Multiple Race Reporting

Amita Dahra

Kyland Howard

Office of Institutional Research and Planning

University of Maryland, 1101 Mitchell Building

College Park, Maryland 20742

amita@deans.umd.edu

khoward@accmail.umd.edu

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By Amita Dahra & Kyland Howard

MULTIPLE RACE REPORTING: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITS DERIVATION AND ITS USE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty years the standards set in the Office of Budget and Management's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 have provided a common language to define and group the social constructs of 'race' and 'ethnicity'. The definitions were developed to provide consistency in the collection of data between various federal agencies and have since been used in various surveys and administrative forms. Race data thus collected formed the very basis of the Civil Rights laws that were enacted to promote equal access in housing, education, employment and other areas for minorities (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). Since the beginning of the last decade, the categories specified by the OMB have come under constant criticism for not reflecting the increasing diversity of the nation in an appropriate and adequate manner. In a response to this criticism, the OMB came up with revisions and modifications to the existing categories in 1997 and tabulation and reporting guidelines in 2000 after a long period of review that involved in-depth research and discussion of the suggestions of changes and the effect they could have on the reporting of different populations. This paper discusses the review process, the changes and the result of the University of Maryland's experiment in using one of the new formats.

HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

Need for the change

The general dissatisfaction with the inability of the data to reflect the vast diversity has stemmed mainly from two factors. First is the continuously increasing influx of immigrants into the country. According to an article published in the *Newsweek* magazine (Meachem, September 18, 2000), by the end of this decade Latinos will outpace Blacks as the nation's majority 'minority population' as a result of immigration patterns. This forecast has been proven somewhat inaccurate by the 2000 census data, released in March 2001. According to the census, the Latino population is 12.5 percentage of the total population in America and thus has already surpassed the Black population, which is 12.3% of the total American population (Census 2000 Brief, March 2001). The fact that the total number of foreign-born workers in United States hit 15.7 million last year an all time high in last seven decades also illustrates the need to accurately record the race and ethnicity of these immigrants (Meachem, September 18, 2000). The Population Projection Program of the Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2045 foreign-born population would be a whopping 13.3% of the total population in the U.S. It also estimate that by that year, the White non-Hispanic population in the nation would be a slim majority at a mere 54.5%- down from 75.1% in the year 2000. States like California, Hawaii and Mexico bear evidence that this is not an unrealistic estimate, as Whites are the 'minority population' in these states (Meachem, September 18, 2000).

The second factor, that merited a second look at the way the race and ethnic data is

collected and reported, is the increase in the numbers of interracial marriages in the nation. According to the Census Bureau, interracial married couples with at least one spouse White or Black were 2.4% of all the American married couples in 1998 - up from 1.8% in the year 1990(Census Bureau). Considering the fact that Blacks and Whites are the two races that are least likely to marry outside their race - they account for only one-seventh of all interracial marriages- these numbers are indicative of an increased acceptance of interracial marriages in American society (Mathews, 1996). Only 6% Black men, 2% Black women, 1.6% White men and 1.4% White women marry outside their racial groups (Mathews, 1996) where as much higher percentages of Asian, and American Indian men and women tend to marry outside their own racial groups.

In the year 1990 more than two million children were born to interracial couples. It has been estimated that interracial marriages are more prevalent in second-generation immigrants, and that over 50% of Asian-Americans and American Hispanics enter into such unions (Mathews, 1996). Individuals in such households have expressed their dissatisfaction at being forced to isolate themselves from their multicultural heritage and to identify themselves as belonging to a certain primary race (Morning, 1998).

The Review Process

The OMB responded in 1993, and formally began to undertake a full review of the standards for collecting, analyzing, and reporting all government data that depicted the racial and ethnic information about the individuals. In 1994, it created an Interagency Committee to oversee the review of the established standards, identify the concerns, and to provide suggestions for changing the standards. This committee was also made responsible for conducting the research and testing related to assessing the possible effects of changes on the quality and usefulness of the resulting data. Some of the major principles developed by the committee to govern the review process dealt with the issues of the social, cultural and ancestral constructs of race and; self-identification by an individual over observer identification; generally accepted definitions and broad coverage of the categories; consistency of the data across federal agencies; and historic comparability of the new data collected. It was also decided that the new standards would be phased in without updating historical records. (Complete list of the principles can be found in the Federal Register/ Vol. 62. No. 210, Oct.30, 1997)

The first element of the review process undertaken by the Interagency Committee was the public input. A variety of means were used by the committee to identify and address the concerns and suggestions including workshops, presentations, and public hearings; and representatives of federal agencies, academia, social research institutions, interest groups, industry and local school district were given an opportunity to present their views (Federal Register, 1997). The second element of the review process was the research that was undertaken to "provide assessment of the data quality issues associated with various approaches to collecting data on race and ethnicity" (Federal Register, 1997). The issues to be tested were –

- how to collect data on persons who did not want to classify themselves belonging to just one race;
- whether to combine the race and Hispanic origin question or present them as a two part question;
- whether to change the terminology used for particular categories and whether or

not to add new categories.

