THE RESEARCH AGENDA ON ISSUES SURROUNDING THE DEFINITION OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES

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I. Introduction

A. Charge to the Research Working Group

On June 9, 1994, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the review of OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting. In March 1994, an interagency committee was formed to assist OMB in various phases of the review process and to evaluate the impact of potential changes on the Federal agencies that are producers and users of racial and ethnic data. That committee appointed a Research Working Group of substantive and methodological experts to prepare an agenda which would address research questions about the possible effects on the standards resulting from changes suggested in the public comment. This report presents that agenda.

In developing the research agenda, the Working Group had the following goals:

- review and evaluate the potential research issues associated with the suggested changes identified in the June 1994 Federal Register notice and in subsequent public comment;

- prioritize those issues;

- draft a research agenda that would address the issues in the order of their importance;

- identify and monitor research opportunities that could provide information by 1997 for the OMB decision concerning changes, if any, to Directive No. 15; and

- assist the interagency committee in making recommendations about these changes.

B. Statement of principles

In developing the research agenda, the Research Working Group was guided by a set of principles derived from those published in the June 1994 Federal Register notice. The Research Working Group acknowledges that these principles can be in conflict at times, and that these conflicts will have to be addressed in policy recommendations. The principles which the Research Working Group considered particularly relevant to its work are:

1. The Directive should allow for self-identification as much as possible, but also should minimize respondent burden.

2. The Directive should provide a means for making reliable, valid, and meaningful population estimates.

3. The Directive should meet legislative and program needs.

4. It must be possible to implement the Directive throughout the Federal statistical system; that is, in the 2000 census; in surveys collecting demographic information; and in administrative records, including those using observer identification.

C. Overview of the report

This report discusses the five central research issues identified by the Research Working Group and the questions associated with these issues. For purposes of discussion, the research questions are divided into those that cut across several central issues, described as shared, versus those that are unique to a particular central research issue. Both shared and unique questions are further subdivided in this discussion as either conceptual or operational in nature. The shared questions are of highest priority, because they will have the greatest impact. These questions often cannot be answered without, in the process, answering some of the issue-specific questions. In developing the research agenda, the Research Working Group gave equal weight to answering both the conceptual and operational questions that must be answered before any changes to Directive 15 can be entertained.

Section II identifies and provides some background on the five issues. Sections III and IV deal with the

shared conceptual and operational issues, respectively.

Section V focuses on the questions that are more issue-specific in nature. Section VI outlines the possible research opportunities over the next few years for answering the questions that have been raised. The last section discusses the criteria to be used in evaluating the results from any research that is conducted. It should be noted that agency staff and funding for research and testing are very limited, so it was necessary to develop plans within those resource constraints.

II. Central Research Issues

A. Multiracial category

Research is needed on the possible effects of including a multiracial response option or category in data collections asking persons to identify their race and ethnic origin. This issue has emerged and grown in importance for some respondents as the U.S. population has become more racially diverse. Between the 1980 and 1990 decennial censuses, the rate of population increase for Blacks (13 percent), American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts (38 percent), and Asian and Pacific Islanders (108 Percent) all exceeded the rate of increase for Whites (6 percent).[1] This increase in diversity has been accompanied by the growth of interracial marriages and, with that, the increasing number of interracial children. The number of interracial marriages involving at least one white partner in 1960 was approximately 150,000. By 1970, the number of such marriages had more than doubled to over 320,000; in 1980 and 1990, the number totaled about 1.1 million. In addition, in 1970 the number of children living in families in which one parent was White and the other was not (Black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander) was approximately 400,000. By the 1980 census, that number had increased to 570,000; and by the 1990 census, to 1.5 million.[2]

Directive No. 15 says that persons of mixed racial and ethnic origins should use the single category which most closely reflects the individual's recognition in his or her community. A growing, but still relatively small, proportion of the racially mixed U.S. population may not self-identify with a single race. Some of these persons feel the current data collection categories force them to deny one of their parents. For such persons, this forced identification with a single broad population group conflicts with the self-identification principle.

