improve Decennial Promotional Outreach Efforts And Educational Campaigns 51

6. CLOSING REMARKS 52

7. REFERENCES 55

8. APPENDICES
Appendix A: Generation X Ethnographic Questionnaire Protocol
Appendix B: Card Sort Activity List
Appendix C. Generation X Focus Group Moderators Guide

LISTING OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

Table 2.1A: Race/Ethnicity Demographics Of Respondents In This Study.....6
Table 2.1B: Race/Ethnicity Demographics By Age of Generation X in The U.S 7
Table 2.2: Gender Demographics Of Generation X Respondents In This Study 7
Table 2.3A: Highest Educational Levels Completed By Generation X Respondents In This Study.....8
Table 2.3B: School Enrollment By Level Of School And Race For U.S. Population……8
Table 2.4: Total Annual Incomes Of Generation X Respondents In This Study 9
Table 2.5: Citizenship Demographics Of Generation X Respondents In This Study.....9
Table 4.1.1: Respondent Core Values And Issues In This Study 13
Table 4.2.1: Respondent Engagement Profile Types In This Study 20
Table 4.6.1: Generation X Survey Question Results: I Trust the Census When They Say Information Is Confidential 46

FIGURES

Figure 4.2.1: Generation X Survey Question Results: I Would Like To Be More Involved In The Community.....14
Figure 4.2.2: Generation X Survey Question Results: It Does Not Matter If I Volunteer 18
Figure 4.4.1: Cambodians: Historical Overview 27
Figure 4.4.2: Laotians: Historical Overview.....27
Figure 4.4.3: Vietnamese Historical Overview.....27
Figure 4.5.1: Generation X Survey Question Results: People Should Be Able To Trust the Government 37
Figure 4.5.2: Generation X Survey Question Results: I Do Not Trust The Government.....37
Figure 4.5.3: Generation X Survey Question Results: I Do Not Have Any Say About What The Government Does.....39
Figure 4.5.4: Generation X Survey Question Results: Voting Is The Only Way I Have A Say About Government Decisions 41
Figure 4.5.5: Generation X Survey Question Results: Public Leaders Do Not Care What Happens To Me.....41
Figure 4.6.1: Generation X Survey Question Results: It Is Important To Fill Out The Census.....44

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research is part of a larger program of ethnographic research, known as *Ethnography for the New Millennium*, conducted for the U.S. Census Bureau by the Statistical Research Division, Center for Survey Methods Research. The purpose of this project is to develop social science insights that may help improve Census Bureau survey response rates and population counts. Just as past ethnographic studies have improved outreach to undercounted populations for Census 2000, it is expected that findings from this research will have benefits ten years hence.

The premise of this research is that response to surveys is motivated by a respondent's sense of civic responsibility[1]. The main goal of this study is to investigate shared attitudes among Generation X about civic engagement and community involvement, government in general, and decennial census participation in particular. Participants of this study were drawn from "hard to reach" respondent populations, such as ethnic minorities, lower socioeconomic classes, immigrants and alienated young adults who are all members of the birth cohort Generation X[2]. The wider Generation X populace, according to past studies (Cheung 1995; Halstead 1992; Holtz 1995), tends to be apathetic about community and political involvement and disillusioned with government. If Generation X respondents in this study share such attitudes as their wider Generation X counterparts do, then the Census Bureau will face another major obstacle in reaching out to them. This apathy and disillusionment with government will also compound existing enumeration barriers identified by past ethnographic research (de la Puente 1993; U.S. Census Bureau 1999)[3] and may have short and long term implications for survey nonresponse issues, undercoverage challenges, privacy and confidentiality concerns and effective outreach campaigns.

All research findings and recommendations are based on 150 semi-structured, individual ethnographic interviews, ten focus groups, a paper-and-pencil survey and participant observation activities in diverse settings such as American Indian Pow Wow ceremonies, coffee bars, community demonstrations, class rooms, pool halls, jobsites and bowling alleys. The scope of this research was nationwide and was conducted in Oregon, Illinois, Florida, Texas, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC. Recruitment for this research was nonrandom, and primarily by means of snowball sampling. Recruitment targeted 25 African Americans, 14 first-generation Afro-Caribbean Immigrants (Haitian and Jamaican), 20 American Indians (on and off reservations), 19 Southeast Asians (Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese), 59 Hispanics (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Nicaraguan) and 13 non-Hispanic White Americans. Respondents were

1 See Gerber, Crowley and Trencher 1999. Past ethnographic research clearly shows that a primary reason respondents participate in government-sponsored survey requests is that they feel it is their civic duty to do so as good citizens.

2 For the purpose of this study, Generation X is defined as persons aged 21to 32, that is, respondents born during the years 1968-1979. Various studies define Generation X differently by age, with some analyses categorizing persons born in 1961 as the cohort's oldest members, while others use a younger upper boundary to demarcate the age group (Craig and Earl Bennett 1997). Only in hindsight will the boundaries for this cohort become clearer.

3 Past ethnographic research carried out at the Census Bureau has revealed that behavioral causes of census coverage errors are due to one or more of the following circumstances: residential mobility, language and illiteracy barriers, increased privacy fears, irregular housing and household arrangements and resistance by respondents as a strategy for dealing with outsiders, especially the government.

primarily working class adults with levels of education that ranged from high school dropouts to those in pursuit of PhDs.

The following section highlights some of the critical findings which emerged as a result of research specific to this study, *Generation X Speaks Out on Civic Engagement and The Census: An Ethnographic Approach.* This research suggests that the following factors may contribute to decennial noncompliance and undercoverage errors:

Non-citizenship status or unstable immigration status

- The distinction between citizens and non-citizens (which includes immigrant permanent residents) is not nearly as important as the distinction between undocumented immigrants (illegal residents) and documented individuals (which includes citizens along with legal immigrants) in an attempt to convince respondents to comply with Census enumeration efforts.
- Individuals with an insecure immigration status were much less likely to trust the government and specifically less likely to fill out the Census. Undocumented immigrants have long been a concern for the Census Bureau. This research demonstrates that respondents with irregular immigration statuses are unlikely to directly cooperate with the Census. Only one undocumented immigrant in our study was willing to be counted while she resided with her uncle who is a legal resident. On the other hand, another respondent, who did have legal status as a student, was afraid to participate in the Census because she feared that some time in the future she may go out of status and that the information she provided to the Census might be used to track her down.
- Immigrant-centered community-based organizations are important conduits that attract distrustful and growing undocumented populations in the United States.

Respondents not knowing about or understanding the decennial census

- Generation X values the decennial census as important and worthwhile. While most respondents were familiar with the Census by name, most respondents were unclear about the roles and functions of the decennial census. However, most new immigrants and African American respondents in our study were significantly less informed about the Census. Some had heard about temporary jobs available via the Census, yet still did not know details about the decennial census. African Americans in this study were the least likely group of native-born respondents to have completed a Census questionnaire (in some instances, African American respondents in this study were enumerated by someone else who did complete and return a Census questionnaire).
- Respondents either expressed a complete lack of faith in the notion of Census Bureau privacy and confidentiality statements or were ambivalent about such Census Bureau promises; in spite of perceived risks, most respondents were still willing to divulge personal information.

Increased levels of distrust among respondents towards the government

- Skepticism and mistrust towards the government is pervasive among this group of respondents. Respondents past negative experiences and interactions with federal bureaucracies do influence their overall negative attitudes towards the government.
- Although respondents in this study possess unfavorable attitudes towards the

government, derogatory views were not extended towards the Census Bureau. Respondents were still willing to comply with decennial enumeration efforts because they believe the social importance and benefits of the Census outweigh distrustful attitudes held towards the government.

- Respondent distrust of police and law enforcement agencies, including the Justice Department, Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is a link that serves as a deterrent to Census participation.

Miscellaneous findings

- Minority Generation X respondents in this study generally did not confirm many of the negative stereotypes (e.g. selfish, detached from civic responsibility) that surround all Generation X cohort members.
- Family (including family values and family relationships) is seen as the most important social institution among this age cohort; family seems to represent the most stable sense of community for Generation X respondents.
- Religious activities were extremely important among all respondent groups in this study with the exception of non-Hispanic White Generation X respondents (a small percentage of the respondents in this study). For non-citizen immigrant respondents in our study, the church and its parishioners represent their 'local' community.

The recommendations that follow are based on sound, empirical, ethnographic research provided to the Census Bureau to help make informed planning and policy decisions with regards to the 2010 decennial census. Key recommendations are:

- **Downplay the national nature of the Census; emphasize making a difference through Census participation in one's local community without over promising benefits.**
- **Stress benefits of the decennial census to families; promote the Census as a family activity that will also help one's ethnic community.**
- **It is recommended that the Census Bureau continue to partner with church and faith-based organizations to reach special population groups, especially immigrants.** The Census Bureau should recruit and hire church youth groups for outreach and enumeration work. Church members are familiar with their communities and the enumeration mission of the Census, and in many instances they are bilingual (i.e. Spanish and English; Creole and English). Church youth group members are ideal for outreach and enumeration work. They are local residents, bilingual and bicultural in many instances, and care about getting involved and improving conditions in their communities. Additionally, members of the church youth groups are in positions to reach out to hard-to-reach populations, such as gangs and undocumented workers, who are at a high risk of not being included in Census surveys.
- **Further research is needed to determine if the Census Bureau should only emphasize the distinction between *citizens* and *non-citizens* in its advertisements and outreach efforts to various respondent groups.** For instance, the 2000 decennial census posters, commercial announcements, billboards and other advertisements emphasized the distinction between *citizens* and *non-citizens* with regards to Title 13

data. However, our research strongly indicates that 2010 decennial census posters, commercial announcements, billboards and ads should also emphasize that personal information is confidential for *documented* and *undocumented residents* as well. Specifically using the term "undocumented" in future advertisements may relay a clearer message to a group of respondents who are apprehensive towards the government that their participation in the decennial census is crucial. The terminology that the U.S. Census Bureau uses to target various immigrant populations is important. Further pretesting research is needed to determine the most effective terminology to use in marketing decennial census participation.

- **Continue to focus on all undocumented immigrant population groups in educational and outreach campaigns.** Undocumented immigrants were by far the least trusting and the most unlikely to comply with the Census. Outreach messages from multiple sources that state it is "okay" and "safe" for undocumented immigrants to participate in the Census are needed.
- **The decennial census is an easy way in which a generation can give back to the community while empowering the community.** This is a message that should be continuously publicized during outreach messages.
- **The Census Bureau should collaborate with Immigration and Naturalization Services to incorporate one or two decennial census questions on the Naturalization Civics Exam sponsored by the Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Services.** All applicants are required to pass this exam before being considered eligible for American naturalization. According to 1996 Immigration and Naturalization Services estimates (the most current and publicly available data), 1,044,689 persons are naturalized in the United States annually. The top ten countries for persons naturalized as American citizens according to 1996 Immigration and Naturalization Services estimates are from Mexico, Cuba, Vietnam, the Philippines, the Former Soviet Union, El Salvador, China, India, the Dominican Republic and Columbia. The top three countries that produce American naturalized citizens are also respondents included in this research sample. Questions included in this exam (go to http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/natz/require.htm for specific test questions) assess the applicant's knowledge of U.S. government and history. The Study Guide to the Naturalization Civics Exam is one venue that the Census Bureau can utilize to educate a segment of the immigrant population about the historical role and national function of the decennial census. Decennial census questions that could be included on this exam (e.g. What is the U.S. Decennial Census? Name one purpose of the U.S. Decennial Census.) could increase knowledge and familiarity about the decennial census that many newly arrived immigrants often lack.

1. BACKGROUND

Civic engagement is an important explanatory factor in this Generation X Census study. It is being used to assess whether it is an indicator of Census survey participation. The basic argument in considering civic engagement for this purpose is that individuals who engage in civic engagement activities—such as voting, volunteering at soup kitchens and joining political advocacy groups—will most likely participate in Census surveys. For the purpose of this study, Generation X is defined as respondents born during the years 1968-1979. Various studies define Generation X differently by age, with some analyses categorizing persons born in 1961 as the cohort's oldest members, while others use a younger upper boundary to demarcate the age group (Craig and Earl Bennett 1997). Only in hindsight will the boundaries for this cohort become clearer.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics for 2000," 20.9% of the total population in the United States is between the ages 20-34 years. According to "Table 094 - International Data Base for 2002," 20,226,941 of 288, 368,698 (the total population in the United States as of July 2002) is between the ages 20-24 years; 18,830,901 of 288, 368,698 (the total population in the United States as of July 2002) is between the ages 25-29 years; and 20,744,483 of 288,368,698 (the total population in the United States as of July 2002) is between the ages 30-34 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census, http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbagg). Although these data include a wider population range than the age groups targeted for this study (ages 21-32), these data provide perspective on the majority distribution of young adults in the United States currently.

Research was conducted and completed during March 2000 through February 2001. This qualitative study was initiated in order to expand our basic understanding of social trends and processes that affect decennial census and survey participation in general. Research specific to this project initiative is guided by the assumption that responsiveness to survey data collection efforts has something to do with people's sense of civic responsibility. This collaborative research effort was an opportunity for researchers to explore patterns of civic[4] and government[5] engagement among GenXers in order to understand relevant short and long-term consequences that such attitudes and behaviors may have in terms of survey nonresponse, undercoverage challenges, privacy and confidentiality concerns and effective public outreach campaigns. This report describes the beliefs GenXers have about the government, how they value, define, organize and view civic engagement, and how various cultural value systems with respect to race/ethnicity, education, income and citizenship status impact general survey participation rates.

According to media rhetoric, the majority of Generation X wants little to do with government, is selfish, lazy and shuns civic responsibilities and commitments. As a testament to these notions, GenXers have inherited several nicknames, among them, *Slacker Generation* and *The Me Generation*. Members of the age cohort "Generation X" are often derided by a stereotype that casts them as *slackers* (persons who lack ambition or drive) or as *whiners* (those who complain

4 Civic engagement is defined in this research as being involved in something or contributing to something that attempts to create social alternatives expressed through informal activities and formal organizational ties

5 Government civic engagement is specific to commitments or duties that are government-sponsored initiatives, which may produce a public benefit.

without reason). Popular literature along with a multitude of research studies conducted depict the children born to "Baby Boomers" (Generation Xers) as the most cynical and detached of current generations. While such individuals exist in the Generation X population, these descriptions do not characterize all of its members (as our research illustrates). In fact, Generation X is often inaccurately portrayed as a homogeneous group. Although concerns of cynicism cross-cut all segments of this generation, it is speculated that historically underenumerated members of GenX (minorities, young males, immigrants) may hold higher levels of distrust and suspicion towards the government and any of its sponsored endeavors, including the decennial census. Unfortunately, most previous Generation X research and commentary relates to a narrow racial and socioeconomic group (Barber 2000) -- mostly Non-Hispanic White, middle class Americans. Minority GenX populations have had no clear place in the on-going discourse on Generation X. This research includes both minority and non-Hispanic White respondents. However, minority respondents were over-represented (see Table 2.1A) since, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, ethnic minority groups, young adult males and immigrants are among the population groups considered "hard-to-reach (HTR)" and thus, are consistently underenumerated.

Generally, members of the same cohort usually share a similar coming-of-age period in their lives in which tastes and preferences, values and beliefs are shaped by important historical, social, economical and cultural events or experiences. This proves true for the GenX participants in this study as well. For the majority of GenXers in this study, they believe that it is and will continue to be "much harder for them to get ahead than it was for their parents - and that they are overwhelmingly pessimistic about the long-term fate of their generation and nation" (Howe and Strauss1992). When GenXers in this study were toddlers, the nation was riding high. By the time GenXers in this study reached pre-adolescence, ugly new phrases like "latch-key kids" already defined this generation. By the time GenXers in this study matured into adolescents, national confidence had weakened and community and family life had splintered. Schools had deteriorated and educational curriculums included a mixture of bravado and fatalism with computer training and AIDS educational programs. Generation X is one of the most highly educated generations, but yet, not since the Great Depression have more young adults had to experience a migration back to their parent's nest to make ends meet. And although it seems that things may be rigged against GenXers in this study and among the majority of GenXers in the larger population, they have emerged with robust visions of society and self that capture this generations' worldview.

Research questions central to this study can be divided into three broad areas of interest, which include: cultural, behavioral and social factors.

Cultural:

- Is there a shared generational consciousness that exists among Generation X with regards to civic engagement?
- How does Generation X's construction of meanings and functions of community correlate with their civic values and civic engagement?

Behavioral:

- How salient are civic engagement activities among GenXers?

- What opportunities and/or barriers do Generation X members perceive or experience to being civically engaged?
- What are the attitudes of GenXers towards participation in the decennial census and why?
- How does the topic of privacy among respondents affect government civic cooperation?

Social:

- Who are the GenXers that participate in government-sponsored data collection efforts and why?
- How do race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education, gender, age and citizenship affect GenXers' attitudes toward civic and government engagement behavior?

2. METHODS

Data for this research were exploratory and collected in the tradition of social and cultural anthropology - primarily by means of in-depth ethnographic interviews, focus groups and participant observations. Personal narratives were used in order to expose the social underpinnings of civic and government engagement. Through the collective combination of these methods, recurrent statements and behaviors by respondents were legitimized as shared and contemporary components of a common culture.

2.1 Respondent recruitment and research scope

Recruitment targeted 150 male and female respondents (see Table 2.2). African Americans, Afro-Caribbean Immigrants from Haiti and Jamaica, American Indians (on and off reservations from the Hopi, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Oneida and Ojibwa tribes), Southeast Asians (Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese), Hispanics (Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Nicaraguans) and non-Hispanic White Americans were targeted to participate in this research study (see Table 2.1A & Table 2.1B). Racial and ethnic minority respondents are over represented in this study. Respondents were primarily working class adults (see Table 2.4). The educational backgrounds of these respondents included those in pursuit of Ph.D.'s while others had dropped out of school prior to receiving their high school diploma (see Table 2.3A & Table 2.3B). Respondents recruited also included documented and undocumented immigrants (see Table 2.5) residing in the United States. Ethnographic interviews generally spanned two hours per respondent. At the completion of an interview, respondents were paid a $30 cash honorarium.

Respondent recruitment was the responsibility of each ethnographer. Findings included in this report are from interviews, focus groups and participant observations conducted in Portland and Madras, Oregon; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas and Houston, Texas; Miami, Florida; Washington, DC; Virginia; and Maryland between March and December 2000.

2.2 Ethnographic questionnaire protocol

The principal researcher designed a semi-structured questionnaire protocol (see Appendix A), which was further developed in consultation with five contract ethnographers who also served as interviewers for this research. Each ethnographer is an experienced social scientist with extensive training in qualitative techniques of investigation.

Questions for the protocol instrument were first pretested and then revised. The main concern with the questionnaire protocol was making sure it would be inclusive enough to tap into the personal life narratives and decisions of respondents from diverse racial, ethnic, citizenship, class and educational backgrounds. The protocol instrument used to conduct the ethnographic interviews included the following six sections:

2.2.1 The Introduction

The manner in which the introduction or greeting was handled was a sensitive issue since a productive and engaging interview with a respondent depended in large part on the rapport, trust and comfort level established at the onset of each individual interview, especially for respondents with irregular citizenship status. Individual interview sessions were audio-taped (exceptions included some respondents with unstable citizenship) and included explicit discussions about confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and informed consent.

2.2.2 A Mixed-Mode Survey

Respondents were asked to complete a survey, in which the respondent was instructed to indicate whether he/she "strongly agrees, agrees, neither agrees or disagrees, disagrees, or strongly disagrees" to 16 statements which represent ideas about the way relationships between people, society and government could be. The objective of the survey was threefold: one, to collect standardized quantitative data in order to analyze significant trends and patterns; two, to allow the survey to be self-administered or verbally-administered, contingent upon individual respondent skills and needs (i.e. literacy, comprehension and language competencies); and three, to warm respondents up (get them in the frame of mind) to the topics of discussion for the remainder of the interview session. The survey-questionnaire was also translated into Spanish. Care was taken to make sure that, when appropriate, Spanish or Latino idioms were used.

