

THE 1970 CENSUS -- METROPOLITAN, LOCAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS

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My task is to try to summarize the changes between the 1960 and 1970 censuses of greatest importance to census users on the metropolitan, county, city, neighborhood, census tract and block levels -- in the truly small area uses of census data. This is clearly a monumental task and cannot possibly be covered fully, or even adequately, in the short time at my disposal. Necessarily I have been selective. This selection is based on the knowledge I have built up in my own work and as chairman of the ASA Census Tract Committee (now known as the ASA Committee on Small Area Statistics). Also the Census Bureau has graciously made available to me various documents -- minutes of the Census Advisory Committee on Small Area Statistics, various speeches made by Bureau staff, notes taken by Bureau staff at the numerous regional meetings held this year, and internal memoranda. I have attempted to boil all of this material down to a single summary paper, focusing on the most important and frequently expressed needs for small area census uses, and discussion of present and proposed tabulations on a small area basis. Some of my remarks will undoubtedly overlap those already made, for many small area needs are the same as state, regional, and national needs. Also much of what I will say is already well-known to the Bureau. My purpose is to establish a public record and expression.

Perhaps the most interesting general statement is that there is considerably less interest in new items, than there is in changes in the handling of items already on the schedule and in other structural changes in the processing and tabulating of the census. I will discuss briefly proposed new items, then go on to suggested definitional changes, suggested improvements, additions and deletions in tables and publication levels, and finally review some important miscellaneous topics. Also to save time I will not attempt elaborate justifications of these proposals. Only the most comprehensive and frequently stated points will be mentioned; and beyond remarks necessary to express the point clearly, this selectivity must suffice for justification. I merely paraphrase a statement made by Mr. Brunzman in a recent internal memorandum, that while in earlier censuses the most articulate users of small area census data were persons involved in health and vital statistics, in recent years and today the users of small area census data have enormously expanded. They include market research, city planning, transportation, urban renewal, civil rights, housing, welfare, anti-poverty. I will add to Mr. Brunzman's statement that indeed the decennial censuses of population and housing constitute the most comprehensive and important single source of the economic, social demographic research on which are based most of the vast urban programs going on today.

So we begin -- new items in no special order of priority.

1. We must obtain place of work on a much more refined basis than the county-central city level of 1960; at least to the census tract level; and indeed, bearing in mind the proposed method of taking the census by mail, which includes elaborate coding tables of address to block-face to census tract, work location can theoretically be handled if obtained as an actual address.

2. We must obtain information on multiple jobs, on the extent of 'moonlighting.'

3. The concept of residential mobility should be applied to occupations -- what occupation were you in five years ago?

4. Mobility should be expanded to include, if possible, the number of moves over some time period.

5. 'Children ever born' should be obtained for all women, not just ever-married women. The present restriction introduces substantial biases in the data, especially in central cities.

6. The family or permanent residence of students, as well as their school residence, should be obtained.

7. There have been several requests for attitudinal questions -- attitudes toward one's job, living quarters, health and recreational facilities, etc. This should be explored.

So much for strictly new items. As we discuss definitions and tables, some recommendations will be equivalent to new items. Let us turn to definitional problems.

8. The present definition of the labor force as anyone who worked at least one hour or had a job or was looking for work in the census week, is badly inadequate for current information on poverty and employment. The hard-core unemployed, or Negro youths who, when asked if they are looking for work, shrug 'what for?' are counted out of the labor force exactly the same as suburban housewives. The seriously under-employed, the person who tries to survive by long hours at multiple jobs, the underpaid, these are all difficult or impossible to study for small areas by present census labor force definitions and tabulations.

9. Most people, certainly including Census Bureau staff, recognize the weaknesses of the present subjective housing condition definitions. Furthermore these definitions are totally unfeasible in a mail type survey. New definitions based on objective criteria of facilities, such as shared bath, separate entrance and others, are being studied by the Bureau. I hope this will be presented in some detail this afternoon.

10. Part of the housing condition problem is that many local programs that need this item are focused not on the housing unit but on the structure. Being able to relate condition to structure would be a breakthrough in usefulness of housing information.

11. There have been suggestions to change the definition of gross rent. The concept of gross rent as a definitional effort to make rent comparisons meaningful is very important and must not be lost. The concept may well be improved by changing the definitional components, but it certainly won't be improved by being eliminated.

12. There have been suggestions that the present occupational definition of the census week job be changed to "usual occupation." This harkens back to pre-depression days and memories of how inadequate the "usual occupation" definition was for depression studies. Yet there is a valid point in the objection. The present definition should be retained, but possibly a new item, "usual occupation" added.

So much for definitions. Let us now take up tables and publication levels.

13. At this point I want to dispose of a curious inconsistency that has apparently crept into census thinking about housing condition. As stated above, the Bureau is developing a research effort to impute housing condition by correlation with facilities. If good correlations can be established, then the publication of facilities on a block level could be reasonable substitute for condition. Well and good. But in other Bureau memoranda the suggestion is made to reduce the facilities questions to a sample. If this is done, then block information on condition by means of facilities will not be possible.