The research process undertaken was extensive and involved surveys conducted in different ways - in-person, telephone and by mail. It also included cognitive interviews conducted with various interest groups. The surveys conducted were at the national level, the major ones being the Supplement on Race and Ethnicity to the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the National Content Survey (NCS). In addition to these, the Race and Ethnicity Targeted Test (RAETT) was conducted by the Census Bureau in the June 1996. This test was conducted to assess the effect of the changes under consideration on specific minority populations - not measured reliably in the national surveys. Findings of this test were considered important as some of the minority-group leaders believed that the new methods could reduce the number of persons identifying themselves as members of their respective groups (Hirschman, Alba and Farley, 2000). The research findings and methodology of the RAETT were published in the Bureau's Population Division Working Paper 18 (U.S. Bureau of Census 1997). This paper describes the important findings of the test.

The 1996 Race and Ethnicity Targeted Test (RAETT)

To conduct the test, different formats of the survey were sent to geographic areas that had higher concentrations of people belonging to specific racial or ethnic groups. This was important, as the national surveys would not have enough cases of the minority population to test all the formats hence a 'targeted sample' design was used. Six samples were chosen - Black, American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian & Pacific Islander, Hispanic and White. The researchers involved have cautioned against using this data to make generalized assumptions, as the samples were not representative of the proportions of race or ethnicity in the national population.

Different formats of the survey were developed that reflected the specific purposes of RAETT. These objectives were:

- To determine the effects on the population of allowing respondents to report more than one race or include a 'multiracial' category and test the effect of using different terminology of the instructions.
- To determine the effects of placing the Hispanic origin question immediately before the race question. NCS and other studies have shown that the Latin Americans do not have the same concept of race as North Americans. Putting the race question before the Hispanic origin question, as was done in the 1980 and 1990 census tends to confuse people and they opt to either mark the 'other' category or not respond to the question at all. Having the race question after the Hispanic origin question reduces this confusion thus increasing the response rate. Some people expressed concern that a question that would ask about a single ethnic group, would be placed before the question that would provide racial identification for all the persons.
- To determine the effects of collecting information on race and ethnicity from a combined or two part question. This option was to be tested in response to research that showed that there was no consensus on how Hispanics wished to identify themselves- as one of the race categories or in addition to the race question as a separate entity.
- To test different terminologies, classifications and formats in the race question. An example of terminology issue was using Indian (Amer.) verses American Indian. An

example of the classification issue was whether to list the Asian countries of origin or allow the respondents to write in their country of origin from the examples provided. Finally alphabetizing the Asian and Pacific Islander groups was the format issue (U.S. Bureau of Census 1997).

Eight different survey formats were used that reflected the objectives of the RAETT and allowed comparison of specific issues. RAETT results showed interesting ways in which the different groups could respond to the different suggested changes. Asian and Pacific Islander and American Indian targeted samples were found to be the most reactive to the opportunity of marking more than one race and they also responded well to the 'multiracial' category. The numbers identifying themselves as American Indians or Asian Pacific Islander increased with the option of choosing multiple responses and for American Indian sample it increases by as much as 4%, probably due to the persons reporting as 'other race' now choose more than one race. Both methods captured similar numbers among these two racial groups. Listing out the countries of origin in the question (in the API category) instead of just providing the examples allowed for identification of separate races and increased reporting of the 'Other API' by five percentage points. This increase could be ascribed to the Asian and other Pacific Islander population that reported as 'Other Race' when this option was available. Another interesting observation was the unrequested multiple responses. In one of the formats, which was similar to the 1990 census questionnaire, respondents were asked to select only one race category but a large number - four percentage of the total API sample- marked more than one response to the race question (Results of RAETT, 1996).

The identification of the Hispanic population is sensitive to variations in the format and question order. Placing the Hispanic origin question first reduced the non-response to the question, but did not eliminate it. Reporting of the Hispanics in the 'other race' also reduced as a result of this change. Combined race and ethnicity question reduced the non-response to the question significantly, in all samples, when compared to the corresponding separate format. The combined format also elicited higher levels of multiple responses in the Hispanic population. Over 90% of the multiple responses involved the Hispanic origin and race group. When all the responses of Hispanic origin are added together no difference was found between the total numbers in the combined format and the separate format. According to Hirschman, Alba and Farley who have analyzed the results of RAETT, the numbers of persons who reported themselves as Hispanics in the Black and White targeted areas was reduced when a combined race/Hispanic question was used. They do caution that the numbers were small and thus no conclusive results could be obtained. But this does seem probable as the results on which the RAETT findings are based are responses from the Hispanics living in predominantly Hispanic areas, a fact that could affect the way people see or report their race/ethnicity (Harris & Sims, 2000).