2.2.3 Civic Interests, Activism and Causes

At this point in the protocol, respondents were questioned about their thoughts, beliefs, behavior and attitudes regarding the ways in which they engage or avoid engaging in society. Interviewers probed respondents using open-ended questions designed to assess the interests, issues and causes most meaningful (and meaningless) to respondent lives, including decennial enumeration, voting, club memberships, group activities and organizational functions.

2.2.4 Card Sort Activity

Section four was designed to measure volunteer activities and participation in organizations, clubs, and groups. A set of eighty-seven cards was given to respondents to sort (see Appendix B). Each card identified a specific or general action. The cards listed cultural, political, financial, governmental, social, educational, spiritual, global and environmental type activities. "Other" was also a card sort option from which respondents could choose. Respondents were asked to sort the cards into three categories: first, endeavors which respondents had "participated in during the past two years;" second, endeavors which respondents had "not participated in during the past two years;" and third, endeavors which respondents would like to participate "in the future." A card was only allowed to go into one of the three categories.

The benefit of using card sorts was that they successfully served to trigger respondents' recall of additional experiences with activities and organizations. The card sorts also expanded specific topics under discussion and encouraged respondents to talk freely and openly about their experiences and behaviors. The card sorts allowed respondents to conceptualize the activities and organizations into cognizant domains that hit home for them. Once respondents had completed the card sort activity, they were asked to explain their choices. Where appropriate, respondents were probed to discuss any constraints that prevented them from taking part in any engagement endeavor or activity.

2.2.5 Government Participation

Eight open-ended questions on census participation and government made up section five of the protocol. It was designed to capture knowledge and participation about the Census and to gauge attitudes toward local, state and federal government sectors.

2.2.6 Demographics and Background

The last section of the instrument, section six, was comprised of twelve open-ended questions on identity, marital/relationship status, age, race and class; five open-ended questions on work and alternative income; and six questions on education. A flash card containing annual income ranges before taxes, which the respondent was to choose from, was used in conjunction with the questions on work and alternative income. Section six ended with probe questions on civic participation experiences, role models and mentors, future ambitions and familial and peer relationships.

2.3 Focus Groups

Ten focus groups were conducted and facilitated by project ethnographers in order to extend relevant research issues that emerged from the ethnographic interviews. Five of the focus group sessions conducted included respondents who participated in an ethnographic interview; the remaining five focus group sessions included new respondent recruits. Focus groups varied in size

from six to twelve participants. A semi-structured focus group moderator's guide (see Appendix C) was designed to help clarify definitions (i.e. civic participation, community), to help understand the reasons why (or why not) respondents participate in civic activities, to determine how salient civic engagement activities were to our respondent's lives and to ascertain the level of knowledge and awareness respondents possessed about the decennial census. The questions posed in each focus group differed with the intent of garnishing as much "folk theory" as possible, that is, anecdotal and descriptive evidence of civic engagement and responsibility from respondents. Focus groups were conducted at professional facilities with state-of-the art equipment as well as in community libraries and centers. Each focus group session was audio-taped and spanned an average of two and a half hours. Respondents who participated in focus groups sessions were paid a $30 cash stipend.

2.4 Participant Observations

Participant observations added a creative and interesting dynamic to this research. Ethnographers associated with this research observed and spoke informally with GenXers at American Indian Pow Wow ceremonies, coffee bars, parades, community demonstrations, classrooms, pool halls, various jobsites and bowling alleys. By observing GenX respondents who participated in an ethnographic interview, we were able to look for any discrepancies between interview statements and actual behavior. We were able to observe with whom and how GenXers interacted with others in terms of participatory and non-participatory engagement roles. These participant observations extracted data that would not have been captured using any other method than that of ethnography. As researchers, we were able to witness social reproduction as it was actually lived out, that is, understand respondent behavior mechanisms and decision-making processes.

Table 2.1A. Race/Ethnicity Demographics of Respondents in this Study

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
African American	25	16.6 %
Non-Hispanic White	13	8.6 %
Hispanic*	59	39.3 %
American Indian	20	13.3 %
Southeast Asian**	19	12.6 %
Afro-Caribbean***	14	9.3 %
Total	**150**	**100.0 %**

* Hispanic respondents in this study include Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Nicaraguans.
** Southeast Asian respondents in this study include Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese.
*** Afro-Caribbean respondents in this study include Haitians and Jamaicans.

Although the data in Table 2.1B below includes a wider population range than the age groups targeted for this study (ages 21-32) as indicated in Table 2.1A above, these data provide perspective on the majority distribution of young adults (including GenXers) in the United States. These data are included in this report for comparison purposes only.

Table 2.1B. Race/Ethnicity Demographics By Age in the U.S

Age By Race/Ethnicity	Total Estimate U.S. Population	Percent Estimate of Total U.S. Population (277, 017,622)
African American & Black alone in U.S. *	**33,148,835**	**11.9%**
20 to 24 years	2,386,406	0.86%
25 to 29 years	2,184,908	0.78%
30 to 34 years	2,389,144	0.86%
White alone, Not Hispanic or Latino in U.S.	**190,611,186**	**68.8%**
20 to 24 years	11,171,672	≈4.0%
25 to 29 years	11,248,127	≈4.0%
30 to 34 years	13,098,604	≈4.7%
Hispanic or Latino in U.S. **	**36,200,781**	**13.0%**
20 to 24 years	3,346,169	1.2%
25 to 29 years	3,379,647	≈1.2%
30 to 34 years	3,208,627	1.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone in U.S. ***	**1,927,777**	**≈0.7%**
20 to 24 years	139,560	.005%
25 to 29 years	148,758	.005%
30 to 34 years	142,462	.005%
Southeast Asian in U.S. ******	**10,564,333**	**3.8%**
20 to 24 years	722,225	0.26%
25 to 29 years	1,011,738	≈0.37%
30 to 34 years	1,009,197	0.36%

*This category of African American or Black alone collapses African Americans and Blacks into one category. Afro-Caribbeans are Black respondents in this category and include Haitians and Jamaicans.
** This category of Hispanic and Latino includes the following respondents, but is not limited to, Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Nicaraguans.
***The American Indian and Alaska Native alone category includes, but is not limited to tribe groups targeted for participation in this study .
**** This category of Asian alone includes, but is not limited to, Southeast Asian respondents of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese descent.
NOTE
Data for this table was extracted from The 2001 Supplementary Survey universe (data that is based on twelve monthly samples during 2001): Tables P005B, P005C, P005D, P005J and P005K. This data is limited to the household population and excludes the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate is represented through the use of a confidence interval. The confidence interval computed here is a 90 percent confidence interval and can be interpreted roughly as providing 90 percent certainty that the true number falls between the lower and upper bounds, which are the figures displayed in this table.

Table 2.2. Gender Demographics of Respondents in this Study

Gender	Frequency	
Male	90	
Female	60	
Total	**150**	

Table 2.3A Highest Educational Level Completed by Respondents in this Study

Educational Level Completed	Frequency	Valid Percent
No High School Diploma	20	14.3%
High School Diploma	57	41.0%
Some College	30	21.8%
College Graduate*	27	19.4%
Advanced Degree	5	3.5%
Total	**139**	**100.0%**
Absent Data	11	-

***** This total includes respondents who graduated from four-year colleges or universities.

Table 2.3B School Enrollment by Level of School and Race for U.S. Population

School Enrollment By Race/Ethnicity	Total Estimate U.S. Population	Percent Estimate of Total U.S. Population (270, 076,176)
African American & Black alone in U.S. *	**32,734,511**	**12.1%**
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	2,534,919	0.93%
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	2,224,181	0.82%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	2,389,144	0.88%
White alone, Not Hispanic or Latino in U.S.	**187,908,274**	**70.0%**
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	11,171,672	≈4.1%
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	11,248,127	≈4.1%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	13,098,604	≈4.8%
Hispanic or Latino in U.S. **	**36,200,781**	**13.4 %**
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	3,346,169	1.2%
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	3,379,647	≈1.2%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	3,208,627	1.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone in U.S. ***	**1,927,777**	**≈0.71%**
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	139,560	.05%
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	148,758	.05%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	142,462	.05%
Southeast Asian in U.S. ****	**10,564,333**	**3.9%**
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	722,225	0.26%
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	1,011,738	≈0.37%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	1,009,197	0.36%

*This category of African American or Black alone collapses African Americans and Blacks into one category. Afro-Caribbeans are Black respondents in this category and include Haitians and Jamaicans.
** This category of Hispanic and Latino includes the following respondents, but is not limited to, Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Nicaraguans.
***The American Indian and Alaska Native alone category includes, but is not limited to tribe groups targeted for participation in this study ***
**** This category of Asian alone includes, but is not limited to, Southeast Asian respondents of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese descent.
NOTE
Data for this table was summarized from sample Census 2000 data. For information on sampling error, nonsampling error and definitions, see http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/expsf3.htm.

Table 2.4 Total Annual Incomes of Generation X Respondents in this Study

Annual Income*	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Under $6000	16	14.8%
$6000-$12000	19	17.6%
$12000-$18000	14	12.9%
$18000-$24000	20	18.5%
$24000-$30000	17	15.7%
$30000-$40000	10	9.2%
$40000-$50000	5	4.6%
$50000-$60000	2	1.85%
$60000-$70000	3	2.7%
Over $70000	2	1.85%
Total	**108**	**100.0%**
Absent Data	42	-

* Respondent total annual income before taxes.

Table 2.5 Citizenship Demographics of Generation X Respondents in this Study

Citizenship Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
U.S. Citizen	91	68.0%
Non U.S. Citizen*	43	32.0%
Total	**134**	**100.0%**
Absent Data	16	-

*This total includes immigrant respondents who are documented non-citizens and undocumented non-citizens.

3. LIMITS

Ethnographic methods generate from anthropological theory and studies of distinct societies and social groups. We use ethnographic methods to ground Census Bureau concepts, processes and operations using direct observation methods and discussions with respondents within sociocultural contexts. Small study groups are often associated with ethnographic interviewing procedures. Critics question how studies that vary in size from the hundreds to less than ten can still carry similar weight in their findings. This study includes 150 interviews, ten focus groups and several participant observations and we have found that we are able to make solid assessments and critical analyses based on recurrent themes stated and observed. The methods of recruitment employed, following social networks and working through particular social spaces, were not random, thereby limiting the generalizability of our findings. However, using a nonrandom sample allowed us to specifically target special population respondents often underrepresented in random samples of the population. Furthermore, we were able to capture and observe patterns that a totally random sample might not have produced.

4. RESULTS

The findings, analyses and insights presented in this report should be regarded as a snapshot, rather than a portrait, of a rising generation. An attempt is made to situate civic participation through the experiences of school, work, family life, spirituality, formal and informal organizations, volunteerism, government participation and political activities. The research is essentially based on the voiced and lived victories, struggles, and passions that young adults in American society encounter on a daily basis.

4.1 Society & Self: Core Values and Issues

In response to the question, "what are your core values?" respondents gave a wide variety of answers (see Table 4.1.1). The most common values stated were *restrictive values*, values that pertain to personality and morality issues (i.e. avoiding gang activities, not committing crimes, not being a burden) such as equality (primarily in terms of one's treatment of others), respect and honesty. Other core values mentioned included hard work, independence and individuality. Some respondents mentioned more *expansive values*, values entailing social justice causes related to specific public issues such as AIDS/HIV, the health and welfare of children, homelessness and the expansion of prison systems across the nation.

GenXers in our study favor a return to family and family values. Family relations are seen as very important among this group, almost as if family represents the only stable sense of community for respondents. Over 55 percent (56.5 percent) of respondents in this study declared the importance of family as a value central to their life as demonstrated in Table 4.1.1. Intergenerational contact is also important to GenXers (especially minority GenXers). Parents serve as the role models of choice for this age cohort, teachers, peers, athletes and celebrities were only mentioned by a minority of respondents. TV is still the primary source of news for this group, despite the popularity of the Internet. There is no strong generational identity or "generational consciousness" (Richard Thau 2000) as with previous generational cohorts (e.g. Baby Boomers) apparent among the group. GenXers have not adopted the identity label, Generation X, with the vigor that Baby Boomers have adopted their cohort marker. Identity labels such as age and race seem to be unimportant. Racial prejudice, crime, violence and education are important current and future issues for the majority of sampled respondents.

Respondents do share some cultural beliefs, but they are not the self-centered, materialistic ones of the Generation X stereotype. Most striking was respondent concerns for and value placed upon family. Jennifer[6], a Nicaraguan, when asked about her fundamental values replied, "I was raised to be very family orientated, and I think that's where the values come from. I believe family is very important because that's where everything starts and you learn how to become a good person." Yuset, a Cuban, indicated that one of his most important goals was to not only have his own family, but also to take care of his mother and grandmother because, "They did everything for me, so now it's going to be my turn in a couple of years." Rosemary, a Mexican, indicated she cared most about, "My parents. 'Cause, I would say whatever my parents think of me, that's what I would care about." Family is foremost, before work and other commitments.

6 All respondent names used in this report are aliases to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Barbara, a Cuban, indicated, "If somebody is sick you have to take care of them, [run] errands and stuff. [It's] just your responsibility that you have to do." Family, moreover, is not just one's parents and siblings. Barbara added, "My aunts and my boyfriend's family, they've become my family. So, if something goes wrong, I'm responsible over there also."

Most Hispanics are so deeply committed to their families that they have no ambition to leave the area or even to move out of their parental household until, as Jennifer, a Cuban, jokingly stated, "they kick me out." Miguel, a Nicaraguan, is so tied to his family that in answering many questions he did not distinguish between what he and other family members did. If someone else in his family filled out the Census or voted, then for Miguel that was the same as if he had done it. When asked about their role models our respondents were most likely to name someone within the family, particularly mothers. Our African American respondents were especially likely to single out their mothers as their role models. Several respondents also articulated an appreciation of their elders,' and how they used their courage and survival skills in the face of adversity. One American Indian focus group member expressed great pride in her mother's commitment to ethnic group empowerment:

> My mom was active in speaking out for Native Americans, period. That's all she wanted to do, to get Native Americans to stand up and get what they deserved, not just what was handed to them. Even now (she's very old) she's still very proud to be Native American. She grew up in the 20s, and she's seen a whole lot. I grew up hearing that this is crap, what they've dealt us. We don't do all this 'racism' [etc. talk], but we deserve to be heard. We deserve better.

Other respondents, like Malikah, an African American, looks to her father as a positive example for herself and her community,

> I mean, just he's a fine example. Look at the house we live in, and look at some of the houses; I mean, I don't know if you've ever been to the Liberty City area [the largest African American neighborhood in Miami-Dade County]. I'm not saying they have bad houses, but we're living a lot more comfortable. And, being that my dad was from the projects and from the area, he went back and had his shop right on 52nd and 7th Avenue where he was brought up and had his shop there instead of coming here and building a foundation. He went back. And, I feel like he set an example for a lot of people that came up after him. Especially people I guess my generation, Generation X, or whatever.

Even for those whose family is not close, their most important group is described as family-like. Some of our male Jamaican respondents had strained or distant relationships with their families, but had established a tight group of friends that at least one, Michael, self-consciously recognized as a substitute for family.

Census promotional materials could better reflect the importance of family when targeting

particular ethnic populations. Most “Anglos,” non-Hispanic Whites, emphasize the individual first and then for issues such as the Census, their emphasis jumps to the level of the community. The ethnic minorities we studied, however, emphasize family first. Accordingly, many GenXers would probably respond to Census promotional materials that emphasized families, such as families filling out forms together or how Census information can help families that are in communities.

Many of our respondents did reflect at least one value contained in the stereotypes of Generation X. Widespread, but not exclusively among males, was a concern for “making it," getting a good job, making money and obtaining material goods. Sop, a Jamaican, was the most cynical, “I believe that everybody in this world is all in it for themselves, truthfully. If they can help you on the way there they will, but truthfully everybody is in the race for themselves. They much rather do for themselves. No one is gonna look after you. You know what I'm saying? You got to do for yourself." Marilu, a Mexican respondent and a former gang member, indicated that being able to obtain material goods she wanted was her primary reason for joining a gang. Chris, a Jamaican, indicated that what he cared about the most was money. Marlon, a Nicaraguan, was only slightly more practical. He cares most about, “The future, I guess. Putting food on the table. Paying the bills."

Most GenX respondents, however, recognized that “making it” entailed earning it. John, a Nicaraguan, indicated that you have to work hard, “Yeah, everyone has the goal to succeed, that's what I think. Well, if you wanta do good you gotta work hard. You can't just expect to stay home and be on good terms, so you gotta work hard if you wanta get somewhere.”

Respondent self-indulgence and a corresponding disregard for community inclines one to believe that one is utterly independent and thus the Census is irrelevant to their lives. For our sample, the Census could still reach such respondents through their families. The Census 2000 advertisements that emphasized young people in communities resonated favorably with those among our sample who saw the decennial census posters, billboards, television commercials or heard the various Census radio announcements and ads. Over seventy percent (72 percent) of sampled respondents had seen or heard a Census advertisement. Some of our respondents, however, do not pay too much attention to mainstream media. For them, outreach should be more targeted on media that attract youth, specifically urban radio stations, young adult magazines and perhaps clubs and bars that cater to young adults such as GenXers.

For most respondents, however, self-indulgence was second to family obligations. Miguel, a Nicaraguan, asserted, “I want to be something in life. I don't want to just stay here working like [at] McDonald's or something like that. I want something better for myself. And also my parents, when they came into this country, they had to do hard jobs like at first and things like that. And so just as a little kid (they would say) you know you deserve better, so you go [to] school and you make something of yourself and later on it'll pay off. So, I guess since I was a little kid they pretty much instilled that in my head.”

Respondents in our study do exhibit a shared consciousness, but not in terms of being disengaged self-centered slackers. For nearly all respondents, the greatest value is placed on family. Some of

our respondents are sacrificing earnings and desires to have their own place to help maintain the family or further family goals rather than individual goals. While the values of some of our Generation X respondents appear to be at least partially self-centered, a concern for others, particularly their family, dominates.

Table 4.1.1 Generation X Respondent Core Values and Issues in this Study

Value Mentioned*	Percent	Number
Family relationships	56.5%	85
Giving to others and the community	21.3%	32
Equality and social harmony	18.6%	28
Respect for others	13.3%	20
Honesty	10.6%	16
Hard work	10.6%	16
Continuation of my culture	8.0%	12
Respecting elders	8.0%	12
Not stealing or cheating	5.3%	8
Non-violence	5.3%	8
Following Ten Commandments	5.3%	8
Improving the world	2.6%	4
Being assertive	2.6%	4

* Values respondents mentioned are not exclusive.