14. There is very general agreement that both the block statistics bulletin and the census tract bulletin must be greatly expanded, with far more cross-tabulations than presently exist. At this point we reach the heart of the census as the most fundamental of all tools for social research in small areas. Let me enumerate the most important of these publication improvements, on at least the census tract level, if not the block level. I emphasize that I am referring here not to tabulation alone, but to publication.

First and foremost, there must be a great expansion of population-housing cross-tabulations. The limited extent of such cross-tabulations was one of the greatest weaknesses in the 1960 census publications for anti-poverty program studies, for housing, school drop-out, relocation, urban renewal and similar programs. For example:

- a. Rent or mortgage status by color by income.
- b. Housing condition or its correlates, by population characteristics such as color, income, family size and composition, ages of occupants.

15. There must, on at least a census tract level, be greater cross-tabulations, of housing

items themselves, for example:

- a. Density, i.e. persons per room, by various types of housing -- single, duplex, walk-up, elevator.

- b. Condition (or its correlates) and various other housing characteristics by rent or value.

16. The block statistics at a very minimum should include population by age, and a number-of-units-in-structure distribution.

17. The block statistics bulletin should be published for smaller size cities, at least down to the 25,000 level.

18. The census tract bulletin should have deeper cross-tabulations of population items.

- a. Income by family size and composition.
- b. Characteristics of persons in group quarters.
- c. Educational attainment by age, down to age 17 for persons no longer in school.

19. For market research the census tract bulletin should include availability of telephone and whether private or shared.

20. The availability of work-place opens a whole new spectrum of extremely useful census tract (as well as city-wide) tabulations and publication -- characteristics of the work force in a given area: its number, occupational distribution, age, color, distance from home, mode of transportation, etc. For the first time profiles of the work force in a city or a census tract will be possible. This subject should be thoroughly explored and the most important characteristics published.

21. In this connection the present census tract array of residents by industry does not appear to have widespread use.

22. The census tract program should be extended to the smaller cities.

I want to mention now certain additional improvements in published tables, without passing judgment on their need below the city level, but emphasizing them on at least the city level.

23. There should be a substantial expansion of cross-tabulations by color. Studies of discrimination, civil rights, and changes in the status of non-whites in depth have been hampered by the absence of published color cross-tabulations of occupation, industry, wages, educational attainment, age and class of worker.

24. The income upper-end intervals of \$10,000 and \$15,000 are too low. There should be at least one or two additional breaks.

Finally the following remarks on publication should be made.

25. There has been considerable discussion of the artificiality of political boundaries in

the modern metropolis, and the suggestion that the census publications ignore minor civil divisions and other jurisdictional boundaries. If such a suggestion were adopted in the foreseeable future it would be a disaster. A little reflection on this matter will make this point obvious, and I shan't dwell on it further, other than to point out a simple example of which the Census Bureau is well aware -- relative non-use of data for the urbanized area, which is primarily an academic concept, in contrast to the tremendous use of census data for the cities and counties, which are political jurisdictions. Local public policy, which is heavily dependent on social research, follows political lines. These lines must not be abandoned by the census.

26. One matter under consideration by the Bureau is seriously disturbing. Faced with rising costs and increasing requests for more data, the Bureau has raised the possibility of establishing a hierarchy of publication, in which some items would be tabulated and placed on tapes for sale, but not published in the standard census bulletins; and some items would not be tabulated except on reimbursable request. This of course has been done in the past. What is being contemplated is a great acceleration in the relative decrease of published data. This is a matter of great seriousness on which the Bureau must proceed with extreme caution. The vast bulk of local users of the census have neither the time, the know-how, the mechanical facilities, or the money to obtain and use unpublished data. One of the unique and most precious values of the census is its immediate availability on a reference shelf. To compromise this seriously in order to make more data available could prove monumentally self-defeating. The data, while available in theory, would not be available in fact to the great majority of census users.

There are some aspects of the present publication program that could probably be reduced -- for example tract data by industry. Secondly, in choosing alternatives in publication reduction, the Bureau should consider seriously the great reduction or elimination of the interpretative and graphic material contained in the 1960 volumes. This material has limited value and is expendable. (I do not refer here to the definitions, explanations, schedule displays, and subject reference tables in the Introductions. These are absolutely essential and should be as clear and full as possible.) In addition, most of Volume II and Volume III of the 1960 census publication program have been of little use to local communities. (I do not pretend here to represent national and other large interests. But it is these large interests that are in the best position to pay for special tabulations -- as indeed occurred by, for example, the Department of Labor, the Office of Education, and the Office of Economic Opportunity with the 1960 data.) I strongly urge that a serious review be made by the Bureau of the usefulness of the Volumes II and III programs of the 1960 census before committing its 1970 publication resources. What is needed more than anything else is not these special reports and summaries, but the raw, primeval building block data

which are manipulable in a host of ways by a host of users who have only what the Bureau pre-prints for them -- or nothing.

