

## DISCUSSION

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As usual, we are indebted to Wayne Daugherty for a highly informative and candid paper. All Census users who have had a glimpse of the conceptual and operational problems in the Census of Housing, and of the budgetary and other pressures on the Bureau, will share a sense of gratitude for the high quality of work performed by its professional staff. The introduction of the "components of change" concept in the National Housing Inventory of 1956 and its repeated application in the 1960 Census represent a major innovation. This innovation has already changed markedly our notions of the recent level of new housing construction and the methods of collecting current data on housing starts.

I was keenly interested in Wayne Daugherty's preview of Census results, as I am sure you were. The evidence of great improvements in the quantity and quality of the housing inventory will make it exceedingly difficult to perpetuate the notion that we are still faced with a general housing "crisis." On the other hand, it will become more and more important to identify precisely the population groups and areas with remaining deficiencies and to concentrate on remedial policies for these. The 1960 Census should make a real contribution to such an effort.

It would be premature, however, to comment on our current first glimpse of the Census findings. Instead, I shall address myself to a few conceptual and related points. In doing so, I have an eye on the future rather than the 1960 Census. I am using Wayne's excellent paper as a starting point rather than as a text. And if there are any challenges in what I have to say, they are offered to Census users, the Congress, and perhaps the Bureau of the Budget, as well as to Census officials.

Concerning the definition of a housing unit, it is all to the good that we now have a count of units that eliminates or reduces subjective judgments by enumerators. I find it personally refreshing to see the Census emphasize the criterion of "separatedness" in the definition of housing units when there is so much fashionable talk of "togetherness." It is all to the good that Census technicians are worrying about such matters as the inclusion of vacant trailers or of structures occupied by five or more lodgers when their quarters cannot be defined as individual housing units. But there are still more important though not wholly new questions with which we must wrestle.

For example, is the housing unit, however defined, a satisfactory unit of measurement? To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, is a housing unit a housing unit a housing unit? To be sure, the Census furnishes certain quality characteristics including the number of rooms per dwelling unit which, we just learned, increased in the past decade. But is this adequate? In some foreign

countries, census reports include information on square footage. Here, analysts of the 1950 Census have had considerable trouble in arriving even at the total number of rooms in the housing inventory, segregated for renters, owners, and the various income, rent, and value groups. To my knowledge, the 1960 Census does little to relieve them of these pains.

Another problem is a firmer determination of the number and characteristics of seasonal units owned by households in addition to the year-round unit they occupy. Currently, the Census gives us only a general and somewhat blurred outline of this phenomenon. The apparent growth of week-end and vacation cottages is a startling development with many marketing, planning, and social implications. These are difficult to assess without better data on the units, their utilization, the income and social characteristics of the people who own them, and the characteristics of their year-round housing.

These comments suggest a more general observation. Are we too hidebound by the concepts and questions developed in past housing censuses, and are we too easily satisfied with relatively small increments to knowledge and minor improvements? Would a bolder approach be more fruitful even at the price of reduced comparability? To borrow a phrase from one of the present contenders for the Presidency, are there "new frontiers"?

I have no grand design to offer, but let me sketch some of the directions a new approach may take. One would be a decennial census of much more limited scope, supplemented by more frequent intercensal surveys with a minimum of standard items and additional varying questions. Another would be experimentation in selected localities with items that will advance knowledge of land use and community structure. Much of the steam behind the Census of Housing has come from the Federal housing programs. These have more and more been augmented by Federal aids for community development. This trend, and the severity of problems posed by future urban growth, would seem to justify some reallocation of resources in favor of data needed for metropolitan planning purposes, at least on a selective and experimental basis. An example that comes to mind is the journey to work. The 1960 Census of Population will for the first time furnish data on this item, but the areas of place of work are defined so broadly that the information will have very limited usefulness. One wonders whether more intensive Census surveys in a few areas would be more profitable in the long run. The 1960 solution may be a case of compromise that pleases hardly anyone.

A second set of comments refers to the tabulation and publication program. The block statistics in the form of published tabulations are undoubtedly useful, but one wonders whether it would not be sufficient to make them available

upon request and at cost, and use the savings for other things. By introducing the price mechanism, the Census would also be in a better position to assess the strength of demand for block statistics.

As I said earlier, the Census results indicate that we should increasingly concentrate on specific policies to remove remaining housing deficiencies. In this connection, one hopes that the tabulation process in 1960 will provide more adequate information on two important aspects of housing policies and programs: housing for low-income families and for the elderly -- partially overlapping groups, of course. Each of these groups, however defined, is composed of widely heterogeneous elements, and there is great question whether one type of housing program could or should do anything for all of them. But it was difficult from available tabulations in 1950 to match housing conditions with the income and social characteristics of the various subgroups. In the case of the elderly, analysts were also frustrated by the limitation of many Census data to the households headed by an elder-

ly person. It would obviously be revealing to have more complete data on the households that include an elderly person, whether he heads it or not.

Finally, there is reason for concern over Wayne Daugherty's reference to the quality of enumeration. We have been spending a great deal of money on better and faster machines but it seems we have done less to improve or even maintain the quality of enumerators. This is a good reminder of the fact that the machines are still largely at the mercy of what is being put into them. I do not know of any solution to this problem except more money, better training, greater selectivity, and perhaps a shift of the Census period to a time when our large student population is more readily available for temporary work. We would not wish to recommend that the monetary and fiscal authorities engineer a major slump at the time of each decennial census so that the Bureau may pick up more qualified personnel, and some of us would even question their ability to administer the shock at the proper time and with the proper doses.