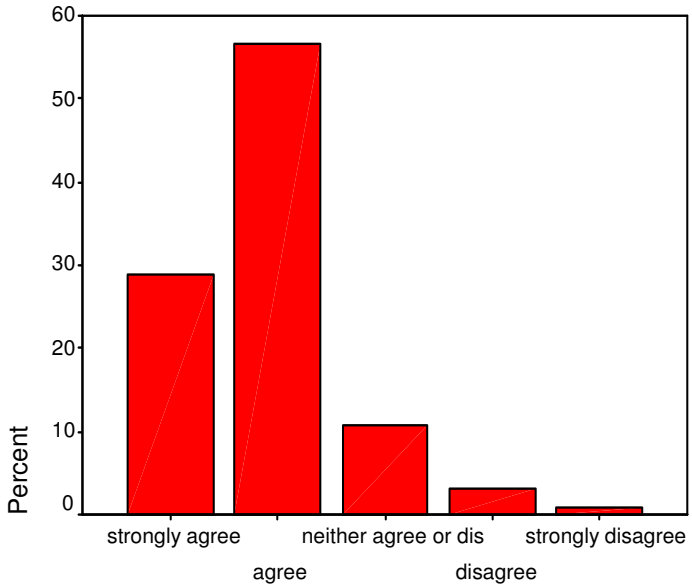
4.2 To Be Or Not To Be Involved: GenXers Speak Out

Contrary to popular belief, most members of the birth cohort Generation X in this study have by no means opted out of civic life - they are civically engaged. The general consensus among respondents in this study is that civic involvement is a good thing. It would be a mistake to assume that GenXers are wholly disengaged. Overall, our ethnographic interviews have provided evidence that GenXers are engaged in a number of civic responsibilities in and around the family, the home, the church, through neighborhood crime watch committees, cultural activities (i.e. Pow Wows, Cinco de Mayo, Kwanzaa), by donating food, money and blood to local charities, by helping out senior citizens, through recycling, tutoring, signing petitions, by voicing opinions on talk radio shows (i.e. Native American Calling, National Public Radio and the Tom Joyner Morning Show), and by joining school-based activities. Our interviews, survey data, focus groups and participant observations also revealed that our group of sampled GenXer's has far greater desires to be involved in the community than actual involvement.

Figure 4.2.1 shows that nearly 85 percent of GenX respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the survey statement, "I would like to be more involved in the community." Of this total 85 percent, 96 percent of all African American respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with survey this statement; 91 percent of all Hispanic respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this survey statement; 83 percent of all American Indian respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this survey statement; 83 percent of all Afro-Caribbean respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this survey statement; 77 percent of all

Non-Hispanic White respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this survey statement; and 67 percent of all Southeast Asian respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this survey statement.

Figure 4.2.1 Generation X Survey Question Result



Historically, young adults have always been active in activities that require commitment and the giving of time (Putnam 2000). And today's young adults have not broken with the tradition of community involvement and the spirit of volunteerism. In fact, many respondents commented on their observations of a renewed interest in community among their peers, a sort of revitalization in civic engagement. One Non-Hispanic White male in his early thirties had this to say:

> In the past few years, it never ceases to amaze me how much more volunteerism I run into - I run into people who are volunteering time or are involved in things that aren't necessarily going to be paying them any money but that they feel some ennobling urge- if you will- to be involved in a soup kitchen or a neighborhood clean up.

We argue that civic engagement has not disappeared among GenXers, but that it has changed. Civic engagement now occurs during the micro-processes of everyday life, a trend exhibited throughout contemporary American culture and not a phenomenon unique solely to Generation X.

GenXers were especially unlikely to be involved in what might be called traditional community engagement areas, such as formal organizations and political activities. By and large, our research data reveal that respondents demonstrate their civic seriousness in large numbers through four different patterns of civic engagement: 1) via l*ocal volunteer associations*; 2) via

local, non-political networks; 3) via *informal, low-key activities*; and 4) via *unconventional forms of activism*.

One twenty-three year old American Indian respondent commented on her commitment to volunteerism through a local Habitat for Humanity chapter, "it's all about helping people to get up on their feet and have a home. Getting them to be self-willed people." Another respondent shared an example of a candle vigil, a local non-political activity important to him and to other members of his immediate community,

> ...one of the things that I recently did was a little walk with candles through the neighborhood to bring awareness to this idea of keeping affordable housing in the neighborhood.

The opinion that there is more than one prescribed way to be civically involved seemed to resonate with many GenXers. Some respondents were particularly outspoken concerning the narrow focus of socially accepted and legitimate forms of community involvement. One non-Hispanic White female respondent, an advocate of informal, low-key activities, had this to say about community involvement:

> I think it's talking to people, finding out where people are from and what people are thinking about. I don't necessarily think it [community involvement] always has to happen in these organized ways, like block meetings. Actually, I'm probably a little suspicious of those type of things, but I think it can happen in very informal ways...you know, picnics, going down to the park, actually having a conversation with people, smiling to people as you pass them on the street, creating this kind of warmth in the neighborhood. If we're talking about specific development issues, should a school be built, then that requires these organized meetings and things of that nature. But I don't think that community can only take place in those spaces. Picking up your dog crap is community too so I don't have to step in it.

Many respondents argued that they are involved in the community in a variety of ways and on a variety of levels that do not always reflect "traditional" forms of activism. One twenty-one year old African American male specifically addressed this issue by stating,

> When they have polls and stuff, I give my lil'two cents. I call the radio stations a lot. Stuff like that counts. You know it doesn't have to go as high as government to always be heard because, a lot of people in my community and a lot of people in the community surrounding me listen to [radio stations]. So my opinion can go further sometimes than trying to petition or trying to be heard on Capital Hill.

One Indian male respondent in his late twenties, for example, does not necessarily see volunteerism as a component of civic participation. For him, volunteerism only scratches the surface of authentic civic engagement. He states,

> I work with students, sometimes, and their idea of volunteering is service, service is going into a shelter and working in the soup kitchen, or doing a clothes drive, and that's service. I don't think you really make the individual connection...institutionally you haven't done anything. Now if you do that, then you would write to your legislator and say, "why don't you do something about it?"...that would mean taking the next step towards systemic change.

Other respondents were eager to point out that community civicness goes hand in hand with responsible consumerism. For example, supporting small, locally-owned businesses was deemed as yet another form of active social consciousness. One respondent commented that, "although I find myself occasionally in a Seattle's Best [chain grocery store] or something like that, I try to support local, small businesses in my community and elsewhere." From the perspectives of GenXers like this respondent, activities such as these, suggest that they are more than willing to be responsible citizens, but lament that such types of civic activities receive little attention, respect and recognition. There is a sense among GenXers in this study that "community activism without drama" does not count.

When respondents were asked to explain *why* community involvement was important to them, several GenXers mentioned that it was about *community empowerment.* A Mexican American female respondent in her late twenties explains,

> I believe that people should take a very strong role in solving community problems. I strongly disagree where people from government offices come, who are not from the community, don't know much about our needs, try to solve our problems without any help from us. So I do believe in community empowerment.

A 26-year-old Non-Hispanic White female respondent expresses the same sentiment,

> Well, I don't think we should leave it all up to the government to decide on how to help people because a lot of it is not money. It's your time, it's personal interactions. And I think it also gives some control back to you because you don't always get full control of where your tax dollars go or what organizations and what issues get help. But if you really feel strong about an issue, it's your opportunity to make a difference there. And second of all, I think once you start doing it, unfortunately you may become aware of how big the problem is which I think encourages you to be more committed to the issue and how to resolve it. So, I think it [community involvement] broadens people's horizon.

Others feel that the best way they can contribute to community life is to inspire their children with a sense of self-respect they themselves did not have when young. For example, an American Indian focus group respondent expressed this point of view. She said, "I see the younger generation being more proud of who they are." She explained her position:

> ...I have children that I feel will play a big part in [governance] some day, as long as they – I'm the generation who – My parents just gave up. I'm the generation telling my children, stand up and be proud of who you are. If I'd been taught that when I was younger, I might have had a more powerful voice, but now I can at least say to my children, 'It doesn't matter what anybody says, stand up to them' and making them have the power, have a voice, that's what my power is.

It was also important for many respondents to maintain a bond or tie with their community so they could continue to be a positive force, *role model* or *advocate* to those currently living in or near their community.

> I feel like I belong here; it doesn't mean that if there are bad people in the community I should separate myself from that...as a matter of fact, if I can see the wrong they're doing, it's up to me to try to talk to the right people, so I can change the youth who are being derailed from doing the right thing.

> I think of myself as a role model. I can go out there and make a young person just like myself....not go through things that other young people go through. We have an organization that we meet with once a month to talk about issues within the community among young people, such as HIV education.

> I act as an advocate. If I see that your real and your issues are real, than I act as a advocate for you. At the age of 16 I was locked up...I got to see the world on real terms. I decided that I wanted to be part of the plan, and not the destruction of the plan.

For the majority of respondents, getting involved in the community was about *giving back to the community*, it's about making the connection between one's personal values and larger systemic concerns or issues. This was especially true for many ethnic minority respondents. The value placed on *giving to others* is important to respondents in this study (refer to Table 4.1.1), insofar as reciprocity is the heart of social life. For example, an American Indian respondent talked about "giving and receiving" as having magical effects, as well as being the very definition of community involvement:

> You should give before you receive from the community.... What is received is a feeling of being part of something. Many people feel isolated. To be a part of something beyond my own family.... By [our] giving, our community becomes that much stronger, our kids can read that much better, we have more salmon to do our ceremonies around, and to keep our Oregon economy strong.

An 18-year-old Cambodian high school student made a similar though less eloquent statement: "[Others in the community expect that] whatever they do for you, you should help in return, whatever the problem is." One twenty-one year old Hispanic female respondent shares this same sentiment, "I'm remembering right now something that Martin Luther King said, that an injustice

anywhere is an injustice everywhere, it's important for people to have a communal oriented value. "

The decennial census is an easy way in which a generation can give back to the community while empowering the community. This is a message that should be publicized during outreach efforts. The decennial census can also serve as a vehicle by which some GenXers can "have their voices heard." The Census is a non-partisan, legislative, national resource that tells politicians, policy makers, government agencies, community organizations and businesses the resources a community has and the resources a community needs.

In contrast, there were respondents in our study who revealed a higher degree of skepticism about the value of civic engagement, particularly Afro-Caribbean Immigrants. There seemed to be an awareness, as first-generation Haitians and Jamaicans, that they are undervalued, marginalized, not accepted, and alienated from local and national communities alike. Jamaicans males, in particular, repeatedly voiced this belief:

> I'm not saying that I don't believe in it [community involvement], it's just for others to do - I won't knock anyone for doing it, to put it to you that way. Just don't force me to do it. You know what I'm saying. All that good stuff make it right, but personally for me to go out and to help enhance it or you know - I don't believe in that. They had a community clean-up one time and they were saying everyone's cleaning up. That's fine. I'm so glad. I was glad to see people there, but don't ask me to come over there and come help too. It should be voluntary, not forced.

Other respondents like one 19-year-old Haitian-American respondent, felt that community involvement was important, but not a priority. She states,

> I mean, it's not like detrimental, but you know, you need to give back, you need to give your input and try to help out when you can. I don't feel people need to be pressured to get involved. You have to be involved by your own preference.

Perhaps the primary turn-off for Afro-Caribbean respondents is due to the forced nature of community involvement activities as a prerequisite for high school and college completion nowadays. The mandate that community involvement is required and involuntary rather than voluntary, was not well received by these respondents.

Figure 4.2.2 Generation X Survey Question Result

'It does not matter if I volunteer.'

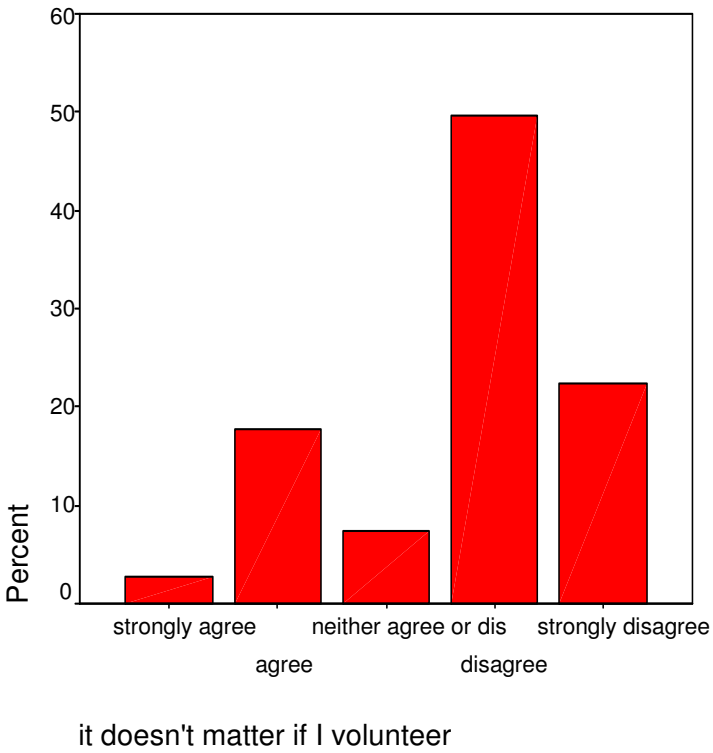


Figure 4.2.2 shows that over seventy percent of our GenX respondents (72 percent) either "disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the survey statement, "It does not matter if I volunteer." Only 57 percent of Afro-Caribbean respondents 'agreed' with this survey statement. As a way to help describe the various civic and government engagement patterns and values that characterize GenX respondents in this study, we have identified five engagement profile types in Table 4.2.1: the *Transitional* participation profile type; 2) the *Trend-Setter* participation profile type; 3) the *Crisis* participation profile type; 4) the *Altruistic* participation profile type; and 5) the *Egoistic* participation profile type. These engagement profile types discussed in Table 4.2.1 may be indicative of current and future behavioral responses to the decennial census and other demographic surveys.

Table 4.2.1 Generation X Respondent Engagement Profile Types in this Study

Profile Type	Definition	Consequence	Respondent Quote Example
Transitional	The ability to participate is directly related to the individual's station in his/her personal or professional life.	Civic and/or government engagement may be erratic, inconsistent, unstable.	*"Where I'm at now, as far as professionally, I'm just starting out, I just graduated from school, so I'm not in a position to make much of an impact."*
Trend-Setter	Civic and/or government engagement values are expressed through folk festivals, religion/ spirituality, art, music, education, politics and etc.	Civic and/or government engagement activities may be progressive, transformative and innovative.	*"You can't work alone. If you work with your neighbors – for example, every year there's a Cinco de Mayo holiday. I'm there to help them even though I'm not Mexican.... I've also talked to a pastor in my neighborhood, actually his wife* is Buddhist.*...We want them to know what they have as part of the community.... I know there are gangs in our community. What can I do to bring them in? Maybe we can put together our resources in partnership on behalf of our kids....There should be more recognition of bilingualism in the public school system....If the community colleges can teach Russian, they can also teach Lao."*
Crisis	The ability to participate is undermined by the individual's overwhelming life circumstances, struggles and responsibilities.	Civic and/or government engagement perception and behavior is altered; it is a low priority.	*"I recently left an abusive relationship and live alone with my two-year-old daughter. I work two part-time sales jobs in a shopping mall, but I don't have a reliable babysitter. Having a baby and two jobs prevents me from being active in the community, but I do stay in touch with the people at the Title IX Indian Education Program."*
Altruistic	Civic and/or government engagement emphasis is on doing, it's philanthropic, for the greater good; "we" mentality.	Civic and/or government engagement is deliberate; it is a priority.	*"I do a lot of community service. I've been volunteering this spring. My school encourages that. Not everybody has access to dental care, so it's important that we volunteer in the neighborhood clinics. [I also go] to schools, educating students about oral health care. [And I volunteer] at the clinics every Monday night. After school I plan to continue doing this kind of thing, even if it's only once a month. I think I owe it to my community."*
Egoistic	Civic and/or government engagement emphasis is solely self-centered and self-seeking; "I" mentality.	Civic and/or government engagement is avoided; it is not a priority.	*"I'm not a part of my community. There are things happening all the time, and I'm around. But, I'm just not interested. It just doesn't follow my interest."*

4.3 Hope and Despair: The Meaning and Role of Community Among GenXers

The term "community" is too frequently uttered with the intended meaning of speakers and listeners readily assumed. The idea of community is a deceptively simple one. The notion of 'community' emerges as something much more complex and obscure than originally predicted. The concept of community means different things to different people, and our GenX respondents were no exception. Several respondents associated community with *locality* or *localism*, "where you live, the people and places that are surrounded by you," thus assigning a bounded, geographical definition to the term. For such respondents, the source of civic life is embedded in the "local" community. The term 'community' evokes a link to a group of neighborhood people who probably have known each other for many years, and who help one another. Respondents see in local civic life a vehicle for creating and sustaining habits of social interaction and social trust. This ideal, based on stable, long-term associations, is both a *spatial* and *social* view on the term community. The "local" community for such respondents seems to represent an entity that stands in opposition to the "nation" or the "government." According to author Alan Brinkley, the local community is "a defense against impersonal bureaucracies" (Brinkley 1996). Edner, a male Haitian respondent substantiated Brinkley's claim by simply stating, community is "another part of your home."

Some respondents emphasized that community implied something shared, such as an interest, religion or activity. Community was about "meaningful connections," thus, community was about *association*. For instance, according to respondents, "community means people who are, who have some common bond, something that puts them in a group together, something that gives them something in common with other members." The meaning of community for these respondents moves beyond the customary "weather-movie"conversations. A non-Hispanic White female respondent of Jewish background remarks,

> There's a community that is my work-world community, there's an advocacy community, and there's a sort of a social justice community that I am a part of. I think for the most part, the communities that I'm involved with would have similar views.

A Southeast Asian respondent expressed a view of community that is ethnic, social and spatial:

> A community is the way people live, the way people treat each other in the neighborhood. The government services, quality of life, protection from police. Small businesses, library – everyday involvement. ...My community would be Asian group, first. And I have a community of people I work with. They're also my community. And my friends.

For other respondents, definitions of 'community' were discussed as symbols of *identity.* For instance, one respondent commented, "I put the communities I belong to-- the African American, the middle class community, college student community and the hip hop community." Another respondent, a Hispanic female states, "people think of their race when they think of community. Instead of seeing themselves as homes, they see themselves as subdivisions: the Cubans, the Columbians, and stuff like that. They break it down, which makes us weak." The meaning of

community for these respondents had evolved into a construct founded on collective, yet distinctive characteristics that are physical, personal or behavioral. One African American respondent was quick to reveal, "I'm part of the gay community. That's the one community that I say that's my life and that's the community I'm really a part of." A Southeast Asian respondent from Portland, Oregon acknowledged that he is part of a dispersed "Asian" community:

> Community in my mind is a group of people, like a village, who live together and work together and have activities with each other....A leader who can talk about problems....[We "Asians" in Portland] are distributed around town. Many Asians have small communities – maybe at a common market. A place where they have the same language and same culture, people who understand each other.

The idea of sharing community responsibility was also valued among respondents. Respondents seem to believe that part of a community's inherent function is to teach its members how to mature into responsible citizens. An African American respondent in her late twenties expressed what so many other respondents had also voiced,

> It's very much important to be involved. If one person feel an issue, than maybe everyone on that block feel it and if you don't take a step to get involved and let other people know, making them aware of the issue, then they may feel that no one cares. And if they feel that no one cares, then the issue will remain an issue 'til somebody do something about it. To be involved means to get people involved, help get the word out on what's going on and also to just make your presence there every now and then, show up for those meetings, and participate, make your face known and make your beliefs known.

Another respondent remarks, "…a community only works when everyone rotates, but there's always someone or a set of people who stop doing and set the whole chain off." In terms of community citizenship, one respondent noted, "it's very important [to get involved in the community] but often frustrating, not knowing if you're getting heard." For these respondents, civic involvement is about a shared sense of community responsibility where it is important for everyone to do his or her portion of the work in order to sustain a successful community, thus, a civically engaged community.

Participation in community life, most GenXers regretfully admitted, is too often based on an "I" mentality over a "we" mentality. A sense of romanticized nostalgia overcame many respondents when they reflected back on the way community in society used to exist. There is a belief that the days of community as older generations once knew them to exist have all but disappeared – "they no longer are vibrant" one respondent remarks. The reality, however, for this highly mobile population, is that they believe they have no "community." The demise of community is evident for GenX respondents in that "a sense of confidence" is missing. Many respondents commented on the disappointment, the fracture of, and the moral decay they have increasingly witnessed in their communities. Respondents had the following to say of their respective communities.