As a final section of this paper I want to turn to some miscellaneous but very important topics.

27. The Census Bureau has most happily demonstrated its responsiveness to the increasingly critical need for information of our rapidly urbanizing society, by seeking out ways of serving local communities over and above the census items as such. One of the most useful ways is a by-product of the proposed mail census of 1970. The creation of the address tapes will enable the Bureau to provide localities, at cost, a variety of address directories. This should be especially noted by those communities that have had difficulty constructing address-census tract directories, or that need block directories. In addition, the Bureau is setting aside a 5-digit blank code field for free use by the community, together with the free address print-outs to expedite use of this code and its entrance onto Bureau tapes. This will provide a computerized look-up table for a variety of city divisions such as voting and police precincts, school and health districts, that will permit publication of census data for any of these city divisions at moderate cost. In addition to this 5-digit local code, the Bureau will have its own block-face code which will be made available to localities for similar use.

I trust that these things will be presented today in more detail by the Bureau speakers. I mention them here for two purposes -- first to express publicly our appreciation for these progressive steps, and second to urge that the Bureau prepare a comprehensive and detailed non-technical brochure explaining these and related matters step-by-step -- the various types of maps, different projection systems, such terms as state plane system, coordinates, the uses of block coordinates, their relation to addresses, why both are needed, how a local community can use block coordinates, what facilities it must have to use them, how it can order material from the Bureau by the codes and coordinates, costs, etc. The tremendously valuable work of the Census Geography Division should be clearly explained to the local communities.

28. There has been much mention of the integration of local and census data, but apparently little clarity of thought that has been reduced to cold print. The much greater accessibility of 1970 census data on a small area basis made possible by the 5-digit code, the block face code, and potentially, the block coordinates are major breakthroughs. But they are not integration with local data. Two proposals have been advanced for genuine integration of local and census data, both of which are strongly urged upon the Bureau. The first is the retention of the individual address tapes with the substantive data for that address, or some equivalent method that permits computer return to the raw data by address at moderate cost. Then a community can send to the Bureau a list of addresses with substantive information for each,

and have the Bureau cross-tabulate this local material with census data. This is true integration of local and census data by address. The second is inclusion on the basic questionnaire of the social security number, and the retention of individual record tapes with this number, or some equivalent method. Then the community can send to the Bureau a list of social security numbers with substantive information for each, and have the Bureau cross-tabulate the local information with census data. This is true integration of local and census data by person. Both of these steps would permit enormous advances in community research, planning and evaluation. If the costs are reasonable, their usefulness can hardly be exaggerated.

I want to close this paper with a few remarks on this very last point, the social security number on the census schedule. This item is very familiar to the Bureau. It has been questioned on the ground of possible public objection, since it obviously is not a substantive item but would be there only for record matching purposes. The prevailing opinion of the Census Advisory Committee on Small Area Data, with which I agree, is that there would probably be little public objection to this item (although there may be some objection from civil liberties groups). As we all know, the social security number is being increasingly required on various documents, and the public is becoming accustomed to providing it. By 1970 it can be reasonably inferred that this item will be taken for granted by most people.

Aside from mechanical and technical problems in processing and using the social security number, I believe the heart of the issue lies elsewhere than the strategic question of public acceptance. It lies within ourselves, as citizens

and statisticians. Assuming that we have the power to place the number in the census, what do we ourselves want? There is no question that the horizons of research and planning for social engineering will tremendously widen with the ability to integrate numerous sources by social security number -- census, OASI, IRS, welfare, health, and others. This can, potentially, solve the record matching problem we have wrestled with for years. We are on the historical threshold of comprehensive social data banks, and this item will surely put us across that threshold. Is this what we really want? We live in a democratic society, and presumably confidentiality statutes and regulations are honored. Will this always be so? For the enormous leap forward in social engineering that integrated person records will make possible, do we want to create such governmental files? Or are there ways to, say, create central "look-up" tables by social security number links with other file numbers, without actually integrating the substantive records? Would this suffice? Or is even this too great an invasion of privacy, too great a risk? What is the tipping point? In marching courageously forward to a 1984 utopia, are we not also blindly paving the way for a possible 1984 Big Brother?

This is too big an issue to be covered here. Suffice it to say that the historical moment of truth is rapidly approaching. Already the medicare program is forcing the integration of local health, welfare and vocational rehabilitation records. Whether we like it or not, social data banks, at least primitive ones, are historically upon us, as inevitable as the tide. We must face squarely and solve the problem of how to create effective social data banks and yet preserve confidentiality and personal privacy. Otherwise we may find that the road to a totalitarian hell was partly paved by our liberal good intentions.