

Memo on U.S. Census Outreach Efforts Targeting Latinos

Introduction:

The Census Bureau began targeting minority communities for outreach efforts following the 1960 Census when they discovered that 10% of the nonwhite population was not counted.¹ In 1990, there was also a significant undercount of minority populations even though it was the first time the Census had designed advertising campaigns specifically targeting blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders.² The 2000 Census was more accurate, yet some groups were missed at a higher rate than others. For example, Hispanics had a 2.85 percent rate, blacks had a 2.17 percent rate, and non-Hispanic whites experienced a 0.67 percent rate. Between 1990 and 2000 the Hispanic population was the fastest growing population in the U.S. and experienced a 58 percent increase.³ Below is a summary of the outreach efforts targeting Latinos during the 2000 Census and their relative effectiveness.

2000 Census Outreach Efforts:

- 1.) **Census in Schools:** the U.S. Census provided free curricula to K-12 classes entitled “Making Sense of Census 2000.” They contacted over 43,000 public and private schools to promote the curricula (about 40% of the U.S.’ 109,000 schools).⁴ They focused on schools with low-census response rates. The rationale behind targeting schools specifically was that in 1990 more than half of the 4 million people who missed the census were under 18 and tended to come from “minority families who are poor, highly mobile, and immigrant- precisely the children often found in urban districts.”⁵
- 2.) **Advertising campaigns:** preceding the 2000 Census, the Bureau engaged in the first-ever paid advertising campaign which was implemented in three phases (educational, motivational and nonresponse follow up). Some of the ads specifically targeted African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific

¹ Scott, Ann Herbert, *Census U.S.* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), pp. 81-83.

² National Research Council (U.S.) Panel to Evaluate Alternative Census Methods, *A Census the Mirrors America: Interim Report*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1993), pp. 49-51.

³ Waldrop, Judith and John F. Long, “A First Look at the 21st Century: Census 2000,” *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 9.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, “Census Outreach Effort Encourages Civic Participation in Census 2000,” *United States Department of Commerce News, Press Release from Decennial Media Relations*, October 27, 1999, <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-cn53.html> <Accessed July 29, 2009>

⁵ Schnaiberg, Lynn, “Counting lesson: Schools join census outreach,” *Education Week*, 18.35 (1999): 1-2. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=2126038&site=ehost-live> <Accessed July 29, 2009>

Islanders and Alaska Natives in 17 languages. Advertising spots were purchased from television, radio, print, and outdoor ads, as well as cable, local television and radio stations, and ethnic publications.⁶

- 3.) **Partnership Programs:** the U.S. Census Bureau teamed up with close to 30,000 state, local and tribal governments, federal agencies, national and community organizations, businesses and corporations, and the media to promote the 2000 Census.

Findings Based on 2000 Outreach Efforts:

- 1.) **Hiring easily recognizable and/or Latino census workers to conduct and carry out Census:** Luisa Ollague, a census-outreach coordinator for the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, points out that “Using easily recognizable and trusted individuals in these temporary jobs is key... Though individual responses to census questions are confidential, in many immigrant and minority communities distrust of the government looms large and turning over personal information is seen as a risky proposition.”⁷
- 2.) **Implement diversity management throughout Census organization:** In a testimony delivered to the House of Representatives, the U.S. Government Accountability Office Director, Mathew J. Sciré stressed the importance of a top leadership commitment to diversity within the Census Bureau, including diversity training and incorporating diversity into the Bureau’s strategic planning. Sciré stated this was particularly important because the U.S. population is “growing steadily larger, more diverse, increasingly difficult to find, and more reluctant to participate in the decennial census.”⁸
- 3.) **Advertising campaigns stressing the counting of noncitizens resonated with Latinos in 2000:** The National Opinion Research Center conducted a sample survey to evaluate the marketing strategy of the 2000 Census. They found that the advertising message that had “statistical significance” amongst Latinos was the message that “the census counts citizens and noncitizens alike.”⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "2010 Census: Diversity in Human Capital, Outreach Efforts Can Benefit the 2010 Census," *Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives*, July 26, 2007, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071132t.pdf> <Accessed July 30, 2009>

⁹ Rivers, Emilda B., James Poyer, and Sherri Norris, "Census 2000 Partnership and Marketing Program Evaluation," *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 135-151.

- 4.) Latinos were more responsive to personal visit interviews than self-response in 2000:** Data from the 2000 U.S. Census revealed that a “higher percent of Hispanic persons enumerated on interviewer administered returns was observed for both followup and enumerate returns.”¹⁰

Sources:

National Research Council (U.S.) Panel to Evaluate Alternative Census Methods. *A Census that Mirrors America*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1993.

Pinto Alicea, Ines. “Latino Perspective on Census 2000: Chapa, Flores, and Yzaguirre Press for Equity.” *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, 2.24 (September 2001), 20.

Rivers, Emilda B., James Poyer, and Sherri Norris. “Census 2000 Partnership and Marketing Program Evaluation.” *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 135-151.

Schnaiberg, Lynn. “Counting Lesson: Schools Join Census Outreach.” *Education Week*, 18.35 (1999): 1-2. 29 July 2009, <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=2126038&site=ehost-live>>

Scott, Ann Herbert. *Census U.S.* New York: The Seabury Press, 1968.

Treat, James B. and Herbert F. Stackhouse. “Demographic Comparison between Self-Response and Personal Visit Interview in Census 2000.” *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 39-51.

U.S. Census Bureau. “Census Outreach Effort Encourages Civic Participation in Census 2000.” *United States Department of Commerce News, Press Release from Decennial Media Relations*, 27 October 1999. 29 July 2009 <<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-cn53.html> >

U.S. Government Accountability Office. “2010 Census: Diversity in Human Capital, Outreach Efforts Can Benefit the 2010 Census.” *Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives*, 26 July 2007. 30 July 2009. <<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071132t.pdf>>

Waldrop, Judith and John F. Long. “A First Look at the 21st Century: Census 2000.” *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 9.

¹⁰ Treat, James B. and Herbert F. Stackhouse, “Demographic Comparison between Self-Response and Personal Visit Interview in Census 2000,” *Population and Research Policy Review* 21 (2002): 39-51.