> Well, I think that community used to be more of a tangible defining word or term that people when they used it there was no question what it meant. I think when you talk to older generations you'll get that message. These days, we have to sit down and come up with different definitions of it, which means it is more abstract.
>
> The kids with the poverty and the drug abuse. I've seen it [the community] change since when we first moved there to now. The homes are run down. They're not being maintained. A lot of homes have become HUD homes now. I would say more than half. There's a lot of garbage outside the homes. I'm not saying everyone, but there's a few bad influences. They're writing all over the place and smoking and drinking, and I don't like that.
>
> I'll take my street for example. Growing up as a small child, we all knew each other, all the neighbors and now a lot of new families moved in, all younger, and no one knows each other. And if that were to be a microcosm of what's really going on in my home city....you would have a city of people who don't know each other, who don't want to get to know each other. Maybe that's community these days.
>
> Well, I should say that I'm kind of disappointed with the status of community right now because most of the time, when I'm ready to go for work, or when I come back from work, I find youth just loitering in the streets, I mean doing nothing. And I wonder what amount of time they do waste, just hanging around in the streets. I wish they knew that the time they use, that they mess up, is kind of vital. They can do something constructive, rather than walking around in the streets, doing nothing....I'm afraid that in our generation, we've lost track, tremendously. We don't have moral values. We don't respect parents, and that's really scary.

The decennial census can serve as a powerful tool for communities, especially in communities such as the ones respondents described above. Members of a community can get to know their communities through the data collected, which is used as a resource to allocate federal and state funds to communities, to formulate public policy and to assist with planning and decision-making in the private sector. The importance of Census survey data to community development and federal educational allocations should be stressed to GenX respondents to inspire decennial census compliance. Just as the lottery system has a slogan, *you can't win if you don't play*; and the Census 2000 had a slogan, *This is your future. Don't leave it blank.* The Census Bureau could create a new slogan for the 2010 Census that would appeal to GenX respondents: *Be counted in your community so that you can count on your community. Return your 2010 Census form* (Crowley 2001).

Although our sample did not express a single, clear and coherent definition of community or of what engagement in that community might mean, some respondents added the criterion of sharing values and goals. Allison, a Jamaican, defined community as, "People who come together when they have a common interest. There's something in common whether it be the

neighborhood or church or work or school. Just a group of people who have something or things in common, they go together." Edner, a Haitian, indicated community is, "Another part of your home;" meaning, "Family and friends. I know community is a big part in how you gonna turn out in the future."

The notion of "community" emerges as something much more complex and obscure than originally predicted. A full sense of what community is, as respondents have clearly illustrated -- is open to infinite interpretation. Many respondents cited their family and/or church as the primary source by which their civic values and beliefs were developed, nurtured and encouraged. We refer to these communities as *root communities*. In contrast, respondents often claimed that school, work and neighborhood settings are akin to *surrogate communities*, substitute communities that serve as resources and outlets by which respondents are able to develop and maintain civic ties. The bottom line for respondents is that community is a dualistic experience; it serves as a place that represents both hope and despair.

4.4 Alienating Immigrants: The Impact of Citizenship on Civic-Mindedness

4.4.1 Afro-Caribbean Haitians

Immigration and Naturalization Services(INS) identifies Haitians as being the fifth highest undocumented alien population residing in the United States according to 1996 estimates. Life for Haitians in the U.S. has tended to be dominated by struggle; struggle against a discriminatory immigration policy and struggle against ubiquitous anti-Haitian prejudice. Their focus in the U.S. is commonly surviving and getting ahead. Keisha, a Haitian immigrant reported, "Like what's the most thing I care about in life? To be honest with you, I care about my church and my education. I do have a problem that's bothering me all the time, but I don't think it's a part of it. I just want to go see my people. I'm like, 'hey, it's a problem for me. I don't have a green card. I can't go.' I always think about it, and it's a problem for real."

Coming from one of the least democratic heritages in the New World, Haitians have little experience with civic involvement. Family and church are the only two institutions Haitians trust. Civic participation is an alien concept to Haitian respondents that participated in this research. Even Haitians who are very active in their church do not conceive of participating in a community outside of church. For instance, the experiences of American societal racism urge Haitians to identify with African Americans. At the same time, prejudice specifically against Haitians, some of it on the part of African Americans, supports a specifically Haitian identity. Census outreach should be tailored to meet the specific needs of Haitians; it must also be sensitive to their multiple, situational identities and sense of community.

4.4.2 Afro-Caribbean Jamaicans

None of the Afro-Caribbean Jamaican respondents had a strong sense of local community history. Instead, they often compared the lack of solidarity in their current community (e.g. Miami) to an idealized image of their home country where people were allegedly more likely to help each other out. Jamaicans, the only immigrants in our study from a strongly democratic

country, had notions of civic engagement most similar to those in the U.S. Nevertheless, respondents frequently and cynically noted widespread corruption and cronyism. Because most of the Jamaicans in our study had come to the U.S. as adolescents, they have fairly clear memories of civic and political society in Jamaica. Immigration frequently sundered their nuclear family as one or both parents remained in Jamaica while respondents came to the U.S. to pursue their education. In the U.S., Jamaican respondents commonly live in female-headed households or with relatives whom they did not previously know very well. Moreover, their experiences with U.S. racism have alienated them. As a result, these respondents are socially more isolated in the United States and nostalgically recall the warm families they left behind. Jamaican respondents did know about censuses, voting, political parties and the like. But they did not feel particularly attached to those activities in Jamaica nor in the United States. Their sense of community in America tends to be no more than people who share a neighborhood. They felt that the sharing needed for a broader community is evident in Jamaica, but is absent in the United States.

4.4.3 Afro-Caribbeans Collectively

Afro-Caribbeans appear both staunch in their views and extreme in their actions against civic involvement. Afro-Caribbean respondents in this study sincerely believe that they are not cared for nor particularly respected in America. These respondents articulated that they have received little positive input from their surrogate or adopted communities to date, and thus, are unwilling to put much of themselves into any community outside of a familiar circle of family members and church-circle friends. One Afro-Caribbean respondent expressed his extreme alienation by stating, "As far as belonging to a community right now where I stay at, I don't really know nobody there. I'm just in and out. The only people I really know is who I hang around with, that's about it." For this respondent and like so many other Afro-Caribbean participants in this study, the community they belong to is comprised of individuals who also feel disconnected, it's an endless vicious cycle. One Jamaican respondent states,

> Where I'm living right now, I don't care too much about it 'cause I don't call it a community anyway. [Community is]... people that come together for you because you know them and everything. But here [in the U.S.], everybody doing their own thing. So, I don't call that a community. I just call that, everybody wanting to do their own stuff. I don't care too much about the so-called community I'm supposed to live in.

To not feel like you belong to any bounded community group or geographical space is to not feel like a citizen for many Afro-Caribbean respondents. In essence, these respondents lack privileges and rights associated with American citizenship because they feel as though they have no claim to space or connection to community. The fastest growing segments of the Black population are identified as immigrants and children of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa (Census 2000), and thus, the need for more specific racial demographic data is critical. Omission of specific racial demographic data for such groups such as Haitians, leads to gross errors in planning strategies, family well-being issues, health service access and utilization, civil rights and socioeconomic estrangement (Marcelin and Marcelin 2001).

Not feeling connected to a community because of one's immigrant status certainly takes it toll on one's willingness to get involved in community affairs, even local ones. The willingness among these immigrant respondents to undertake certain forms of civic involvement and responsibility seem to be undermined by experiences of exclusion. Information collected from our ethnographic interviews, survey data, focus groups and participant observations underscored that a lack of citizen rights, whether perceived or actualized, negatively impacts the desire and motivation of many Afro-Caribbean GenXers to undertake civic responsibilities and roles. It is this concept of citizenship, a sense of social cohesion or connectedness, of performing a needed role in society that is all but nonexistent for these GenX immigrants. In this sense, not only is citizenship deferred but civic engagement is delayed.

Afro-Caribbean immigrants express an invisibility. Without being recognized and feeling respected, Afro-Caribbean respondents are cynical about assuming responsibilities in and around their communities. Motivation paralleled by exclusion translates into apathy. The incorporation of *cultural rights* (the right to practice and maintain a distinct cultural identity and lifestyle) into a liveable definition of citizenship is essential if full societal inclusion and participation is to be achieved among Afro-Caribbean immigrants (Flores 1997). These respondents need to have a way to engage in civic life without feeling threatened or the need to trade their unique cultural values in order to be included, accepted and respected in local and larger communities. These feelings of isolation and separateness from local communities and the larger American society seem to have translated into civic disengagement among GenX Afro-Caribbean respondents on many levels: not much involvement in community outreach activities, very little political participation and a cavalier attitude about civic engagement in general. The one community environment that seems to defy feelings of alienation and exclusion is the church community. For the majority of Afro-Caribbean respondents, "God comes first."

For many Haitians and Jamaicans, civic participation is restricted to church affiliations and obligations. Seventy-one percent of GenX Afro-Caribbean respondents stated that they have participated in church activities on a regular basis in the past two years. One respondent stated that, "man-made governments can't solve social problems. They've been around too long and they have tried every form of government they can think of. When you look at history, they show the same thing." Beyond church activities, civic participation is more about a general sense of being a good neighbor, maintaining one's residence, being courteous and polite to others as well as ensuring not to offend other people by "minding one's business." For the majority of GenX Afro-Caribbeans, their attitudinal and behavioral responses to civic and government engagement conform to profiles described as transitional, crisis and egoistic types (refer to Table 4.2.1). Consequently, civic and government engagement could be inconsistent, a low priority or not a priority at all. This means that Census educational programs and outreach efforts must specifically target and encourage Afro-Caribbeans to participate in Census 2010.

4.4.4 Southeast Asians Collectively

Southeast Asian migration has resulted largely from events associated with the 1964-1975 Vietnam War. Each nationality and ethnic group was affected differently, but the total effect on all Southeast Asians was mostly destructive, including catastrophic involuntary dislocation of large populations, many of who found their way to the U.S. as refugees. According to the most

recent INS figures, during the period 1981-1996, Vietnamese represented the highest rate of refugees entering the U.S. and Cambodians accounted for the fourth highest rate of refugee influx in the U.S. INS estimates place Laos as the sixth of ten leading nations with approved refugee status in the United States. Southeast Asian respondents continue to experience the lingering effects of horrific torture, murder, and deprivation experiences of the Pol Pot era (see Figure 4.4.1 for a brief description of Pol Pot era) and other events associated with the Vietnam War. According to our ethnographic interviews, participant observations and focus group sessions, the bonds of trust were so badly destroyed by these events that they continue to hinder community engagement of many Southeast Asian respondents today. A few historical facts are discussed in Figures 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 about Southeast Asians in order to understand the context of their plight, attitudes and response to civic engagement.

The Southeast Asian subgroups selected for study represent approximately one-quarter (26 percent) of all "Asians and Pacific Islanders" in the five-county metropolitan area in the 1990 Census for the state of Oregon. The five-county metropolitan area includes: Multnomah, Clackamas, Columbia, Washington and Yamhill. The total population count for these subgroups was 12,093, which also happened to be 0.9 percent of the total population. There are no 1998 estimates of subgroup populations, but the Asian and Pacific Islander total was 3.7 percent in 1990 and estimated at 4.8 percent in 1998. Data are from Census tables (CO-98-11 & Table 5/General Population Characteristics) provided by the Center for Population Research and Census, Portland State University. The 1990 population count for the metropolitan region (the five county total) was 1,277,399 and was estimated at 1,492,012 in1998. High rates of geographical mobility make it almost impossible to anticipate what the 2010 count of Southeast Asian subgroups will be.

Figure 4.4.1 Historical Overview

Cambodians, governed initially by Prince Sihanouk, experienced an American-backed coup led by Lon Nol in 1970. This coup temporarily sent Sihanouk into exile, but Sihanouk's forces overthrew Lon Nol's regime in 1974 with the backing of the Khmer Rouge. With Prince Sihouk as head of state, the Khmer Rouge commenced a radical program in which millions died. Prince Sihanouk resigned in 1976, and Pol Pot became Prime Minster until 1979, when he was ousted by a Vietnamese invasion. By 1980 the country was run by the KPRP, Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party, with Hen Samrin as leader. Prince Sihanouk, together with the Khmer Rouge, once again formed a government-in-exile which was recognized by the U.N. In 1988 Vietnam announced troop withdrawals, which stimulated a Khmer Rouge offensive. By 1990 the U.N. Security Council approved a plan for a U.N. monitored ceasefire and elections, and Cambodian factions formed a Supreme National Council. Political turmoil and difficulties continue to the present; but by 1990 all interviewees and their families had emigrated. They refer to the worst period as the "Pol Pot War."

Figure 4.4.2 Historical Overview

Laotians were either peasants or urbanites of the politically dominant "lowland" group, or tribal people, such as *Mien* (also called Yao) or Hmong, speaking Austro-Asiatic languages and living in densely forested mountains. As the Ho Chi Minh Trail crossed parts of Laos, the U.S. bombed areas of the country from 1964 and formed alliances with some Laotians sympathetic to the U.S. and South Vietnamese cause. In 1973, after the Paris Peace Agreement, U.S. forces partially withdrew, and a new coalition government was established. In 1975 the Lao People's Democratic Republic was established on socialist principles, and a program of collectivized agriculture was begun. The new governing group was sometimes referred to by the name of the former military wing of the independence/resistance movement, the "Pathet Lao." The aggressive effort to revolutionize production was especially destructive of lowland elite groups and highland tribal people, many of whom fled the country.

Figure 4.4.3 Historical Overview

Vietnamese people who assisted the U.S. war effort, together with their extended families, either left at the end of the war or left as 'boat people' during the 1980s after realizing that their post-war education and employment opportunities were limited. This nationality makes up the largest single group of Southeast Asian immigrants to the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area.

As Southeast Asian refugees, all respondent families were entitled to public assistance when they arrived in the United States. A large number of Southeast Asian respondents, 86 percent, said that their parents had used public assistance at some time during their childhoods. As might be expected, a similarly large number of GenX respondents (77 percent), worked while in high school. Some worked very long hours. One female respondent, a high school drop-out, said she worked many hours per week while in high school so as to be able to buy necessities such as clothes and shoes.

The majority of Southeast Asian respondents in this study fit the transitional or crisis engagement mode profile (refer to Table 4.2.1). Even after initial refugee settlement to the U.S., there was still much "secondary migration" within the U.S. Southeast Asians sought new locations in order to increase social supports from kin, fictive kin, and patrons (sponsors), some of whom worked in social service agencies. Access to U.S. social services for Southeast Asians is largely obtained through the offices of bilingual people who build up networks of influence through job provisions and other essential services. This system is true to the form of social structure back in respondents' respective native countries. Thus, communal cooperation and mutual problem solving are seen as strengths that respondents value. Giving to others was mentioned as an important value by 43 percent of Southeast Asian respondents.

Some respondents mentioned that efforts by members of their parental generation to form "Asian" self-help associations had not succeeded. The International Rescue Committee of Oregon established the Asian Family Center to provide multiple social services for Southeast Asian refugee families. Some of the community colleges' English as a Secondary Language (ESL) programs also provide opportunities for much needed skills development along with social contact. Gangs also provide a measure of personal security and social status to young people when all else fails.

Southeast Asians in the Portland metropolitan area have access to a relatively meager group of social resources, that is, less "social capital[7]" available for their collective and individual use. The most enduring and stable ethnically oriented institutions seem to be Buddhist temples, in which three specifically serve Southeast Asian communities. Among Southeast Asian respondents that are Buddhist, they use three different Buddhist temples in the Portland metropolitan area: one established by Laotians; another by Cambodians; and a third used mostly by Vietnamese immigrants. Buddhist temples are staffed by a few full-time monks, some Lao and some Thai, who perform initiation ceremonies for young men and officiate at rites of passage ceremonies. The Lao and Cambodian temples share the services of each other's monks if necessary. Church membership once again, is important to this respondent group. Sixty-four percent of GenX Southeast Asians said they have been affiliated with a religious institution during the past two years according to our card sort data.

Elicited Census counts and future survey cooperation from Southeast Asian respondents should

7 Social capital" is a term used by Coleman (1990) and others to refer to the multiple kinds of networks and organizations that literally "produce" public welfare. Depending on the formation of interpersonal trust through long-term reciprocal exchanges (such as gifts, friendship, doing personal favors, and providing or receiving economic support), it grows slowly. It can be said to exist apart from any individual, but the actions, positive or negative, of all participants affect its strength and quality.

make use of community "leaders" (patrons), but should be done with the awareness that there always will be multiple community leaders recognized in any one location. Certain core values should also be stressed when conducting outreach campaigns to engage Southeast Asians. We suggest that these include: meeting family responsibilities, respect for ones' elders (both parents and elder siblings), self-respect, and surviving adversity. There is also a strong tendency among Southeast Asians to value spiritual or personal commitments over monetary ones, though no one criticizes financial success. For 2010 enumeration efforts, field representatives can expect Southeast Asian respondents to encounter language problems (English fluency and literacy is modest) when filling out a Census form and to reside in irregular household and family arrangements. It is also recommended that Census 2010 planning committees increase their outreach efforts to this population segment and continue to promote the availability of Census short-forms in Lao, Thai and Vietnamese languages.

4.4.5 Cubans

Unlike the other immigrant groups in this study, first generation Cubans have power. Because of the relatively privileged background of the first Cuban arrivals and the assistance afforded them from the U.S. government (Stepick 1993), Miami is the only American city where Latino immigrants have created a successful and self-sustained ethnic economy in which they have a high likelihood of being able to work with co-ethnics in enterprises owned by co-ethnics, shop in stores owned and operated by co-ethnics, and obtain professional services from co-ethnics. By the early 1990s, just thirty years after Cubans began arriving to the United States, they controlled all of the most important local political machinery and they had deeply penetrated the most important economic positions. Cubans have the numbers, economic development, political power, cultural and linguistic presence, and social and psychological security to take center stage. Many immigrant groups point to Cubans as the archetype community because they are a group who are internally united and able to wield power and influence.

Cuban Americans view themselves as the most stalwart immigrant group in opposing communism and thus, perceive themselves as loyal supporters and defenders of U.S. interests. They further view themselves as strongly contributing to U.S. society by being economically successful and flourishing through their intense civic engagement reflected in their high rates of naturalization and ability to elect Cuban American officials locally. Cubans have the second highest naturalization rates of all immigrant groups. Apart from their obvious opposition to Castro's Cuba, they have voted as an ethnic block in local elections and have consistently supported Republicans in state and national elections (Moreno and Warren 1992). A 1997 south Florida survey of Cubans revealed, that of those who are citizens, over 90 percent are registered to vote. Of the Cubans registered to vote, 70 percent are registered Republicans.

GenerationX Cuban immigrants are remarkably assimilated in a characteristically American fashion. While they have not adopted an entirely American or Cuban self-identity, they strongly prefer the hyphenated label, Cuban-American. Previous ethnographic work conducted reveals Cuban young adults to be the most Americanized of immigrant groups in terms of teenage culture (Konczal 1997). Cuban GenXers are also the least likely of all immigrant young adults to report experiences of discrimination (Rumbaut 1997; Rumbaut 1998).