B. Combining questions on race and Hispanic origin

There are several reasons to conduct research on the issue of using a combined race/Hispanic ethnicity question instead of separate questions on race and Hispanic ethnicity. Current practice across Federal agencies treat Hispanic origin as a racial designation for administrative purposes. Many Federal agencies have been using the combined format permitted by Directive No. 15 for the collection and presentation of racial and ethnic data. As a result historical data series have been developed based on data from the combined format. The use of the Hispanic category in the combined format does not provide information on the race of those selecting it. As a result, the combined format makes it impossible to distribute persons of Hispanic ethnicity by race and, therefore, reduces the utility of the four racial categories by excluding from them persons who would otherwise be included. The two question option allows for this separation. Thus, the two formats currently permitted by Directive No. 15 for collecting racial and ethnic data do not provide comparable data.

This is a complicated issue because some respondents see race and ethnicity as overlapping or interchangeable concepts, while others think ethnicity encompasses cultural heritage and race does not. Cognitive research has shown that some Hispanics, especially the foreign born, expect to see a single category for Hispanics. Both the high percentage of Hispanics selecting "Other race" (over 40 percent) in the 1990 census and the relatively high nonresponse rate to the Hispanic origin item in the 1990 census (about 10 percent) suggest that the questions may not be operating as intended.

C. Concepts of race/ethnicity/ancestry

Research is needed on the possibility of combining the concepts of race, ethnicity, and ancestry in Federal data collections. Throughout the course of U.S. history, information on these concepts has served diverse and evolving purposes. The concept of ancestry and procedures for the collection of information on it have varied substantially. Where the census and other surveys have selected generic or specific ancestral categories, these have been based on changing political and policy needs. Only in recent years has cognitive research been used to gain a better understanding of the popular conceptions of these terms.

Although Directive No. 15 was formulated to standardize the collection and presentation of racial and ethnic information across Federal agencies, it does not attempt to define and distinguish between the terms "race" and "ethnicity." The Directive acknowledges that there is no anthropological or other scientific bases for its racial and ethnic categories, which are social and political constructs for identifying the Nation's principal population groups. While Federal agencies have attempted to follow the Directive's criteria, they have not been entirely consistent in their use of either generic or specific terminology.[3] In addition, studies by Bureau of the Census staff and other researchers indicate diverse and uncertain understanding among respondents about distinctions among the terms "race," "ethnicity," and "ancestry." For example, respondents may use diverse labels for their ancestry and may provide different labels to describe their identity depending on the situation (e.g., on the 2000 census form versus an administrative record form).

Since some persons cannot distinguish in their minds between the concepts of race and ethnicity, one proposed solution, to be tested through additional research, is to ask census and other survey respondents about a single concept; for example, "ethnicity" (or "race/ethnicity") corresponding to self-perceived membership in or identification with population groups defined by cultural heritage, language, physical appearance, behavior, or other characteristics. In choosing survey questions and response options, it also must be recognized that ethnic groups evolve and may modify their relative socioeconomic position and other characteristics, including their ethnic group names, and that individuals may represent their affiliation with groups differently across settings and may alter their perceived ethnic membership over time.

Thus, research also is needed to test the efficacy of giving respondents an open-ended question (i.e., without a fixed set of predetermined response options) and asking them to write in the terms they believe best describe their ethnic/racial background. This proposal recognizes (1) the general awareness that self-identification is a critical determinant of racial/ethnic classification; (2) the fact that current Federal categories have created single aggregations (White, Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native) from heterogeneous and highly diverse populations; and (3) evidence that one to two percent of census respondents use their own terminology when allowed. Unfortunately, an open-ended question will be costly to code, subject to high non-response and poor reliability, and difficult to use in administrative recordkeeping.

D. Terminology

Additional research is needed on the issue of replacing or modifying current terminology for some of the racial and ethnic categories. Specifically, research should help to inform the decisions on whether the names of the Black, Hispanic, or American Indian racial/ethnic categories should be replaced by or, at least, expanded to include new terms, such as African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American.

E. New classifications

Research is needed on the issue of developing new racial or ethnic categories for specific population groups in the United States. Among suggested new classifications are: Native Hawaiians; Indigenous Pacific Islanders; Arab/Middle Eastern; European Ancestry/Origin; and distinct populations, such as Cape Verdeans and Creoles. Surrounding this issue are myriad decisions, such as choosing terms acceptable to nonmembers as well as members of a group; handling persons of mixed origin; the need for adhering to the accepted principle of self-identification; and determining in what context, if any, additional proof of group membership is needed. Also involved are questions of the criteria for determining under served populations and the social concern that the use of many separate categories might have a divisive effect.

