

## DISCUSSION

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I thank the authors, Keith Rust and Ben King, for their informative papers. It seems that CNSTAT is now almost an ongoing part of Decennial Census activity. At any one time, there is at least one panel, and often two, deliberating. That reminds me of when Pete Bounpane, Steve Fienberg, and I negotiated the first of these ongoing panels after the 1980 census. These panels have done several things for the census: ensured a thorough review of census plans and census methods; supported the census on things the panel agreed with; worked to change census methods on things the panel disagreed with; and provided testimony by credible people on census topics.

Keith's panel has completed its work and issued its final report, *Measuring a Changing Nation*. This panel was asked:

- to review results of the 1995 and 1996 test censuses
- to recommend additional field tests and research to carry out before finalizing plans for the 2000 census
- to review the potential uses of administrative records in the 2000 census
- to review the experimental and research program of 2000

The panel lived through many changes in census plans. One of the methodologies most difficult to deal with must have been the use of sampling for nonresponse. The panel very politely disagreed with the way the Census Bureau laid out its plans. Though sampling for nonresponse will not be a part of the 2000 census, the sampling plan initially proposed by the Census Bureau did not make any sense. It would not have saved time or money. It was very different from the sampling innovations proposed by the Census Bureau in the past. The panel recommended that the Bureau not constrain itself by predetermining a response rate.

The panel was successful in working with the Census Bureau on estimation procedures for the PES data. At a fairly early stage, the Census Plus strategy was abandoned. This is a strategy that raises its head every twenty years or so at the Bureau. Though it would have made estimation easier, the basic premise of being able to do a perfect census in selected blocks did not make sense.

The panel was not so successful in urging a change to the date of Census Day. Despite the potential for

improvement and positive results from the Canadians, Census Day will be April 1.

One troubling note about the panel's work is the review of the Research and Experimentation program for 2000. It is dismaying that the program is not further along this late in the census cycle. The criteria adopted by the panel for an experiment to be embedded in the census are sensible and are those that governed the Census Bureau for years. The panel is very enthusiastic about a Master Trace Sample. Over the years, in economic censuses, this was a difficult sample to control and keep going. I agree that the results would be useful; I have doubts about its being done.

It is time for a test of administrative records. There are many potential uses for them: to improve the address file, to impute for item nonresponse, or to impute whole persons. This will be of great interest to everyone.

All in all, the panel made many contributions to the 2000 census.

Ben King's 2010 panel will also review the Research and Experimentation program and will see some of the results. With luck and good timing, the panel may be able to make some recommendations on an administrative records census.

One thing the panel will be able to do, and it is an activity in which all of us are very interested, is to evaluate the results of the American Community Survey. This panel will be able to say something about whether or not that survey will be able to replace the long form census questionnaire.

I'm interested in something Ben talked about that he wasn't hopeful that the panel could address. That is the cost of the census. If the estimated cost of the 2000 Census is now \$7 billion, then the panel has an obligation to show how much of that could have been saved by sampling, by using administrative records, etc.

Some of the other things I would be interested in are:

- an evaluation of the partnership program
- an evaluation of the local review program
- all of the REX program
- of course, the ACES (accuracy and coverage evaluation study)
- an evaluation of the objectives of census tests leading to the 2010 census

I applaud the Census Bureau for its continued work with CNSTAT and I applaud the panels for their painstaking evaluation of census plans and methodology.