The Elián Gonzalez affair[8] in 2000 has occasioned a profound re-examination among Cubans in terms of how they experience civic and government engagement. In general, Cuban respondents said they became less trusting of the federal government as a result of how the Elián Gonzalez case was handled by the U.S. government. The Hialeah Census Office Manager in Dade County Florida, Gamael Nassar, maintained that up to 1,000 Hialeah residents turned away door-to-door Census enumerators (Yanez 2000). Subsequently, the Hialeah office was embroiled in a controversy concerning fraudulent Census returns. Census workers were fired (Morgan 2000) and a recount ordered (Cobb and Miguel 2000; Morgan 2000). The Elián Gonzalez incident incited much deep emotional resentment among Cuban respondents:

> It's a betrayal. They betrayed us [the U.S.]. We've been the most loyal supporters of the U.S. How could they do this?
>
> The Americans [meaning non-Hispanic Whites], it's like this is their country and we're not part of this. We are visitors. Just that we're not Americans. We're from other places. We don't belong here." Onan added, "I think what she's trying to say is no matter how hard you try you're always going to be from another country. We're not going to be American American. We're going to be Latin"

The Elián Gonzalez affair has also had the contradictory effect of promoting solidarity and ethnic consciousness, while also highlighting differences among Cuban Americans, particularly between the primarily older hardliners and the primarily more assimilated Generation X (or as they are known as among Cubans - Generation Ñ) Cuban Americans. Accordingly, the affair had a contradictory impact on the implementation of Census 2000. During the height of media attention, response rates apparently did decline. We say apparently because there were also apparently a significant number of fraudulent returns. In the short term, the Elián affair made the Census 2000 significantly more difficult among Cubans in Miami. The affair required the Census Bureau to expend significantly more effort in at least one heavily Cuban area, Hialeah. Yet, these alienating events did not prove insurmountable. After the recount, Hialeah ended up having a response rate of 77 percent, the second highest response rate among large cities (Friess 2000) and Miami-Dade County's overall rate of 65 percent surpassed the overall state rate of 63 percent. Thus, even for groups that are apparently successfully integrated and which have significant local power, whenever others perceive, depict, and treat them as alien immigrants, or as the "other," the successful, integrated immigrants may become at least temporarily alienated and not respond to the Census. For most GenX Cuban respondents, they confirm engagement characteristics belonging to the trendsetter profile types refer to Table 4.2.1).

4.4.6 Mexicans

On the eve of Census 2000, nearly two-thirds of the 31.7 million estimated Latinos[9] in the United

8 Elián González, the Cuban rafter child in Miami, Florida around whom a custody battle swirled. Early dawn on April 22, 2000, INS agents rushed the house of Lázaro González to retrieve six-year-old Elián González in order to reunite the child with his father in Cuba. The raid spawned profound reactions from both those who were outraged and those who supported the action.

9 Latino is used to identify a U.S. resident of Latin American heritage, foreign and U.S. born. The term also includes Mexican Americans.

States were of Mexican origin[10] (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). According to the Census 2000 count for Hispanics, there are 35 million Hispanics residing in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). Geographically dispersed throughout the nation, with heavy concentrations in the Southwest and West, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants totaled about 21 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). They also were and continue to be one of the youngest Latino subgroups. Their median age is about 26 years, and nearly 70 percent of them were under 35 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). A significant segment of this young Mexican origin population, nearly 19 percent, was and continues to fall within the age cohort known as Generation X. Our study includes Mexican Americans who are secondary migrants from Texas and thus have been U.S. citizens for generations as well as undocumented immigrants who have been in the U.S. only a few years.

Undocumented Mexican immigrants in this study have worked anywhere from one and half to five years, and they plan to reside in the United States permanently or until economic conditions in their homeland improve. The recent election of Mexican President Vicente Fox of the once described conservative Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party) has given Mexican respondents some hope that the political and economic plight in Mexico will change for the better. However, until they see a change, they have a wait and see attitude. Although many of our Mexican undocumented immigrants are married and their wives and children remain in Mexico, they too plan to stay and work in the United States, at least for the immediate future. Their long-term future plans are for their families to join them in the U.S.

Our respondents' backgrounds reflect the change in the class of Mexicans who immigrate to the United States illegally. Unlike the past, no longer are they solely dispossessed or marginalized peasants who emigrate because of the lack of land and other resources for growing subsistence crops. Now, the immigrants include middle class urban dwellers who are educated and professionals. Most of the undocumented Mexican immigrants represent the new or "renaissance" Mexican immigrant. Respondents are from cities in Mexico where they completed high school, and in one case, attended a university. Their parents are also educated and work for government, have their own businesses or are employed as taxi drivers, store clerks, and in other urban-type employment.

These new immigrants, better educated, are not accepting of their plight in the United States. They are literate and well aware of their rights and, as a consequence, they are not apathetic, but outspoken, especially in their quest for an immigration amnesty. In other major cities throughout the country with a large concentration of Mexican immigrants (e.g. Dallas, Chicago and Miami), they are creating their own political organizations or joining existing ones, such as the Casa Guanajuato. These undocumented immigrants, together with their legal counterparts, are also marching and holding large rallies and demonstrations in front of Federal Buildings in Dallas, Miami and Chicago, calling for an amnesty program that will legalize the large undocumented population. According to 1996 INS figures of this population, the most recent and available to

---

10 "Mexican origin" population refers to foreign and U.S. born residents of Mexican heritage in the United States. A Mexican American, as used within, is a native of the United States. However, readers should be aware that some Mexican immigrants, many of whom immigrated at an early age with their parents and were raised in the United States, also call themselves Mexican American. This term is used over others, such as Chicano or Tejano, because the majority of the U.S. born research respondents in this study used this term to identify themselves.

the public, it is estimated that there are 2.7 million undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States, 54 percent of the total undocumented population in the country (Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2001).

Follow up questioning reveal that all of our immigrant Mexican respondents work long hours as construction workers, maintenance employees or mechanics six days out of the week, sometimes on Sundays, all while they make time to rest and attend church. Guillermo, 23, discusses their time constraints in the following manner:

> Many times we would like to be active, but we cannot, we cannot because we work, we are alone in this country, and we have to follow the work schedule, but we can arrange time to do some activities, but to 'be active' means to give 100 percent for some goal, and this is difficult.

Their heavy work schedule and undocumented status places limits on their community involvement. For the most part, their undocumented status is limiting because they are fearful that, should their immigration status be known, they would be deported. Like other undocumented immigrant respondents, given these constraints, they have limited their involvement to church activities. Lauro, 25, describes his church group in the following fashion:

> Well, in this moment I am reintegration to a movement of the Catholic Church called "Encuentros de Promoción Juvenil" It is a Hispanic group, which devotes to Religion, and also to social. The group works evangelizing young people, and also with people in need [of assistance] like the elderly and the inmates. At this moment my participation is supporting the group. I am not a leader or head of the committees, but my contribution is singing and also doing handwork.

Involvement in the church, respondents explain, is very important to them. For them, the church is not solely a place of worship; it is a place of refuge, not in the physical sense but emotionally. As undocumented workers, living a semi-clandestine life and without their families in the U.S., they often feel alone and anxious. Although they live in a neighborhood surrounded by other Mexican immigrants, some of who are also living in the country without proper immigration documents, they do not feel like they belong. Because of their immigration status and not knowing whom to trust, the undocumented immigrants in the group feel like outsiders. In church, on the other hand, they find solace, peace of mind, and a sense of belonging to a community. The church and its parishioners do not inquire about their immigration status. In fact, they have found that the parishioners could care less about how they entered the country. For them, the Latino church youth group that many belong to is their *surrogate community*, their extended family in the United States. These new extra-fictive family members do not condemn them for seeking a better way of life, but embrace them, include them in all of their activities, and judge them according to their character.

However, the limited community participation of the undocumented immigrants in the group should not be viewed as apathy. Although their work schedule keeps them from participating in community activities to the extent that they would like to, they do care about social issues.

Waste, language, and education for Mexicans were some of the issues that they care about. However, a major issue close to all of them was immigration. They were of the opinion that something had to be done about it besides apprehending and deporting undocumented workers. For example, David, had the following to say about the need to resolve the immigration problem in the following interview excerpt:

> I think the problems, right now, are the problems with the immigration. It is a big problem with us, who came from Mexico to work. I think the government should help us a little more. We, Hispanics, who come here from Mexico, in my case, I came from Mexico, we come here to work, and the [U.S.] government knows about that, knows that we come here to work, but in spite of this, the government does not want to accept us. I do not know what is the reason, but we are an important factor in the progress of this country. Without a good cooker it would have not good meals, and most of the cookers are Mexicans. The same for the constructions, without the Mexican workers in construction, we would not have those big constructions… I think we are a very important part of this country, and if the government gave us a little, that every one of us are asking for, amnesty, then I think the immigration problem would not be anymore a problem. We come to this country and help this country so that it could also help us.

He continued with the following:

> I wish I could do something to solve this problem. Maybe I could do something but I would need help of others, because "the union makes the power," but the government does not help us, does not allow us to do something to solve this.

Enrique, a 23 year old respondent, shared a similar view of this concern in the following statement:

> Well, in my case, I think the most important problem is the problem that we have here in the United States with the immigrants. It is important not to have problems with the law, with the police, and the immigration. And, of course, the big problems that exist in Mexico, which are the reason because we are here. I think I can do something just to improve my own person, in this country.

It is important for the Census Bureau to understand that Mexican immigrants are creating their own community-based organizations, such as Casa Guanajuato, which are growing in number throughout the country wherever there is a concentration of Mexican compatriots. These organizations are reaching a segment of the Mexican origin population long ignored by their Mexican American counterparts. The apathetic Mexican immigrant is a thing of the past, that is, if he/she ever was apolitical. These proactive immigrants, if approached correctly, will be useful in reaching out to their countrymen, especially recent arrivals, and convincing them to participate in Census surveys. Census figures of this foreign-born population show that they are now a majority in many communities, and estimates indicate that they will increase substantially over

the next two decades, as Immigration Reform and Control Act and Special Agricultural Worker Program (amnesty and legalization programs that adjusted the immigration status of over a million undocumented workers in the late 1980s) recipients sponsor the immigration of their kin in Mexico.

This undocumented immigrant respondent group does not have much contact with government agencies and, as such, their experiences with such agencies are very limited. It is not surprising to discover that the undocumented immigrants have had little contact with government agencies. This is a common occurrence among undocumented workers. Since they are in the country illegally, they try their best to limit their interaction with government agencies for fear of being detected and deported. What was surprising is that they also try to have little contact with government agencies in Mexico, especially when they return to their homeland to visit kin. Mexican authorities, according to respondents, often seek bribes from returning immigrants and migrants, and in some cases, rob them at gunpoint without attempting to conceal that they are government officials.

In the focus groups, when questioned about government, participants expressed their apprehension with both the U.S. and Mexican governments. The Mexican government, at least that of the ex-regime, is seen as corrupt; while the U.S. government is considered to be more concerned about the needs of its citizens, but not all of the people. All of them were of the opinion that the U.S. federal government could care less about people like them, that is, undocumented immigrants. Although considered to be better than the Mexican government, the U.S. government was not viewed as perfect, but as flawed. Nonetheless, our Mexican respondents believe people have recourse in this country. In Mexico, they do not.

Mexican undocumented immigrants are similar to Haitians - too concerned and afraid of their immigration status to become involved in civic activities outside of the church. Although Mexican respondents are deeply involved in church, church involvement overall is less for Mexicans than for Haitians and African Americans.

4.4.7 Nicaraguans

For Nicaraguans, much of their civic engagement in the U.S. has been fighting with the American federal government in order to obtain a legal status. The most important issue concerning civic engagement for these respondents is that the U.S. government has not welcomed them as they have Cubans (Portes and Stepick 1993). All Cubans who make it to the U.S. can become documented, while other nationalities experience far greater resistance from the INS. According to the most recent INS estimates, Nicaraguans accounted for 70,000 of the estimated total 5,000,000 undocumented aliens as of 1996. They do not feel a debt to the U.S. as do Cubans. For instance, struggling for documented status dominates their experiences as it does for Haitians. Accordingly, Generation X Nicaraguans, like Haitians, are focused on making it in the U.S., on securing a firm immigration and financial footing. For them, any other civic engagement is a luxury that they cannot afford. Moreover, they report significant discrimination against them from Cubans. While they occasionally feel a pan-Hispanic solidarity, Nicaraguans frequently feel alienated from Miami's dominant Cubans. As a result, Census outreach must incorporate Nicaraguans separately from Cubans.

While Nicaraguans have a strong sense of national identity, they also recognize that being a Latino in Latino-dominated Miami can be better than being Latino elsewhere in the U.S. As one respondent in our study stated,

> "I think here in Miami we're not going to have a problem, but I think if we move probably to Colorado, Michigan and stuff, they'll discriminate against any Hispanics. Okay, if you go up north in Orlando, they do discriminate; the White guy [does]."

The conflicted relations between Nicaraguans and Cubans indicates that targeting Hispanics for outreach may be too broad or at least one must be careful to not offend either group while emphasizing the solidarity that emerges in the U.S. Cuban power alienates other Latinos. As one Nicaraguan stated, "Cubans get more opportunities. Cubans think they are better than Nicas. Cubans are able to move up in the work placer easier. We Nicas get treated differently at work. They think we are less competent. They make rude remarks about us, call us *indios* (Indians) and *tira flechas* (spear throwers), make us feel unwelcome in public places." Nicaraguans mirror Haitians in their treatment of civic engagement, they also conform to transitional and crisis engagement profile types (refer to Table 4.2.1).

4.4.8 Hispanics Collectively

Latinos and Hispanics have a complex, evolving notion of community. Parallel to the alternating solidarity and division between Haitians and African Americans, various Hispanic groups at times see themselves as unified and at other times they emphasize their unique identities.

Miguel, a Nicaraguan defined community as, "I think it's a group of people kind of like, well it's tough. It gets you thinking. I would say they share something, like for example I don't know why we are divided here. Like people, Hispanics live here mostly, but then you move over there and its Blacks mostly. I think a community is where people meet to share the same experiences or… In this case they talk the same language, because it'll be Spanish. This is a community of Spanish speaking people. So, I'll say it's a group of people who share common characteristics." As revealed in Miguel's quote and at least some Latino's experiences with Elián, Latinos and Hispanics often feel a bond based on language. Simultaneously, they feel differences based upon national origin and differing experiences. National differences among GenX Latinos and Hispanics remain important. Census outreach, therefore, must mirror this diversity.

There are increasing populations of other Latin and Hispanic immigrants, including Colombians, Venezuelans, Dominicans, El Salvadorans, Hondurans, Peruvians and Portuguese-speaking Brazilians entering the United States. Although we did not target these groups in our research, the Census Bureau should remain aware that these groups see themselves as quite distinct from Cubans, Nicaraguans, Mexican and Puerto Ricans. In attempting to address the diversity between Latino and Hispanic origin populations, at least to some degree, we attempted to avoid a serious shortcoming. Government agencies, we have found, view ethnic groupings within the Latino and Hispanic populations and treat them in their surveys and programs as if they comprise a homogenous group. In fact, the government term created to identify and categorize the larger Latino population, "Hispanic," reflects and fosters this erroneous depiction. This term, created by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the late 1970s, tends to amalgamate this

highly heterogeneous population into a single category. However, the Latino population, like the ethnic groupings that comprise it, is far from being homogeneous. Its members, as has been documented, differ according to geographical location, national-origin and citizenship, immigration status, language use, socioeconomic class and political affiliation. This heterogeneity is important to keep in mind when conducting research among ethnic groupings in the Latino population and in reaching them for decennial enumeration purposes.

4.5 Distrust, Skepticism and Discontent: Government, Politics and Police

The stories respondents shared with us revealed the depth of their distrust towards government and large institutions. Respondents discussed how government has let them down through scandals, lies, half-truths and personal failures (i.e. The Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky scandal). GenX respondents also cited high incidences of unemployment experienced by many of them. Respondents discussed at length their mistrust and angst for the government regarding wasteful spending, ineffective public school boards, lack of affordable housing, INS raids and discriminatory law enforcement agencies. GenXers have grown up in a world where they could only trust in their self-sufficiency. Many of the institutions that young adults have ordinarily looked to for guidance in the past, are regarded as seriously flawed by young adults today. Our respondents generally assumed relations with big institutes to be short-lived, or at least our respondents treat them as such. Government is perceived as being less accessible, less accountable and less in tune with the needs of the groups that they are expected to represent.

There was a widespread belief, among respondents, that the government should be trusted. Over 70 percent of respondents, as illustrated in Figure 4.5.1, 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the survey statement, "People should be able to trust the government." Southeast Asian respondents had the highest disagreement rate with this survey statement (42 percent) while African Americans (76 percent) and Hispanics (75 percent) respondents had the highest agreement rate. However, Figure 4.5.2 shows that nearly 80 percent of respondents do not trust the government. Agreement with this survey item, "I do not trust the government" by respondent race/ethnicity is as follows: American Indians and Southeast Asians unanimously agreed with this survey item (100 percent); African Americans (84 percent); Afro-Caribbeans (79 percent); Non-Hispanic Whites (77 percent); and Hispanics (57 percent). This mistrust is sometimes founded on bitter historical relations between ethnic groups and the government,[11] and at other times it is premised on personal experience, intuition, the media or word-of-mouth. Distrust, however, does not in and of itself imply disengagement. On the contrary, distrust sometimes motivated more diligence or activism on the part of some respondents in communities, as they sought to make their institutions accountable. Respondents who saw the vote as one mechanism or tool (39

11 For Indians endemic social turmoil was aggravated by the U.S. Congress's "termination" of tribal rights during the 1950s. In Oregon all tribes west of the Cascade Mountains had their official status cancelled as a result of this policy. Although Indians had been experiencing regular displacement and other injustices for more than 100 years before terminations resulted in increased geographical mobility, especially migration off reservations and into urban areas such as Portland, Oregon. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs were not terminated (tribal affiliation of American Indian respondents), but many on the reservation nonetheless were disturbed or frightened by what was happening elsewhere. In the Indian focus group it became evident that the concept of "termination" was perceived literally by some individuals, as indicating the literal end of their status as tribal members or even as Indians.

percent), by which this might be accomplished, were more likely to see the Census as another possible means of making government accountable. Of course, we know that voting rates are dismally low among poor and marginalized communities. In part, this stems from a sense of disconnect or detachment from political institutions. This does not necessarily entail detachment from civil society conceived in a broader sense, however.

GenXers in this study view government as a public enemy that, for the most part, should be resisted, not trusted, and declared threatening. The seeds of pervasive distrust, skepticism and discontent among the overwhelming majority of Generation X reveals that respondents demonstrate a loss of trust in government on three levels: *1) government agencies and institutions; 2) politics and politicians; and 3) police.*

Figure 4.5.1 Generation X Survey Question Result

'People should be able to trust the government.'