III. Shared Conceptual Research Questions

A. Identification of stakeholder positions

Definitions of racial and ethnic categories impact the ongoing data collection activities of governmental agencies at all levels -- Federal, State, and local. The categories, and any changes in them, also affect the data needs and/or collection procedures of other stakeholders, including researchers and civil rights or multiracial advocacy organizations.

Efforts are needed to identify all stakeholders; for example, entities interested in the availability, use, and appropriate data collection methods for racial and ethnic data. Research also should help to determine whether those stakeholders' requirements are best met through the present classification as set forth in Directive No. 15, or whether accommodation of all uses may require separate but related classification systems for the collection and dissemination of, for

example, general demographic data versus data for civil rights monitoring and enforcement.

The uses of racial or ethnic data at all governmental levels need to be described. Agencies should specify their data needs and uses. For Federal agencies, the cost associated with a major change in racial or ethnic categories needs to be quantified. These costs are both monetary and programmatic. Similarly, the costs to other major providers and users of data, such as the business and academic communities, should also be considered.

B. The meaning and use of terms

Relevant literature on the concepts of race, ethnicity, and ancestry should be reviewed and evaluated for findings and conclusions upon which further research can build. Gaps requiring additional research should be identified. Respondents' understanding of the concepts used in measuring race, ethnicity, and ancestry needs to be determined. Do respondents understand these terms to mean the same thing? What thought processes are used when distinguishing among these concepts?

The terms "race" and "ethnicity" sometimes are used interchangeably. There is often disagreement over the meaning and use of these terms among academics and the public. In some daily and practical applications, for instance, Hispanic is considered a "race". Crews and Bindon[4] suggest that race is a sociological construct that is poorly correlated with any measurable biological or cultural phenomenon other than the amount of melanin in an individual's skin. Ethnicity, they suggest, is a sociocultural construct that is often, if not always, coextensive with discernible features of a group of individuals. According to Rodriguez, this view of ethnicity is consistent with the view of race for many Latinos: "For many Latinos race is as much a cultural as it is a physical view of individuals".[5] Crews and Bindon cite several human biologists who have advocated vigorously for the use of "ethnic group" instead of "race" to question hypotheses about the genetic and cultural constituency of the group.[6]

Perhaps more importantly, especially in a self-identification context, is understanding how respondents use these terms. Rodriguez observes that, in Latin America, there is a greater number of racial terms for "intermediate" categories; in the United States, on the other hand, the emphasis has been on constructing terms for "pure" races such as "black" and "white," and not on terms for identifying biracial or multiracial persons.[7] Of 52 Hispanics interviewed,

who identified themselves racially as "other" in the 1980 Census, 63.5 percent said they answered "other" because of cultural background, socialization, national origin, family roots, or political perspective. Only 11.5 percent said they were "other" because they were of mixed race.[8] This finding differs from the statement made by the National Council of La Raza during their presentation at the Committee on National Statistics' workshop: "For many Hispanic subgroups, particularly those from Central and South America and the Caribbean, choosing one race category is problematic since they self-identify principally by subgroup (i.e., ethnicity) and descent from multiracial origins".[9] Clearly, large-scale studies will be needed to capture all of this diversity and to determine how it will affect data collection.

Although the idea of combining race and Hispanic origin was proposed by one of the advisory committees for the 1990 Census, it was rejected as a result of opposition from the Hispanic community.[10] The format proposed would have made "Hispanic" a race. In its comments on the June 1994 Federal Register notice, the National Council of La Raza said it would be inclined to support the combination of race and Hispanic origin questions into a question re-labeled "race/ethnicity," if testing indicates that such a question solicits a greater and more accurate response rate compared to the 1990 census.[11]

C. Respondent understanding of the task of self-identification

Individuals identify their race, ethnicity, or ancestry in their own way; they do not always select membership in a single group exclusively since they often view themselves in terms of a multiplicity of memberships. While some center their core identity on race, others base it on language, national origin, or religion. Because some individuals and groups feel that certain classification systems force them into categories in which they do not belong, self-identification has been adopted as one of the principles for the classification of race and ethnicity.

Research is needed to determine the most appropriate way of eliciting information on respondents' thought processes when asked questions about their race and ethnicity. This type of information will help ensure that any new question formats will be easily understood. For example, in deciding whether a multiracial category should be part of the classification system, it is helpful to know what thought processes respondents use when provided with a multiracial response option in a survey or census.