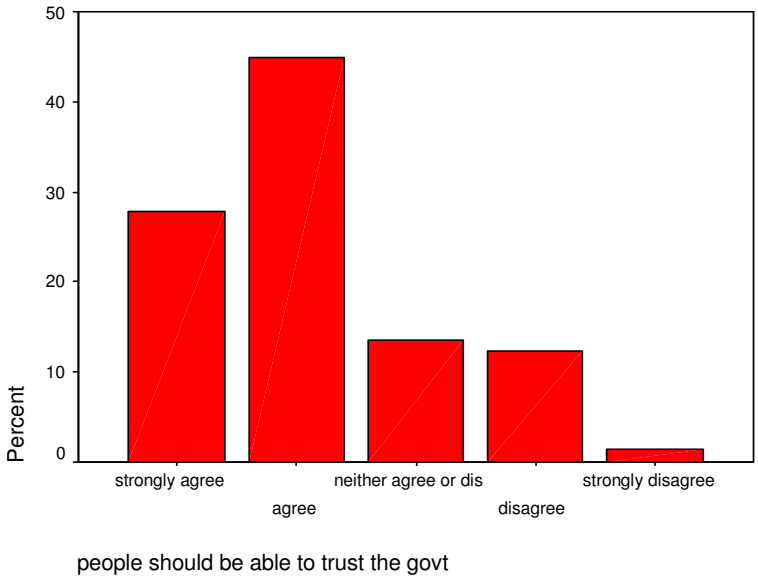
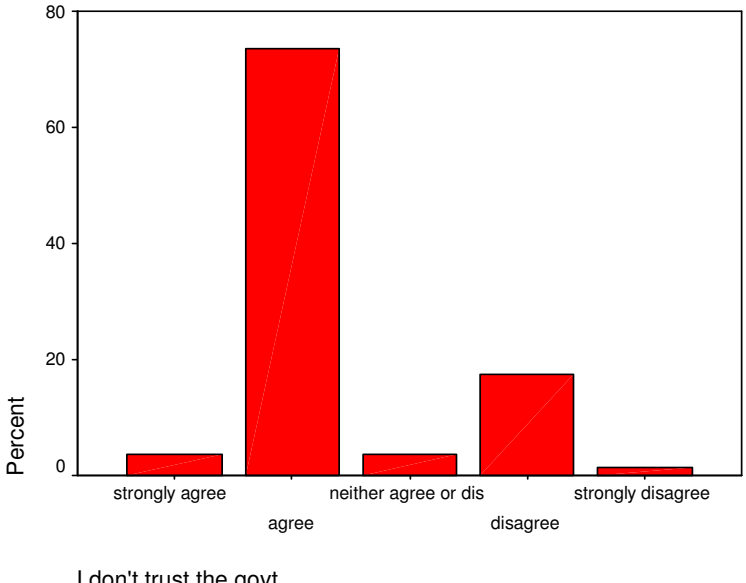


Figure 4.5.2 Generation X Survey Question Result

'I do not trust the government.'



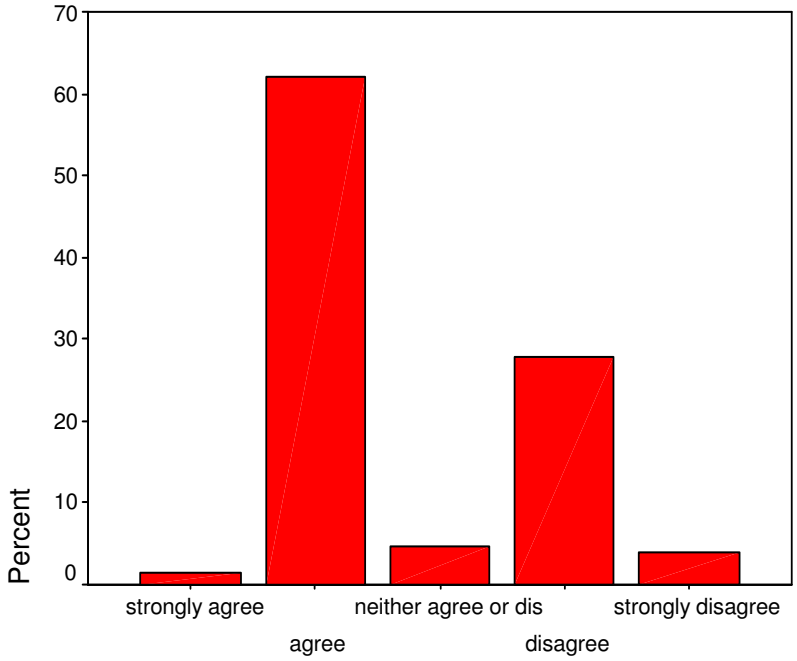
4.5.1 Government Agencies and Institutions

Negative attitudes towards government among GenXers are "a clear departure from past patterns whereby young people were usually found to be less cynical than their elders" (Owen 1997). GenXers have lived their entire lives in an environment in which damning messages about government are the norm. The tone of discussion by media, parents, teachers and friends amplify the inability of government to produce effective change. Based on our survey findings, Figure 4.5.3 reveals that over 60 percent of our Generation X respondents believe that they do not have a say about what the government does. American Indian and Southeast Asian respondents agreed 100 percent with this survey statement; whereas 67 percent of Hispanics disagreed with this survey statement. Moreover, the life experiences of GenXers have also tended to confirm such negative dialogue. Generation X has been forced to contend with a litany of social problems from crime to corporate downsizings to AIDS and drugs. Thus, it is not too hard to imagine that very few Xers would be optimistic, trusting and idealistic about government. In fact, political scientist Gregory Markus states, "Not only do most young Americans want little to do with government, they want government to have little to do with them in terms of obligations or responsibilities"(1994). Respondents shared the following concerns about government:

> It goes back to not trusting the government. It seems like regardless of what the people want they have their own agenda. It seems like okay, well the people have asked for this and the people have asked for that, but right now, this is what we're going to give them. This is all we will be offering.
>
> I don't trust the government period. They over-spend our tax money. The President lives like a king in the face of others poverty. I watch the X-Files, and must admit it influences my opinion of government. But mainly I am aware of the history of treatment of Native Americans. They've been deceived, had promises broken.
>
> We shouldn't trust - we should take things with a grain of salt- the best interest is still an old boys network.
>
> I don't deal too much with the government. These dangerous folks. I watch movies. I see the movies. Government are bad people. "Enemy of the State," that was a scary movie. You think about it, all of it could be going on now, probably is going on now. Government is crooked. They all crooked people, bad people.
>
> You can't trust the government agency, man! All of 'em, you shouldn't trust none of them because they are all being paid this enormous amount of money to do whatever they want to do. They gonna say they gonna do it to get into office, but once they get into office, they can do what they want to do. It's garbage, man! They protect and serve each other, that's about it.

Figure 4.5.3 Generation X Survey Question Result

'I do not have any say about what the government does.'



4.5.2 Politics and Politicians

The data reveal that GenXers are disconnected from the national political scene, however, as we have discussed in previous report sections, GenXers are engaged more locally. GenXers in our study simply do not look to big institutions to solve social problems. One respondent said this of himself and his peers, "We have no faith that politicians will deal with society's ills and we won't bother to protest it, we'd rather do it ourselves." Many respondents professed to being estranged from larger political engagement, including withdrawing from political party identification and not voting in general elections. For example, one respondent passionately remarked, "Politics is predetermined. It's like wrestling, it's fun to watch or to play for fun, but it's fake. "

There is also a popular perception among GenXers that politics is so corrupt, that it is better to wash your hands of it completely than to take on the system, make your voice heard and attempt to promote change. Many respondents in our sample just do not take politics or things political too seriously. Non-Hispanic White GenX respondents acknowledged more often than their minority GenX counterparts that they are not "as up" on politics as they felt they should be. Consequently, they have become alienated as they feel less able to influence the political process, so a "why-bother" attitude prevails and a counter culture that is ambivalent about voting is common:

> I'm going to vote this next time...I was uninformed, totally. And I didn't feel like going in there, it wasn't a priority.

> The government in general, it's a big word. Just by and large it seems creepy. I think that's a part of the reason I'm deliberately a little uninformed about it. Because it just creeps me out. I don't want to become more suspicious than I am. I don't want to get more involved than I am. I don't want to get more involved in something that makes me feel gross. I'm distrustful of it, suspicious. There's probably not a lot of good stuff going on.
>
> Personally, I consider it important because I've been following the Green Party, and I just feel like there is something to support now, as there wasn't in the past- or if there was, I didn't know about it. The two-party system just isn't worth my support. I never voted. This will be my first year voting in my entire life.

Minority GenX respondents were not immune from feelings of doubt and ambivalence about the benefits of voting. This ambivalence is demonstrated in Figure 4.5.4. Nearly 45 percent of respondents either 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with the survey statement, "Voting is the only way I have a say about government decisions." Voting among minority GenX respondents, in particular, African Americans, was more out of a sense of obligation to honor those who have lost their lives during the struggle for the civil right to vote than out of confidence in the political system. But for many racial and ethnic respondents, the fought-for ability to vote was still not incentive enough to outweigh feelings of a "rigged" democracy filled with politicians who give lip service to voters at election time and then ignore concerns once in office:

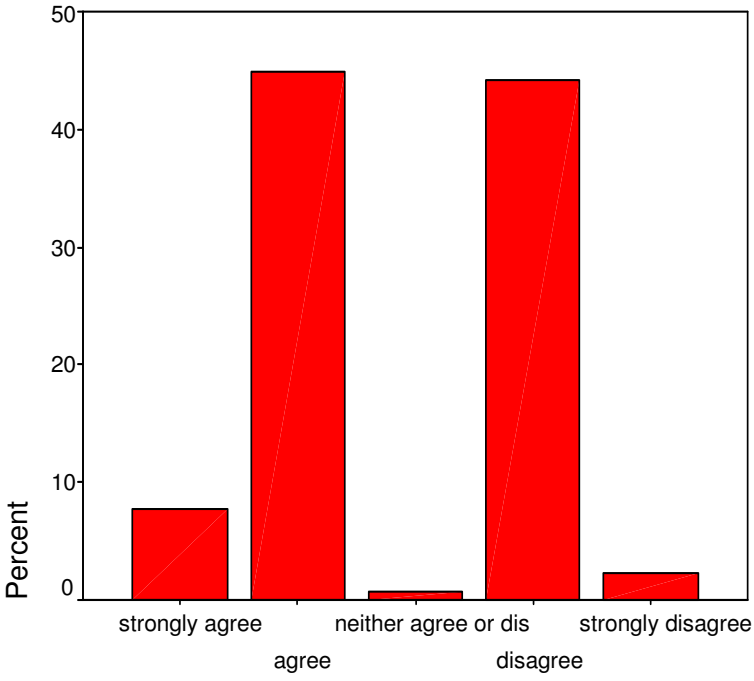
> I would feel the importance [of voting] would be stronger, for like city appointed officials. I wouldn't vote for president or mayor, personally, I wouldn't think that it's too political. I think that regardless of who you vote for its' mapped out --somebody already knows who's going to win. They will let you vote to let you think that you have some sort of empowerment over who your president may be. It's a conspiracy theory, that's how I feel.
>
> I mean, I should vote, but I never think about it 'cause the way I look at it, all politicians are the same. You know they come around when they want your vote, and then as soon as they're in position, some of them remember you in certain instances, but as saying what they were supposed to do before they were elected, and now they're elected, it's totally different.
>
> Yes, I do feel it's important to vote. I'm not sure it works. I don't have a lot of faith in the voting system. But as it's the process we have now, it's important to participate in it. One person once said, you may not see immediate changes, but you might see it happen if like-minded people get involved. If I didn't vote, I couldn't complain.
>
> You know, the higher up you go the less the faith I have in government officials. It seems like the higher the position, the further away from the common purpose the official holds. You know they are just not connected, they are not linked.

I believe in voting on issues of relevance to the reservation, but not in national elections. Government to me means tribe. If it's the federal government, it's in DC, very remote.

GenXers may be poorly informed when it comes to public affairs, but they do know enough to believe that our political system is in need of reform. Figure 4.5.5 demonstrates that nearly 40 percent of GenX respondents 'neither agree or disagree' with the survey statement, "Public leaders do not care what happens to me." The fact that nearly 40 percent of survey participants responded in this manner should not be interpreted as respondents who do not have an opinion concerning this survey statement. At the very basic level, GenXers continually see a large gap between the issues they care most about (education, crime, equality, homelessness, children) and the ones politicians choose to address. The outgrowth of political disengagement among GenXers has not spilled over and thwarted respondents' optimism for human capital, that is, faith in ordinary folk, fellow citizens. Although respondents overwhelmingly believed politics to be a corrupt entity where the power of the vote of one is dismissed and highly-appointed officials are dirty, several GenX respondents preached that their disenchantment with and cynicism towards the national political process coincides with "a continued belief in people on the local level."

Figure 4.5.4 Generation X Survey Question Result

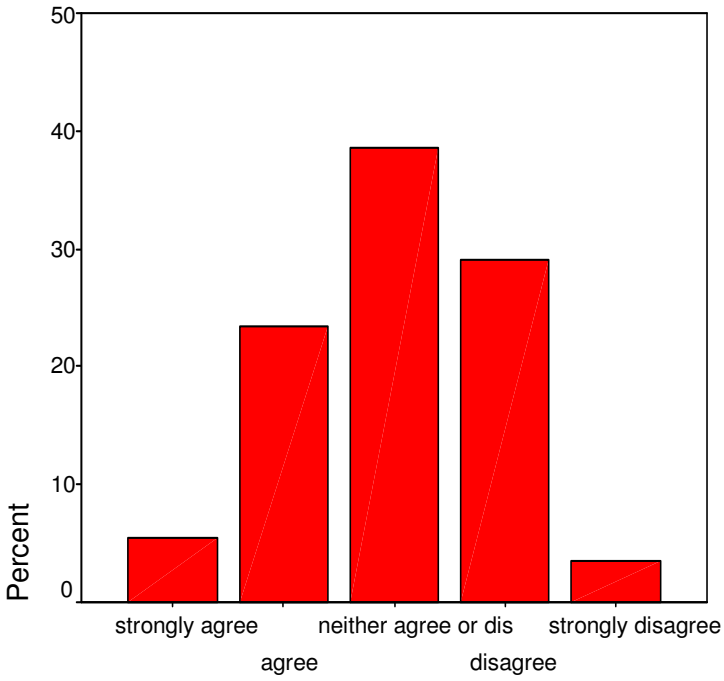
'Voting is the only way I have a say about government decisions.'



voting is only way I have say about govt decisions

Figure 4.5.5 Generation X Survey Question Result

'Public leaders do not care what happens to me.'



public leaders don't care what happens to me

4.5.3 Police

Just as the majority of GenXers believe that they have been given a bad rap by politicians who believe they do not need Xers' votes to get elected, a disturbing number of GenXers feel they are getting a bad rap by police. One 25 year-old Hispanic respondent discusses the subject of police accountability and distrust,

> ...People should be able to trust the local police department, but they would have to do things completely differently. ..talk to the community, be a part of the community, get to know people in the community, and stop trying to intimidate the community, like some damn Gestapo. If they were able to do that it would be cool to trust the police, but I don't think it's necessarily beneficial for us to trust the police because they just don't give us much to trust them for.

Negative experiences and interactions with law enforcement agents and agencies, including harassment, racial profiling, beatdowns and other forms of violence, have contributed to the resentment, resistance and skepticism that our respondents have toward government in general. Collective negative experiences and interactions with police, for example, pave the way for GenXers to estrange themselves from government civic engagement activities. Negative beliefs about the government are contagious and undoubtedly impact the level of engagement with government- sponsored initiatives. Police, like politicians, have not escaped extreme criticism from young adults:

> I don't think you can separate one from the other [government agencies]., it's all institutional. One looks after the other one in a certain sense, so whether or not that's a realistic way of looking at it, I just think that it's inevitable if you are feeling negative strife from one entity of the government or the structure than you're going to assume that the rest of the structure is just as corrupt or screwed up.
>
> It's like half-half, part can be trusted and part not. Sometimes you can trust cops and sometimes you don't.
>
> One bad apple might make lots of bad apples. The police try to stop minority people more than White people. One time I was translating in a court, and heard police joking about the "gooks" they had gotten-to keep, to arrest. I was standing right there, but they didn't seem to notice I was listening.
>
> I been harassed by the police before, because they said I was too young t be out on the street, when I was actually 20 years old, and they called me a few names and then I shoed my ID and they said you should be in bed anyway, you shouldn't be on the street at 12 o'clock at night. ...I think because they are police they think they have rights to do whatever they want to do, they can run the stoplight when they don't even going nowhere and get away with it, they can shoot somebody and get away with it, because they say, oh, I'm defending

myself.

> I have been pulled over for no frigging reason, I fit their description, which was black male, natural hair, with a goatee, which probably would include like 10,000 people in a five block radius. I have been pulled over about 14 times in 1999 and only got one ticket.

Others described insults and worse at the hands of public officials. These incidents were mostly interpreted as evidence of institutional racism. Respondents expressed outrage at the ways that some public officials – especially the police – abuse their authority when dealing with young men. Like almost all of our Southeast Asian and African American male respondents, they had experienced negative encounters with police, which they rationalized as racial profiling. As a gang outreach worker, one respondent has regular contact with the police and the judiciary system, and comments,

> A lot of people see police agencies as two-faced, and I agree. For me as an outreach worker/counselor, if I told the police everything that would defeat my purpose, destroy the trust they have in me.... They use their authority, but otherwise no one's going to come talk to them.

Although the sources for the cynical attitudes that GenXers have may differ, the sentiments are the same. Even though minority GenXers complain about government being too powerful and taxes being too high, as researchers, we do not believe that these Xers are entirely ready to abandon the premise that government can and should be made responsive to the needs and interests of citizens. One Asian respondent remarks that cops are 'two-faced," this is an appropriate description for the larger relationship between GenXers and government. Although the majority of GenXers in this study seem to have forsaken government and political participation *en masse*, it would be a mistake to conclude that they are apolitical. The majority of GenXers in this study feel that government civic engagement is ineffectual and unresponsive, thus, many GenXers have turned to local volunteerism activities and unconventional forms of political activity such as demonstrations and boycotts as discussed previously.

4.6 Decennial Census Compliance As A Civic Quest

Even though many respondents have unfavorable attitudes towards the government in general, the good news is that these views were not extended towards the U.S. Census Bureau. For the most part, GenXers viewed completing the decennial census favorably as a government civic engagement activity because it's social value outweighed any feelings of distrust and cynicism towards the government as a whole. Furthermore, the decennial census was viewed as a vehicle by which minority GenXers could have their voices heard and feel as though there was a sense of ownership and a sense of belonging to their common communities. Below is a sample of what respondents had to say:

> The Census provides important information. It has meaning and carries a lot of impact. It's good, positive. It can help people. People feel they're being

recognized by being counted. There's no segregation, no age limit or prejudice. All are counted as part of a whole. This makes people feel good.

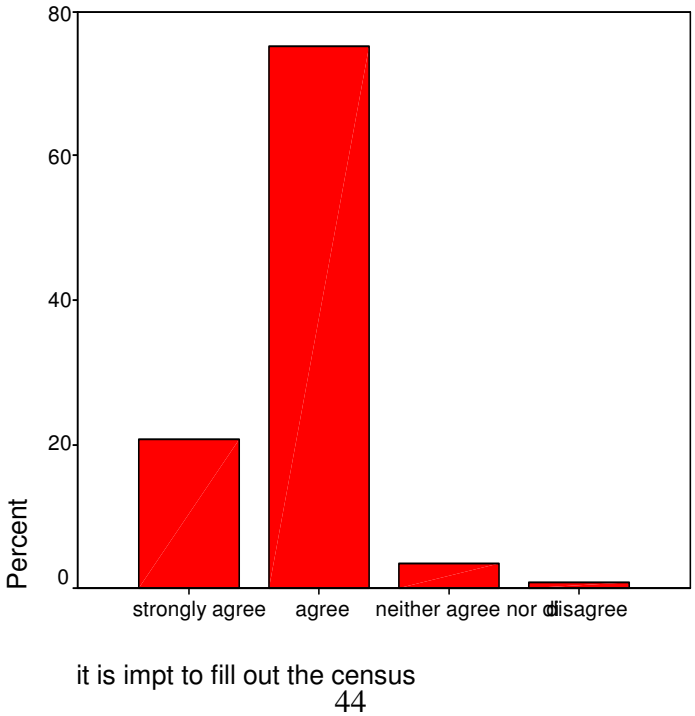
When I was 18 I really didn't care. I didn't think about the Census then. But now [in mid-twenties], I think it's important because I understand it more, and I know, so the money can be appropriated to where it's needed, because my kids are in school now...

The Census is similar to voting. Because if you did not let them know you're here they will not know what your needs are, so it is very important to fill out the Census.

Well, from what I've heard and certain groups have told me especially if you're a minority, more money comes to that state especially for schooling and other funding organizations, so in that sense I do believe it is important.

In spite of the lack of trust and high suspicion towards the government, GenXer's do have positive perceptions of the Census. Over 90 percent of respondents collectively 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the survey statement, "It is important to fill out the Census" (see Figure 4.6.1). The majority of respondents have had no previous experience with a Census before the 2000 decennial census, which is not surprising since respondents are primarily in their early 20's. Fifty-eight percent of our sample stated that they were familiar with the Census. Half of all respondents included in the study stated that their families were enumerated; 37 percent of these respondents actually completed the Census form on behalf of their families. However, 33 percent of respondents stated that they (including their families) were not enumerated; 17 percent of respondents did not know if they (including their families) were enumerated for Census 2000.

Figure 4.6.1 Generation X Survey Question Result
'It is important to fill out the Census.'



In contrast to their American counterparts, Haitian respondents felt excluded from yet another "piece of the American pie" - a constitutional right to be counted. Upset and envious of the attention paid to other immigrant groups, Haitians overwhelmingly stated, "I don't believe the Census belongs to Haiti Haitians because in reading the section they put all those other countries [race]', it means we don't need to get involve [in the Census], which means they don't need to know about Haitians." Again, these Afro-Caribbean respondents believed there to be an alliance to exclude them from American society. In this example, respondents perceive that their culture, their identity, and their Creole language serve as excuses to continuously deny them an "invitation" to participate in the Census, and thus, larger society. According to Marcelin and Marcelin, when Haitians are omitted as a distinct race category, as was the case for Census 2000, "Haitians have no jural ground from which they can stand to defend their specific collective interest as a minority in the wider context of 'minority politics' in the United States" (Marcelin and Marcelin 2002). Marcelin and Marcelin further add that because Haitians are "being classified under or diluted within another category than the one they choose, it is a massive affirmation of a willingness to break their condition as a politically weak community and judicially unprotected minority"(Marcelin and Marcelin 2002). Decennial outreach and educational programs would bode well to specifically target local areas of highly-concentrated Haitians to encourage them to participate in future decennial enumeration efforts.

Although the U.S. Census Bureau is positioned positively on the Generation X scale of cynicism, the Census Bureau is not exempt from scrutiny when the topic is data confidentiality. The same lack of confidence that GenXers have towards government civic engagement endeavors (not viewed as the best way for GenXers to impact community or have their voices heard) is the same lack of faith that GenXers have in how the government really treats and protects personal information. As Table 4.6.1 indicates, 74 percent of our total respondent sample was skeptical about the protection of Title 13 data. The most disbelieving respondent groups of our sample were Southeast Asians (95 percent 'disagreed' with this survey statement) and American Indians (90 percent 'disagreed' with this survey statement). Other respondent groups in our sample were a little more dubious about the survey statement, "I trust the Census when they say information is confidential;" Non-Hispanic White respondents (76 percent 'disagreed' with this survey statement), African Americans (68 percent 'disagreed' with this survey statement), Hispanics (66 percent 'disagreed' with this survey statement) and surprisingly, only 64 percent of Afro-Caribbeans 'disagreed' with this survey statement. GenXers not only have a lack of trust in the government's ability, including the Census Bureau, to protect ones' privacy or personal information, GenXers generally do not believe in the notion of confidentiality. Respondents from all backgrounds continuously stated that, "they wouldn't be surprised if data were not confidential." Some respondents outright dismissed the possibility of data remaining confidential in the hands of the government and added:

> The only way it's confidential is when it's between me and you given all the hands it gonna pass through - it can't be confidential.
>
> I don't believe it's confidential [decennial census data] because its in the public eye, 'cause don't they got to tie all them same answers together to work on something? Confidential is from the public eye for a certain amount of time.

> I don't think that it's confidential. If that's the government, if you tell the government something, you don't really have confidentiality. I don't believe it because, I don't know, sometimes people say things are confidential, but then they screw up...the federal government is one of those people also.

Other respondents were uncertain about the promises of confidentiality that the Census Bureau espouses. These respondents confessed that they were "not 100 percent confident that the Census was confidential" but added:

> I guess they're confidential, But I don't know, I guess you'd have to be working for the federal government. They probably have to keep it confidential, they wouldn't pass it out for free.

> Our country has given us lots of reasons over the years to be suspicious of things that they tell us - I'm just suspicious.

> To be honest with you, I have no idea. Regarding that, I don't know what to believe because they could or could not use it however they want to. I've never worked for the Census so I don't know how they work. I want to believe that it is confidential.

> I do believe the Census is confidential, however, a lot of people say the government is nosy, but my feeling of it is, if the government really wants to know something, I think they got ways of finding out what they want to know...they have access to everything, so they'll find out one way or another.

Table 4.6.1 Generation X Survey Question Result

'Trust Census When They Say Information Is Confidential'

Race/Ethnicity	Agree	Disagree	Total
African American	8	17	25
Non-Hispanic White	3	10	13
Hispanic	20	39	59
American Indian	2	18	20
Southeast Asian	1	18	19
Afro-Caribbean	5	9	14
Total	**39**	**111**	**150**

For the most part, respondents viewed the decennial census favorably in that they deem it important to "be counted." In other ways, respondents questioned, "What has changed in our communities by filling out the Census?" Respondents further remarked, "A lot of stuff hasn't changed. The roads are still raggedy, the schools need to be painted and the parks need to be fixed." In short, respondents complained that the census advertises "the count" in the same vein that commercials advertise -- only to sell their product. Unfortunately, some respondents, mostly poor and working class ethnic minorities, perceive the Census to be like "false advertisement" because respondents have not seen evidence of the community funds promised to improve the communities in which they live. Some respondents were suspicious of census advertisements "overselling" benefits in order to pressure people to complete and return their Census forms.

Some respondents expressed uncertainty or a mix of trust and distrust. Allison, a Jamaican was more concerned about the consequences for her immigration status. In explaining why she did not fill out the Census she first chuckled and then stated, "Because I really haven't had any personal experience, but it's just this deep down fear that I have. Put it this way. I got the Census form, right, and I was all gung-ho about filling it out. All enthusiastic 'cause I wasn't here for the 1990 Census. I'm here for the 2000. Great. I'm going to fill this out. I'm going to send it in. And, I'm going through the form and I notice on it that it asks for my name and my address, and I was like, oh my God, I can't fill it out. I cannot fill it in. If I put my name and address they're going to know who I am and they'll probably kick me out of the country or something. Just because of that, I mean even though the form says yes it's going to be confidential, I don't buy that."

In the case of individuals in so-called "hard to reach communities," we found that the importance of the Census had, to some extent, been effectively conveyed through advertisements, word-of-mouth and the activities of public organizations, immigrant-based community centers, and not-for-profit agencies. One respondent remembers, " Indeed, almost everywhere I went in Chicago I saw Census ads: at the public hospital where I worked, at the community colleges, at the activist organizations, even at the cafes. This in itself had an impact on some people, who responded 'It must be important because they say it is.' We should participate, I'll be honest, because we're paying for it." Respondents knew that the Census was important, because respondents felt that the kind of money spent would not have been spent otherwise. But what was not always clear to GenXers was *why* the Census was important, or for *whom*.

People inside the Census Bureau know why the Census is important, and it is clear that those working in local government agencies and not-for-profit organizations know that it is important, at least in terms of funding. The problem the Census Bureau faces is how to make the importance of the decennial census clear and concrete to the average respondent in such a way that the benefits of answering the Census are apparent, and that the perceived "dangers" of answering the Census are diminished. The Census Bureau should actively work to promote a public image that is both strong and widely recognized as impartial. A possible model for this might be the local fire departments, they have a positive public image of competence and they have also maintained an image of public trust and political impartiality. Along the same lines, examples to avoid, among federal and local agencies, would be the Department of Motor Vehicles, Public Aid, police departments and Immigration, all of which were seen as contemptuous by our respondents, their clientele.

4.7 Means, Motives and Barriers to "Stepping-Up"

While the research presented in this paper assesses the correlation between civic values and civic involvement, it also addresses motivation and opportunity towards civic and government engagement. By framing this research around a broad framework of civic engagement, this research has unearthed a multitude of opinions and attitudes from young adults across a range of life's activities.

4.7.1 Mean and Motives

There are strong indications that church youth groups are here to stay and that they are making additional inroads into ethnic and immigrant communities. Among the variety of factors responsible for motivating engagement among minority GenXers are church activities. Membership growth is the concern of churches everywhere. For instance, the Catholic Church's concern over retaining their young parishioners is a top priority. Over the last two decades, the Catholic Church has lost some of their young flock to protestant religions, not only in the United States but also in all of the Caribbean and Latin America. According to our respondents, to prevent this exodus from continuing, church youth groups have been established in many parishes, domestically and abroad. Parents see these youth groups as healthy alternatives to street gangs and, hence, encourage their children (GenXers) to join one of the many groups in the parishes. Still another reason for the surge in youth group participation is the recent influx of young GenX immigrants who follow church doctrine. These young immigrants join the church youth groups because it is a way for them to meet other young people with similar interests and to get involved, not only in church, but also in their neighborhoods and the larger community.

4.7.2 Barriers

It is important to recognize that all of our respondents felt that they have experienced barriers to being civically engaged at times. Based on respondent narratives, GenXers do not always "step-up," that is, "take the necessary steps to live up to ones' maximum potential as a member-leader in a community." Beyond possessing a "weak community spirit" at times, as some respondents lamented, perceived and actualized obstacles do exist that hinder GenX civic and government involvement.

The means to "step up", according to respondents, is sometimes deficient. For example, if a respondent has irregular, unstable or illegal residency status in the U.S., they are apprehensive of getting involved in any civic or government engagement activities for fear of deportation. Also, resources such as civic skills were felt to be lacking among our respondents along with not knowing, at times, how to get involved in something that will instigate economic, social or cultural community change. Respondents have also expressed a lack of motive to "step up" - a rallying point by which "twenty-year olds are connected to," that is, a lack of motive to "step-up" is a sentiment that some respondents can identify with. Additionally, GenXers reported, "no one is reaching out to us." Respondents also expressed that the expansion of power by certain adults has led to fewer decision-making opportunities for GenXers as well as fewer roles with responsibilities of importance. It is therefore important to recognize that without such opportunities, many GenXers will not feel any ambition to "step up." This ambivalence may

stem in part, from the fact that Generation X has had difficulty gaining access to national politics and has little representation in the national arena. Lacking the incentive or motivation to 'step up' could possibly include decennial census noncompliance. Most GenXers do not seem to identify with any current leader. Respondents do value being heard and having a voice. One respondent explained that "having a voice is a value...it's your responsibility as a citizen to be heard." The same respondent further shares,

> I want to be part of the government. I want to be able to sit down and voice my opinion to the head people. Because really, we as a community can do it, but we need someone inside the government who really wants that for us, who really wants to sit down and listen to us and take action. I believe that I'm that type of person because I want it for them also. I want a better community. But if we have no one there who wants it for us in return, it would never get done.

Decennial census enumeration, as stated previously, offers many opportunities to serve as the motivating force among GenXers in which civic and government engagement opportunities are readily available. The Census provides the chance to 'step up,' it is a rallying point and cause (caring about one's local community by completing and returning ones' Census form), and it is a way to give back to the community all while having your 'voice heard.' These are the means and motives that should be stressed to GenXers and the general respondent population in order to overcome some of the decennial engagement and enumeration barriers.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Recommendations to Decrease Census Nonresponse and Respondent Undercoverage

- Many of the immigrant newcomers, as we have found in our research, are not always aware of the Census and its mission, and as a consequence, they are reluctant to be counted. Often, the only time they hear of the Census is a few months before and during decennial census enumeration. If immigrants are to be enumerated accurately in the future, they must be informed of the Census and its mission. An effective way of accomplishing this task is for the Census Bureau to continue their partnership with immigrant-centered community-based organizations that can also serve as a vehicle to educate its members about the decennial census and the importance of decennial compliance.

- For young adult respondents, the message broadcast about Census compliance should not contain any hints of compulsion. The negative reaction to being forced to do something indicates that for this respondent group, unlike past research findings for other cohorts, GenXers are likely to respond to such compulsion by purposely not complying. Instead, we suggest that Census promotions should continue to emphasize the positive good that filling out the Census may bring to one's family and community. The Census Bureau should *not* emphasize, in any messages targeting young adults that filling out a Census

form is required by law.

- Promote the Census Bureau as an impartial service agency that collects and tabulates data objectively. The Census Bureau should continue to develop a rapport with local, church and community-oriented organizations and avoid public links to Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Many of our respondents reported that negative experiences with the police and other law enforcement agencies negatively impact their perceptions of any agency that is affiliated with them.

- Advertisements should *clearly* and *simply* stress that all people residing in the United States be included in census surveys- documented as well as undocumented individuals.

- Include information about the Census, its purpose and function, as a permanent part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's Guide to Naturalization. For instance, the Census Bureau should collaborate with Immigration and Naturalization Services to incorporate one or two decennial census questions on the Naturalization Civics Exam sponsored by the Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Services. All applicants are required to pass this exam before being considered eligible for American naturalization. According to 1996 Immigration and Naturalization Services estimates (the most current and publicly available data), 1,044,689 persons are naturalized in the United States annually. The top ten countries for persons naturalized as American citizens are from Mexico, Cuba, Vietnam, the Philippines, the Former Soviet Union, El Salvador, China, India, the Dominican Republic and Columbia. The top three countries that produce American naturalized citizens are also respondents included in this research study. Questions included in this exam (go to http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/natz/require.htm for specific test questions) assess the applicant's knowledge of U.S. government and history. The Study Guide to the Naturalization Civics Exam is one venue that the Census Bureau can utilize to educate a segment of the immigrant population about the historical role and national function of the decennial census. Decennial census questions that could be included on this exam (e.g. What is the U.S. Decennial Census? Name one purpose of the U.S. Decennial Census.) could increase knowledge and familiarity about the decennial census that many newly arrived immigrants often lack.

5.2 Recommendations about Decennial Census Privacy and Confidentiality Policies

- The commitment of the Census Bureau to maintaining survey information confidential should be stressed in outreach efforts to all respondent groups.

- A privacy and confidentiality brochure should be created and distributed to each household on the Master Address File during decennial enumeration. This brochure should clearly and simply explain how the law protects personal information and how third party agencies, such as INS, FBI, CIA and IRS, cannot

access divulged personal information regardless of ones' citizenship status. This brochure should also be available in several different languages.

- The commitment of the Census Bureau to maintaining survey information confidential should be especially stressed to undocumented immigrant populations.

5.3 Recommendations to Improve Decennial Promotional Outreach Efforts and Educational Campaigns

- The Census Bureau should continue to hold outreach efforts on community colleges. For instance, previous studies have found that college bound GenX Mexican Americans and GenX Mexican immigrants are concentrated in two-year, community colleges throughout the country. In fact, for the vast majority of them, their college education ends after receiving their Associates of Arts degree.

- The Census Bureau should recruit and hire church youth groups for outreach and enumeration work. Their members are familiar with their communities and the enumeration mission of the Census, and in many instances they are bilingual (English- Haitian Creole, English-Spanish). The church youth groups, as we discovered, have also had success in attracting and recruiting young undocumented workers and ethnic-minorities, both hard-to-reach populations in Census surveys. The undocumented immigrants and migrants feel welcome and through these groups they feel part of the larger community. In a foreign and hostile world, the Catholic Church along with its Spanish or Haitian Creole language masses are familiar to them—they remind undocumented workers, for example, of home and give them hope. Many immigrant participants do not feel part of their neighborhoods because they do not know whom to trust with knowledge of their immigration status and, if they should be discovered, whether they will be accepted or turned in to the immigration authorities. At church, however, they do not have these concerns. They feel like they belong.

- The importance of Census data for writing effective community development proposals and obtaining needed funds should be stressed in reaching church youth group members.

- Outreach messages should incorporate images of the family. Family is the most important social institution in these communities. Filling out Census forms should be depicted as a family activity that will also help one's ethnic community and the broader community of everyone in the U.S.

- Our findings indicate that no single, focused strategy for outreach will be sufficient. Rather outreach must be to multiple communities, simultaneously to local and national communities. This includes, for example, distinguishing among

Mexicans and Cubans or Haitians and African Americans. There should **not** be solely a pan-Hispanic or pan-Black outreach strategy.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

In planning this research, it was important to respond to the charge of apathy levied against all GenXers. It seems that the perceptions surrounding minority Generation X members are recklessly simplistic, and that our understanding of the attitudes, values, behaviors and beliefs embraced by GenXers regarding civic involvement needs to be deepened and re-evaluated. By exploring the habits, behaviors, activities and attitudes of civic and government engagement among minority GenXers, it is our hope that this ethnographic research, as a first step, will inform and improve decennial census enumeration efforts and respondent survey cooperation in the future.

In thinking about generations, it is useful to distinguish between the terms *life-cycle effects, generational effects* and *period effects.* Life-cycle effects refer to the social, psychological and physical changes that take place as individual's age (Erickson 1968). In any society, particular experiences take place at particular stages in the life-cycle. It is important not to overestimate common experiences premised on age because in American society today, there are many experiences that counter age-related experiences. For example, college classrooms contain older students who have returned as older adults, "non-traditional students." Many women are delivering their first baby in their thirties and forties. Nevertheless, common life-cycle experiences have implications for civic engagement and can help us to understand civic participatory differences between age groups.

The generational phenomenon was most succinctly put forth by Karl Mannheim in his essay, "The Problem of Generations." According to Mannheim, a generational unit is not merely a chronological age unit, but a social unit. It is formed by an age group, similarly situated in the social and historical processes, whose shared experiences form a common outlook and a sense of solidarity among its members. To produce a generational effect, events must have a disproportionate impression on the young compared to other segments of the population or affect the young (i.e. Generation X) in ways different than other age groups.

When the consequences of an event ripple through almost every group in society, irrespective of age, the phenomenon is known as a *period effect*. In short, a period effect is when an event has an impact on an entire population in a similar way (Carpini 1986). However, caution must be taken, because a period effect can sometimes affect citizens of all ages but exert its strongest influence on the young as we have seen with the Internet.

If our research indicates a life-cycle effect, then civic apathy or political efficacy among minority GenXers will correct itself with maturity. As one grows up and accumulates habits - developing civic skills, earning higher salaries, accumulating mortgages, and the like - civic engagement among these individuals will match their age counterparts in

previous decades. If the relevant forces are generational rather than life-cycle, then compared with previous generations at similar points in the life-cycle, levels of civic participation among GenXers, for instance, will be depressed.

We do know that Generation X has come of age in an era of high-level political distrust, alienation and the deterioration of wages. Such factors have the potential to leave a permanent mark on the members of Generation X - impairing their sense of civic responsibility and duty. Life-cycle and generational effects are conceptually interconnected and separating the effects are quite tricky. Meanwhile, life-cycle and period effects are obfuscated when using data drawn from a single cohort followed over time.

This research has proven to be a constructive journey of discovery. GenXers are optimistic cynics who believe that one person can make a difference, but not much. Feeling connected to a community based on trust, we have learned, may explain why historically underenumerated GenX respondents participated in Census 2000. The two—trust and feeling connected to a community—made a difference in decennial compliance, in our opinion.

Too often, hard-to-reach subgroups in ethnic minority populations, such as gang members and others who live in the shadows of society, are targeted for special consideration in these studies. The rational behind these efforts, is that, since these groups are at a higher risk of being missed in decennial and related surveys, they should receive more attention. However, other groups in minority populations, such as the ones included in this study, are also at risk of not being included, not because they are hiding or engaging in illicit activity, but because they may not quite understand the mission and the importance of participating in decennial censuses. They, too, need to be targeted aggressively in outreach drives.