Research on respondent understanding of the task of self-identification should yield information on which identifier, whether race, language, etc., is the most relevant for the principal population groups in question. Cognitive research also should help determine the extent to which persons of mixed racial heritage will identify in a separate multiracial category. In addition, research should examine the duality of race and Hispanic ethnicity perceptions. Studies should compare how persons see themselves versus how they are seen. More information also is needed on how Hispanics understand or view race. Finally, the respondent's perception of burden in the task of self-identification should be investigated.

D. Effects on current counts and historical trends

Research should examine the potential effects of any proposed changes on race reporting and data quality, including effects on the sizes of the current racial groups. For example, including Hispanic origin as a racial category should greatly reduce the number of Hispanics reporting in the "other" category of the race item in the decennial census. Changes in Hispanic counts can be expected if Hispanic were included as a race, but it is unclear how dramatic those changes would be. An analytical study showed that the distribution of socioeconomic status by race changed slightly when Hispanics were moved from the race categories; however, the counts for the racial groups did change. These changes can be fairly dramatic at the local level, especially in certain parts of the country.[12]

It is equally important to assess the effects of proposed changes on historical continuity of data series. The consolidation of race and ethnicity or the inclusion of a multiracial category would interrupt the perceived continuity of the categories used to collect data on race and ethnicity in recent decades. However, continuity is already imperfect (due to changes in questions, names of categories, and response options) and has been compromised by Hispanic nonresponse to the race question. Research may indicate that validity might be enhanced at the cost of a continuity that may be more apparent than real.

E. Effects on current and proposed policies

Research should consider the effects of any changes such as the addition of new categories or the expansion of current categories on existing and proposed policies. Issues related to using racial and ethnic data for civil rights monitoring and enforcement should be identified. In the administrative records context, some Federal agencies may be restricted to using the standardized categories. Other agencies may need to use more specific subcategories, such as in the case of health agencies that would prefer more detailed information on race and ethnicity for purposes of medical research.

Research on the potential policy impacts of proposed changes must explore the use of data by Federal agencies, State and local governments, the business community, academic institutions, and other groups in the population. How will government agencies use data from persons who identify as "multiracial" or "other race" in the administration of programs? What is the experience of academic/educational institutions in the use of these terms, especially in those states that have enacted laws mandating these changes to accommodate persons identifying as "multiracial"? How will reapportionment be affected if new categories are added?

IV. Shared Operational Research Questions

A. Impact of changes on data collection procedures

Changes in racial or ethnic categories and terminology may necessitate related changes in data collection procedures such as instructions, question formats, response options, modes of collection, and interviewer training. Research should examine methods of providing specific instructions for answering questions including a multiracial category, a combined race/Hispanic ethnicity question, or any other options under consideration. Also, the effects of providing instructions and/or explanations for the data collection as a whole should be explored with a view to fostering respondents' understanding for why data on race and ethnicity are collected by the Federal Government. In addition, research should test open- versus close-ended question formats for race. Close-ended questions would provide only information on the categories that would be needed for legislative requirements; open-ended questions would elicit more specific racial or ethnic self-identification. Research should also examine whether there are significant differences in response to a single question as opposed to a series of separate questions, and explore the effects of question order on responses. In addition, research should test the various options in different types of data collection modes: telephone or in-person interview; self report (mail questionnaire); and administrative records. Changes in procedures will entail costs in redesigning forms, training data

collectors, and modifying processing systems. Costs also will be incurred in trying to achieve continuity in historical series. The magnitude of these costs needs to be estimated.

B.   Differences between collection and dissemination categories

The categories used for data collection may be, and often are, more numerous than those used in publishing and disseminating data. Research is needed to ascertain whether accommodation of all stakeholder interests may require different categories for the collection and the dissemination of data. As a case in point, the open-ended question format invites a large variety of responses so that guidelines must be developed for aggregating responses into basic population groupings. Changing response options in close-ended questions also might lead to differences in collection and reporting formats. Differences between collection and dissemination categories usually require additional editing and also may create a need for instructions so that respondents will be informed about how their responses will be aggregated.

C. Providing as much continuity as possible

Federal agencies and other data users often need and value continuity of racial and ethnic data across time. This is important so that changes and trends in the social and economic conditions of groups can be identified and monitored. Methods might therefore have to be developed to provide for a crosswalk should any changes be adopted so that historical data series could be statistically adjusted.