Were we right in our initial assumptions? Were there major differences in community involvement, government, and participation in Census surveys among our sample? Our sample of Generation Xer's did exhibit a shared consciousness, but not in the same way stereotyped in the media. They are not only concerned with themselves or people just like them. They are not uniformly slackers disinterested in and disengaged from the broader community. A minority in our study did indeed exhibit these traits. A majority, however, evinced a strong concern for family. Moreover, family seldom refers exclusively to the nuclear family. For our respondents, it minimally extends to one's grandparents and is further likely to include aunts, uncles and cousins.

For those respondents who did exhibit the characteristics of slackers, we suspect that this is a temporary state, a role adopted primarily by individuals who are relatively independent, have no significant responsibilities and can thus socially afford to be self-centered. Other research (Putnam 2000) indicates that individuals in the age range included in our study are the least civically engaged, but that as they mature, form their own families and obtain full-time work, they will become more civically engaged. Since our research is not longitudinal and only examined one age cohort, we do not know for

certain if this generalization will apply to our group. Nevertheless, we expect, given the tendencies within our respondent groups, that those with stronger family ties will be more civically engaged.

7. REFERENCES

Barber, Benjamin R. 2000. "The Crack in the Picture Window." In *The Nation*, August 7/14, 2000, Pp. 29-34. (A review of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, by Robert Putnam).

Brinkley, Alan. 1996. "Liberty, Community, and the National Idea." In *The American Prospect*, Volume 7, Issue 29, November 1-December 1, 1996.

Cheung, Edward. 1995. B*aby Boomers, Generation X and Social Cycles.* Toronto, Canada: Longwave Press.

Cobb, J. and M. Miguel. 2000. Recommendation to Review 16 Local Census Offices, Subcommittee on the Census, U.S. House of Representatives.

Coleman, James S. 1990. Foundations of Social Theory. (Chapter 12. Social Capital). Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Craig, Stephen and Earl Bennett. 1997. *After The Boom: The Politics of Generation X.* New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Crowley, Melinda. 2001. "Generation X Speaks Out on Civic Engagement and the Census: An Ethnographic Approach." (Presentation prepared for the U.S. Census Bureau on February 27, 2001 in Suitland, Maryland).

de la Puente, Manuel, 1993. "Why Are People Erroneously Included by the Census: A Summary of Findings from Ethnographic Coverage Reports." Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census. (Report prepared for the 1993 Research Conference on Undercounted Ethnic Populations).

Delli Carpini, Michael X. 1986. *The Coming of Age of the Generation of the 1960s*. New York: New York University Press.

Erickson, Erik H. 1968. *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton.

Fine, Michelle and Lois Weis. 1998. *The Unknown City*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.

Flores, William V. and Rina Benmayor.1997. *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space and Rights.*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Gerber, Eleanor, Crowley, Melinda and Susan Trencher. 1999. "Identity Thieves, Warranty Cards and Government Surveys: The Ethnography of Information Management." (Paper presented and prepared for The International Conference on Survey Nonresponse: Portland, Oregon, October 28-31, 1999).

Griffin, Christine.1993. *Representations of Youth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press.

Halstead, Ted. 1999. "A Politics for Generation X." *The Atlantic Monthly*; August 99.08, Volume 284, No. 2, Pp. 33-42.

Holtz, Geoffrey T. 1995. *Welcome to the Jungle: The Why Behind 'Generation X."* New York: St. Martins' Griffin.

Howe, Neil and William Strauss, 1992. "The New Generation Gap." In *The Atlantic Online*, December 1992: Digital Edition.

Immigration and Naturalization Services. 2001. Illegal Alien Resident Population. Table 1: Estimated Illegal Immigrant Population for Top Ten Countries of Origin: October 1966. www.ins.gov.

Konczal, L.1997. "Immigrant Identity and Academic Orientation: Nicaraguan and Cuban Adolescents in Miami." Presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Mannheim, Karl.1952. "The Problem of Generations." In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Marcelin, Louis and Louise Marcelin. August 2002. "Ethnographic Social Network Tracing Among Haitian Migrant Farm Workers in South Florida." A report prepared as part of the Census Evaluation Project on *Ethnographic Social Network Tracing of Highly Mobile People*. Suitland, Maryland: The Statistical Research Division, Methodology and Standards Directorate.

Markus, G. B.1994. "Stability and Change in Political Attitudes: Observed, Recalled, and Explained." In *Political Behavior*.1994: 21-44.

Moreno, D. and C. L. Warren. 1992. The Conservative Enclave: Cubans in Florida. *Latinos in the 1988 Elections*. R. de la Garza. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Morgan, C.2000. "Census workers protest firings, Mistakes not our fault, they say." In Miami Herald. Miami, Florida.

Morgan, C. 2000. "Feds urging census recount." In Miami Herald. Miami, Florida.

Owen, Diana. 1997. "Mixed Signals: Generation X's Attitudes Toward the Political System." In *After The Boom: The Politics of Generation X.* New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Portes, A. and A. Stepick. 1993. *City on Edge: The Transformation of Miami*. Berkley, California: University of California Press.

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster Press.

Rumbaut, R.G. 1997. "Paradoxes and Orthodoxies of Assimilation." In *Sociological Perspectives*: 40(0731-1214): 1-22.

Rumbaut, R.G. 1998. "Pinos Nuevos? Growing up American in Cuban Miami." In *Cuban Affairs*: IV(3-4): 4-5.

Thau, Richard. 2000. "Meeting the Challenges of the 'Leave Me Alone' X Generation." (Presentation prepared for the U.S. Census Bureau on March 7, 2000 in Suitland, Maryland).

U.S. Census Bureau. 1999. Ethnography for the New Millennium, Manuscript. Suitland, Maryland: The Statistical Research Division, Methodology and Standards Directorate.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000a. The Hispanic Population in the United States, Population Characteristics, March 1999, Current Population Reports, Washington, DC.

Yanez, L. 2000. "Elián case hurts census effort in Hialeah, Little Havana." In Sun-Sentinel. Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

APPENDIX A

Intentionally Blank

APPENDIX A

Generation X Speaks Out on Censuses, Surveys and Civic Engagement: An Ethnographic Approach

Interview Protocol

ID #_____

Time Interview Begins _____***am/pm*** ***Date of Interview***_____

Introduction - Section 1

Greetings. I would like to begin by thanking you for helping us out today. The reason that you have been asked to participate in this interview is because we are interested in talking to you informally about your opinions, feelings and experiences concerning the activities, organizations, clubs and groups in which you participate. Anything discussed today will be strictly confidential and your participation in this interview is completely voluntary.

Because it would be hard to keep track of everything you say today, I would like to audio tape this session. (Hand respondent the consent form if applicable). Please read this over and sign it. (Interviewer signs and dates the consent form as well). Again, I want you to know that your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be seen by the project researchers who have also signed a pledge of confidentiality.

Mixed-Mode Survey - Section 2

*ID#*_____

The survey should be self-administered for respondents who are able to complete the survey without language, literacy and/or comprehension problems. Otherwise, the survey should be administered verbally by the interviewer for those respondents who you believe will have language, literacy and/or comprehension difficulties as a consequence of this survey.

Self-Administered Survey

People have different ideas about how they think the relationship between people and the government should be. I have provided some statements which represent some of these ideas. Please complete this survey (hand survey to respondent if self-administered). When you have finished, let me know and then I would like to ask you some questions.

Verbally-Administered Survey

People have different ideas about how they think the relationship between people and the government should be. I have provided some statements which represent some of these ideas. Please respond to the following questions. I am interested in your point of view, in what you think. In each case, please tell me whether you:

1 2 3 4 5

(strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

1. I think people should be active in solving community problems.
2. The government really cares about what I think.
3. It doesn't matter if I volunteer.
4. I think young people today care about the problems facing society.
5. I think it is important to fill out the census.
6. Public leaders don't care about what happens to me.
7. People should be able to trust the government.
8. I think people expect the government to solve all the problems facing society today.
9. Voting is the only way that I have a say about the decisions the government makes.
10. I think older people care about the problems facing the younger generation.
11. I don't trust the government.
12. I think that people should be concerned with animal-rights.
13. I would like to be more involved in the community.
14. I don't have any say about what the government does.
15. I don't have time to be involved in the community.
16. You can trust the Census when they tell you that your information is confidential.

Follow-up Survey Probes:

- *What does "community" mean to you?*
- *Do you think other people in your community share your opinions?*

Civic Interests, Activism and Causes - Section 3

Now let's talk about your beliefs and attitudes concerning the ways in which you participate or contribute to society.

- What are your core values? *What do you stand for?*
- How do you reflect your beliefs and values in your behavior?
  What do you feel is expected of you?
- What issues, causes or problems do you care most about today? Why?
  What are you doing in your life about these things?
- How do you keep informed about these issues or causes?
- Is getting involved in the community important to you? Why?
  What does "involved in the community" mean to you?
- Do you belong to any organizations, clubs or groups? If so, which ones?
  What does the organization, club or group do?
  What do you do as a member of this organization, club or group?
- How did you get involved in this/these organization(s), club(s) or group(s)?
- Is it important for you to vote? Why or Why not?
- Are you a registered voter? Why or why not?

Activities, Organizations, Clubs, Groups (Card Sort Activity) - Section 4

I have a task here that I'd like for you to do. This will help me to understand how you are thinking about the issues that we have been discussing. (Hand respondent card sorts). *If respondent has difficulty reading, please read each response option aloud and circle responses on behalf of respondent on the "Activity & Organization" sheet.*

Instructions

Please select any of the activities, organizations, clubs or groups in which you have participated in the past two years. Please sort the cards into three piles:

1. I have participated sometime in the past two years.

2. I have not participated.

3. I would like to do this in the future.

Additional Card Sort Probes:

- Do you participate in any activities not on this list? If yes, what?
- Why do you participate in this/these activities, organizations, clubs or groups?
- Did you ever used to participate in any of the activities, organizations, clubs or groups that you did not select? Why did you stop?
- Is there any activity, organization, club or group that you would like to participate in the future?

Government Participation - Section 5

Let's talk about any experiences that you may have had with a county, local, state or federal government agency.

- Are you familiar with the Census?
- Have you seen or heard any Census ads?
- Have you ever been counted by the Census?
- Do you think that filling out the census form and returning it is important? Why or Why not?
- The Census Bureau says your responses are confidential (secret). Some people do not believe this. What do you think?
- People have all sorts of experiences with government agencies. With which agencies do you have experience with?
- Is there any government agency that you have ever had a negative experience with?
- Is there any governmental agency that we really shouldn't trust? Why?

Demographics & Background - Section 6

I would now like to get some information from you.

Identity - A Sense of Belonging

- Is there anyone you consider as a role model (mentor)? *Probe for specifics.*
- Where did you grow up? Tell me about it.
- Is there anything you hope to accomplish or achieve within the next 5-10 years?

Marital/Relationship Status

- What is your marital status? If single, do you have a partner?
- Do you have any children? If yes, how many?

Age

- How old are you?

Race

- How do you define yourself in racial and/or ethnic terms?

Class

- Tell me about your parents' occupation(s).
- Can you tell me about the neighborhood you live in now? How is it the same/different from the neighborhood you grew up in?
- Was there ever a time in your family when money was tight?
- Have you ever applied for welfare? Have you/do you receive benefits?
- How would you describe your current financial situation?

Work and Alternative Income

- Tell me about your first experience that you worked for pay.
- When you were in high school, did you work? (While in high school are you working?) If yes, where and what did (do) you do? How many hours did

(do) you work?

- Are you currently working?
  If yes, full or part time? ==> What do you do? Do you hope to stay there?

- If no, are you looking for work? ==> What was the last kind of work you did?
- People sometimes do things to add to their income (e.g. work ore than one job , play the lottery/gamble, consulting work, do hair, sell items at pawn shops, sell handmade items such as clothing or arts & crafts, etc.). Do you do anything along these lines? If yes, what?

- *Use flash card:*

Which letter on the card best represents your current total annual income before taxes?			
A.	**Under $6,000 a year**	**G.**	**$40,000 to $50,000 a year**
B.	**$6,000 to $12,000 a year**	**H.**	**$50,000 to $60,000 a year**
C.	**$12,000 to $18,000 a year**	**I.**	**$60,000 to $70,000 a year**
D.	**$18,000 to $24,000 a year**	**J.**	**$70,000 to $80,000 a year**
E.	**$24,000 to $30,000 a year**	**K.**	**$80,000 to $90,000 a year**
F.	**$30,000 to $40,000 a year**	**L.**	**Over $ 90,000 a year**

Education

- Where did you (do you) attend high school? Was it (is it) a public, parochial or private school? *Parents? Peers?*
- Did you complete high school? If no, how many years have you completed? *Parents? Peers?*
- Are you attending or enrolled in school now? If so, where? *Parents? Peers?*
- What are you studying?
- What degree or degrees have you received? *Parents? Peers?*
- Tell me how your education has influenced your attitude(s) towards civic obligations, if any?

Any Additional Probes

- How would you define the term *civic*?
- How would you define *civic participation*?
- How would you define *volunteer activities*?

Time Interview Ends _____am/pm

APPENDIX B

Intentionally Blank

Adoption/Foster Care

AIDS/HIV

1

2

AmeriCorps/Vista/JobCorps

Amnesty International

3

4

Animal Rights

Art
(Painting, Drawing, Tagging)

5

6

Baby-Sitting

Big Brother/Big Sister

7

8

Board Member

Boycotts

9

10

Car Pool

Chat Room

11

Civil Rights

12

Community Clean-Ups

13

Community Service Organizations

14

CPR/First Aid

15

Credit Union/Savings Clubs

16

Crime Watch

17

Demonstrations/Protests

18

Donate Blood

19

20

Donate Food

Donate Clothes

21

Donate Money

22

Drug Counseling

23

Environmental Action

24

Ethnic-Based Organizations

25

Fill In Census

26

Food Co-Op

27

Fraternity/Sorority Activities

28

Gang

29

30

Gay/Lesbian Rights

31

Habitat for Humanity

32

Health Club/Spa/ YMCA/YWCA

33

Helping Senior Citizens

34

Helping a Non-English Speaker
(Translations, Letter Writing)

35

Helping a Non-Reader

36

Helping Profession

Helping a Recent Migrant
(Translations, Letter Writing)

37

38

Home Schooling

Hospital Volunteer

39

40

Hosting a Student

Hotline Volunteer

41

42

Labor Union

Listen to Talk Radio

43

44

Loaning Money

Lobbying

45

46

Medical Research Volunteer

Military

47

48

Militia

Music or Dance

49

50

Neighborhood Association

Other *

51

Pay Taxes

Peace Corps

53

52

Peer Counseling

Political Campaigning

54

55

PTA

Read Newspapers/Magazines

56

57

Recycle

Religious Activities

58

59

Respond to Surveys

60

School-Based Activities

Running Errands For Others (Buying Groceries, Giving Rides, etc.)

61

Scouting

62

Shelter Volunteer

63

Sign Petitions

64

Sports

65

Stay-At-Home Parent

66

Support Groups

67

Theater

68

69

Tribal Associations

70

Tutoring

71

Vegetarian/Vegan

72

Volunteer Spring Break

73

Vote

74

War Resister

75

Watch the News

76

Welfare-to-Work

77

Women/Girls Organizations

78

Writing or Poetry

79

Family Reunions

80

Jury Duty

81

Actively Stay in Touch with Homeland

82

Home Town Associations

83

Immigrant Rights

84

Holiday Events/Parades

85

Community-Based Mutual Assistance

86

APPENDIX C

Intentionally Blank

Appendix C

MODERATOR'S GUIDE
Civic Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Explain what focus groups are: who, what, why, etc. Explain that audio taping is for report-writing purposes only. Entire discussion is strictly confidential—no last names needed. No right or wrong answers. It is important that everyone speak their mind. The only ground rules are that we are polite and let a person have their say. It is perfectly alright to respectfully disagree because there can be no right or wrong answers. In fact the focus group is about hearing the full range of opinions represented by all of you.

Topic Introduction: Often statements are made by one group of people about another group of people without really knowing either who they are or why they do what they do. Frequently, you are never asked how **you** feel about things, but others assume to know. Today you have the opportunity to make your feelings known. In fact, in many respects, you are like an Advisory Board to us. We are here to find out what each of you really thinks about the issues of community and society, so that we can write about it and tell the larger world.

I want to reinforce again that everything said here today is strictly confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. We really want to hear what you have to say about your community and society.

Warm Up Question. Go around table and have participants introduce themselves (first names only), tell what high school they attended, where they were born, how long they have lived in Miami or Dade County and what they are doing now (going to school, working, etc.)

THE MACRO ISSUE:

This is still part of the warm up and provides a basis for follow-on discussions. The following written questions are designed to provide a launching point for discussion. [This will be the list of standardized, Likert scale questions from the interview.] Be sure to give them only 5 minutes to complete the one-page questionnaire. Hand-out one-page survey.

Here is a simple survey asking your opinion on different ways some people think about their community or society, more generally. I want you to take a few minutes to fill it out.

Just put your first name on the paper. Remember that everything is confidential. Once you fill it out, we'll begin the discussion.

PROBE QUESTIONS—ASK AS MANY AS APPROPRIATE

1. Defining Government

a. When you considered question #___, which asked "The government really cares about what people like me think," how did you interpret the phrase, "people like me?" *(Does anyone think in generational terms?)*

b. For all of the questions that mentioned "government," what did you think of ? What does government mean to you? *(For immigrant respondents is there a clear distinction between homeland and U.S. gov't. Also is there any distinction among federal, state and local gov't?)*

2. I'd like to change the subject a little and ask you to describe to me what you define as <u>your</u> community?

Moderator should go around the room. Try to get some defintions of different kinds of community.

Be prepared to ask individuals to elaborate on different levels of community or sub-communities that participants may feel they belong to: for example, family, neighborhood regional, ethnic, religious, general civic, age, or gender based <u>or disconnected</u>.

a. What makes you feel connected to a community?
Try to get some sense of emotional connectedness/connections to any kind of community.

b. If you don't feel connected, can you say why or what would help you get connected? *This applies to participants who have stated they are disconnected from any community as well as those who may only feel connected to one form of community such as a church or ethnic community.*

3. Problems

a. What would you say are the biggest problems or issues in your community?

Try to get some sense of awareness of issues/problems that they feel merit involvement.
N.B.: Those who are disconnected may still recognize problems.

b. What would you say are the strengths in your community?

4. Obligation & Responsibility

a. Do you *feel obligated or responsible in any way* to somehow get involved to try to make things better in your community? Or, for the larger society?

5. Constraints

a. What kinds of things keep you from doing more of these things that you feel are important
The goal here is to probe for structural constraints, such as time or of alienation based on sense of discrimination.

6. Concrete Activities

a. Now, we're just about done and I'd like to ask you some specific questions about concrete things that you may have done. Specifically, I'd like to know if any have you:
   i. voted
   ii. filled out the Census
   iii. served on a jury, performed jury duty

b. Do you feel you have a responsibility to do any of these things?

c. What other things would you say you have a responsibility to do?

FALSE EXIT/LOOSE ENDS

Any new ideas on what needs to be asked should be communicated to the moderator at that time.

FINAL QUESTIONS

Now that you have heard everyone discuss issues of government and community involvement and responsibility, answer the following two questions. This is our final question and we will not be discussing your answers with the rest of today's group—so please tell us how you personally feel about these questions.

1. Please take your sheets that you used at the beginning with the questions on them and turn them over. On the back side, first write the **two** community activities that are most important to you. Please be as specific as possible and list the most important thing first.

2. Now, write below what two changes you would most like to see in government. Again, please be as specific as possible and list the most important thing first.

I want to thank-you very much for helping us out. As I said, you are like an Advisory Group to us so that we can understand and communicate to others what is important and how you feel about the world. I hope you gained something from this discussion and I wish you the best of luck in whatever you're doing now.