D. Implementation strategy

If any changes are adopted in the racial and ethnic categories, an implementation strategy will need to be developed not only for the Federal agencies, but also at the state and local governmental levels, and for business and other private sector organizations. Investigations of the various options as they would be applied at the State and local level will be needed. Furthermore, guidelines also will be necessary for businesses and industries required to collect and report such data.

E. Cognitive aspects of question design

As discussed earlier, the Research Working Group recommends that a series of cognitive interviews be conducted with individuals who have parents of different races, as well as with individuals who may identify with only one race even though they have a mixed racial heritage. The main objective of this cognitive research is to examine how individuals view race and ethnicity and how they might interpret and

respond to a race question that provides a "multiracial, specify" option. Cognitive research also should provide guidance on question wording and on what instructions, if any, should be included for respondents. In addition, research on how changes in the categories will affect observer identification will be needed.

Focus groups and pretesting questionnaires are two techniques that should help us devise question wording to elicit the correct or "accurate" response; that is, one for which respondents and data users will infer the same meaning as intended by the agency conducting the survey or census. This type of cognitive research also will help determine, where "wrong" responses are obtained and whether the problem is one of interpretation or of respondent preference.

V. Research Questions Specific to Each Issue

A. Multiracial category
  1. Conceptual questions

  a. What is the history of this issue and its implications for changing concepts of race and ethnicity?

  b. What determines whether persons of mixed racial heritage identify in a separate multiracial category or a single race category?

  2. Operational questions

  a. Identify and evaluate possible data processing problems such as coding and reallocation of multiracial write-in responses.

  b. Evaluate the use of additional questions which gather more information about those choosing a multiracial category, as compared to a single check all that apply" question.

B. Hispanic as a racial designation instead of a separate ethnic category
  1. Conceptual questions

  a. Examine the duality of race and Hispanic ethnicity perceptions--comparing how persons see themselves racially and how they are seen.

  b. What are the differences in response to a single race/Hispanic ethnicity question and separate

questions by national origin and generation?

c. To what extent does Hispanic ethnicity take priority over other racial categories in the minds of respondents?

2. Operational questions

a. Examine which sub-groups to include as "Hispanic". For example, should persons from non-Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America be included? Should persons from Spanish-speaking countries in the Caribbean be included? What about Spanish Europeans?

b. What is the impact of (a) a separate Hispanic origin question and (b) its placement on the proportion of the population selecting "Other Race" or "multiracial"? Although the impact of question order on the proportion of the population selecting "Other Race" has been tested, the combined impact when using a "Multiracial" category was not tested.

c. In existing surveys and administrative record databases, what percentage of respondents have no information on Hispanic ethnicity? What percentage of Hispanic respondents have no information on race?

d. What percentage of administrative record databases already use "Hispanic" as a racial category?

e. Can the "Other" category be eliminated through other changes (e.g., multiracial category, having a single question)?

C. Combining concepts of race, ethnicity, and ancestry and asking open-ended questions
   1. Conceptual questions

a. Explore what the relevant literature says about the measurement of race, ethnicity, and ancestry.

b. Determine the most appropriate way of eliciting relevant information on respondents' thought processes with respect to terminology.

c. Determine how and to what extent people distinguish among the three terms.

2. Operational questions

a. How would we use data collected in an open-ended format?

b. Should distinct information on more than one term be collected?

c. How should conflicting information be used?

D. Terminology
   1. Conceptual questions

a. Consult with stakeholders of relevant groups.

b. Review the existing literature and public comment on the preferred terms to use, such as Negro, Black, or African American.

c. Should new or alternative terms include a combined recognition of one's race and ethnicity or should they be race and ethnic specific?

d. Does preference for a particular term differ by age, geography, national origin, or socioeconomic status?

e. To what extent is the meaning of terms changing over time? Which respondents are most affected by this fluidity?

2. Operational questions

a. If the current names of the racial and ethnic categories be changed, what terms should be substituted and how will these terms be decided?

b. How might alternative terms for the same race be presented?

c. Should different terms be used in different subpopulations?

E. New classifications: some conceptual questions
   1. Native Hawaiians, Indigenous Pacific Islanders (Guamanians, Tongans, and Samoans), U.S. Virgin Islanders, and the term "Native American"[13]

Research should be conducted on the definitional problems that arise in trying to create categories for indigenous peoples. In choosing terms to use, is the concern with what terms are preferred by members of the advocacy/interest groups regardless of how these

terms are received by nonmembers? Or is the concern to have terms that satisfy both?

2. Inclusion of Native Hawaiians, Micronesians, Samoans, and Guamanians in a "Native American" group (which includes American Indians and Alaskan Natives)

Is the requirement for classifying individuals in a "Native American" group, as opposed to Asian/Pacific Islander, that they fall in the category of "Original peoples of acquired American lands?" On the other hand, are definitions and distinctions needed based on the different status of the lands; that is, States vs. commonwealths and territories? How are these original peoples to be identified? Will classification be based on birthplace? Ancestry? How will one distinguish immigrants into those lands from the "original inhabitants"? Will those who have migrated out of those lands and their descendants be classified still as "original peoples"? If the land was acquired after the United States became a nation, then does the term "original" American apply more to the people from those lands than to others who were in the United States when it became a nation? Is there going to be proof of belonging comparable to that for American Indians to participate in certain Federal programs? What about persons of mixed origin?

3. Other groups not yet identified

What should the guiding premise be for determining which groups to disaggregate into separate, stand-alone categories? Is the criterion going to be predominant groups? What is the population threshold? Should the criterion for determining "under served" populations be from an historical point of view as a result of past practices that existed in the United States? Or does it mean any group, no matter how recent, that does not have a socioeconomic status comparable to that of certain other groups?

VI. Possible Research Opportunities

In addition to recommending research that should be conducted to inform OMB decisions and the Interagency Committee deliberations on the issues, the Research Working Group also is charged with identifying opportunities and vehicles for undertaking that research.

At this stage, a race question with a multiracial category and a combined race and Hispanic origin item has been tested on the May 1995 Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement had four panels, which provided a full initial test of questions representing these changes in a Computer Automated Telephone Interview-Computer Automated Personal Interview (CATI-CAPI) context:

1. separate race and Hispanic origin questions without a multiracial category;

2. separate race and Hispanic origin questions with a multiracial category;

3. a combined race and Hispanic origin question without a multiracial category;

4. a combined race and Hispanic origin question with a multiracial category.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau jointly conducted an extensive program of cognitive research on the draft questionnaire for the supplement. This research was designed to provide insights on how respondents in key population groups would interpret and understand the items on the questionnaire, and on how the questionnaire might be revised to meet its objectives better.

The Census Bureau also has identified a multiracial category or response option (e.g., multiple responses) as a high priority for panels on the 1996 National Content Survey (NCS) or for a 1996 Race and Ethnicity Targeted Test (RAETT). Such tests would provide information on the effects of these changes in a self-report context. The Census Bureau has partially funded a program of cognitive research and focus groups to (1) examine OMB issues such as a combining race and Hispanic Origin and a combined race, Hispanic origin, and ancestry question, and (2) help develop question wording for these tests. It currently is conducting cognitive research on race questions with a multiracial category or a "check all that apply" option. The actual content of the 1996 tests and panels will be influenced not only by funding, but also by consultations with OMB and the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards, and by results from the May 1995 CPS Supplement and cognitive research and focus groups.

The May 1995 CPS Supplement and the 1996 census tests, together with the results from the cognitive and focus group studies and classroom experiments, should provide a reasonably strong body of research on a multiracial response option in interviewer and self-report survey contexts. In addition, these vehicles also should provide good initial coverage of the major terminology issues, as well as testing Hispanic as a race. The CPS Supplement, which has a sample of about 60,000 households, asks persons who report as Black or as Hispanic which term among several they prefer for their group (e.g., Black, African American, Negro; Hispanic, Spanish, Latino/a), and should provide sufficient research on this issue. The Census Bureau's proposed research program and the 1996 tests may provide an opportunity to examine terminology issues for smaller populations (e.g., Alaska Natives) and new category issues (e.g., Native Hawaiians, Arab Americans, Cape Verdeans). Although the CPS Supplement does not gather information on the conceptual differences between race, ethnicity, and ancestry, a significant amount of cognitive research was undertaken in this area during the developmental stages of the Supplement. The results of this research indicate that respondents have a difficult time defining these concepts and distinguishing among them. Further research probably should take place in a laboratory setting.

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) are conducting research that will provide information on multiracial category issues in the context of administrative records. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health (OASH) and NCHS are undertaking cognitive interviews of multiracial and of Hispanic women that will explore how they would furnish information about themselves and on the birth certificates for their children. In the Spring of 1995, the NCES and the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education will be conducting a survey of 1,000 public school principals to obtain information on: how schools currently collect students' racial and ethnic data; how administrative records containing racial and ethnic data are maintained and reported; what State laws mandate or require of school systems with respect to collecting data on race and ethnicity; and current issues in schools regarding racial and ethnic categories. NCES may conduct a similar survey of post-secondary institutions in the fall of 1995.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is undertaking a project to evaluate the accuracy of racial classification on death certificates. This study will survey funeral directors, and it should provide some information about observer identification of race and ethnicity.

A literature search on work related to racial classification in the health field is being conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS also is doing an inventory of HHS minority health databases which will document data collection problems concerning racial classification using the current categories.

To date, however, no research projects or vehicles have been identified that would study any of the other issues in administrative records contexts. Except for the Census Bureau's proposed research program and the 1996 tests, no research is currently planned on classification issues relating to new categories, or on combining questions on race, Hispanic origin, and ancestry into a single question. The latter is one of the priorities for the 1996 tests, but available funding may place constraints on what issues are actually tested.

In summary, the Federal agencies have funded or proposed research on the multiracial category, combined questions on race and Hispanic origin, and terminology issues in interview and self-report contexts relevant to current surveys and the 2000 census. At this point, additional classification issues relating to new categories and a combined race, Hispanic origin, and ancestry question will be studied in the self-report context of the decennial census, but not in current survey or administrative record environments. In the administrative records context, however, little research beyond the multiracial issue and, perhaps, Hispanic origin is planned. Final reports on each of the issues will require additional research on the extant literature; to date, the resources to accomplish this have been identified only for the terminology issues.

VII. Evaluation

As explained in the Federal Register notice, proposed revisions of Directive 15 "...ultimately should result in consistent, publicly accepted data on race and ethnicity that will meet the needs of government and the public while recognizing the diversity of the population and respecting the individual's dignity." The Federal Register notice also

raises issues that will have to be settled by policy discussion. Toward this end, it is critical to define:

    • the multiple purposes that the classification system serves;

    • the criteria which categories should meet for these different purposes; and

    • both the commonalities and contradictions in these criteria.

Once this information is provided priorities must be set that can be used to resolve the inevitable conflicts which will arise. Some of the criteria used will necessarily be subjective, but others will be empirically grounded. Most of the research outlined in this document deals with the latter; however, some questions, such as the identification of stakeholder positions and the assessment of respondent burden, will inform the subjective decisions. The following are some of the more objective criteria that the Research Working Group recommends to be used:

1. consistency of measurement across time with respect to various subpopulations;

2. magnitude of changes to current time series;

3. ability to collapse categories in a meaningful manner for policy purposes;

4. ability to develop implementable reporting standards for all data providers;

5. ease of using the measures under different circumstances;

6. ease of creating data editing and adjustment procedures; and

7. costs associated with changing the categories.

To facilitate the use of research results to evaluate alternatives and develop recommendations, the Research Working Group will monitor the research projects and oversee the consolidation of results in a form that will be useful for policymakers.

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[1] Census Questionnaire Content, 1990 CQC-4. Race.

[2] Census Bureau proposal for research on race/ethnicity prepared for OMB, March 18, 1994.

[3] R. A. Hahn and D. F. Stroup, "Race and ethnicity in Public Health Surveillance: Criteria for the Scientific Use of Social Categories," *Public Health Reports*, 1994, 109, 7-15.

[4] D. E. Crews and J. R. Bindon, "Ethnicity as a taxonomic tool in biomedical research," *Ethnicity and Disease 1991*, 1, 42-49.

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[9] C. Kamasaki, "An Hispanic assessment of the Federal standard for race and ethnicity." Paper presented at the Workshop on Race and Ethnicity Classification: An Assessment of the Federal Standard for Race and Ethnicity. Committee on National Statistics, Washington, D.C., February 17, 1994.

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[12] J. H. del Pinal, "Social science principles: forming race-ethnic categories for policy analysis". Paper presented at the Workshop on Race and Ethnicity Classification: An Assessment of the Federal Standard for Race and Ethnicity Classification. Committee on National Statistics, Washington, D.C., February 18, 1994.

[13] Puerto Ricans occupied their island before it became a U.S. territory and commonwealth, but they are not considered indigenous.