Alternate questionnaires elicited almost no variation in the overall response rates of Blacks and Whites reporting as single race. Slight increases in multiple reporting in alternative formats in the Black targeted sample could be due to the persons reporting as 'White' or 'Other race' in the single race option format.

OMB's Survey Guidelines

RAETT results were compared with the CPS and NCS surveys and the recommendations made to OMB. OMB accepted a number of recommendations made by the Interagency

Committee but believed that more research was needed in some areas like allowing multiple responses to the Hispanic origin question and adding Arab/Middle Eastern Category before any action could be taken on them. Recommendations that were accepted were:

- Self-reporting or self-identification is the preferred method for data collection and should be used wherever feasible.
- There will be not a "Multiracial" or a "Multiethnic" option.
- Respondents will have the option of selecting one, or more than one, of the racial/ethnic groups.
- Recommended instructions should be: "Mark one or more" or "Select one or more."
- The category "Asian or Pacific Islander" will be split into two categories, "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander."
- The original racial category "Native American or Alaskan Native" was expanded to include any of the original people of South America and Central America.

OMB also recommended that the separate format should be used when racial and ethnic data are collected through self-identification. OMB in their December 2000 provisional guidelines further clarified that this format was to be preferred over the combined one. The question on Hispanic ethnicity should be asked first, followed by the question requesting racial identification. The minimum standards for the separate format include two categories for ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. The minimum standards for the separate format also include five categories for the data on race (with instructions to select one or more than one as appropriate): (1) American Indian or Alaska Native, (2) Asian, (3) Black or African American, (4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and (5) White.

The combined format, according to the recommendations, could be used for observer-collected data on race and ethnicity, when self-reporting is not practical or feasible. In such cases, there should be a minimum of six racial/ethnic categories with instructions to select one or more, as appropriate. The categories would include Hispanic or Latino and the five listed under race in the separate format. Definitions of all the categories as specified by the OMB directive have been included in the appendix.

OMB Tabulation Guidelines

Settled rules on the manner of reporting individuals via the new Census categories do not exist. There are, however, tabulation guidelines that have been issued by the Office of Management and Budget.[1] These guidelines (OMB 2000) make the following suggestions:

- The five single race categories are to remain 'intact'. Persons selecting one of these choices are to be reported without any aggregation of categories.
- The four 'double-race' categories most frequently selected are to be reported.
- Categories exceeding 1 percent of the population are also to be reported

[1] Please note that OMB guidelines are directed at federal agencies. The emphasis on these guidelines is a result of expectations that federal agencies will, in turn, require higher education institutions as well as other organizations to submit their data in a format that matches OMB requirements.

- All other individuals are to be placed in a 'remaining balance' category.

Several issues remain problematic when these guidelines are employed. Since the category of 'Hispanic' is considered an ethnicity (rather than a race), the treatment of Hispanic responses is somewhat unclear. It would appear that a Hispanic total in excess of one percent of the relevant population would be reported in a separate category. But since Hispanic origin is not a race, counts below one percent of the population would be placed in a remaining balance category. Since population distributions differ by region, race reporting will not be uniform. The University of Maryland, for example, might report Hispanics as their own separate category. The University of Minnesota might place Hispanics in a balance category.

OMB drafted tabulation guidelines to cover several contingencies. If the reporting is for the purpose of monitoring Civil Rights, individuals selecting a single 'minority' category and 'white', are to be counted as a minority. If a respondent selects two or more 'minority' categories, additional decision rules are employed. If the reporting is in response to an allegation or complaint of discrimination, the aggregation places all persons reporting the race upon which the complaint is based in that category (OMB, 2000, p.67). If, for example, an analysis is undertaken in response to a complaint by a person of Asian, Hawaiian, and white descent, and the complaint alleges discrimination based upon Asian background, all individuals selecting identifying, in whole or in part, as Asian, are to be counted as Asian. There have been no formal recommendations regarding how to conduct 'non-enforcement' related analyses.[2]

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND'S EXPERIENCE WITH MULTIPLE RACE REPORTING

Data

The University of Maryland decided to investigate what its freshmen population would look like if OMB's questionnaire and tabulation guidelines were employed. The University of Maryland conducts an annual survey of its freshmen class. Over the past two years the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) has placed a racial identity question- in multiple response format- on the freshmen survey. Since Maryland's undergraduate application contained race data under the single-race reporting format, the campus has had the ability to match individual responses under both scenarios.

The freshmen survey employed the 'combined format'. This option treated the choice of Hispanic ethnicity as a race. Respondents were given the following racial categories from which to make an identification: (1) White, (2) Black, African-American, (3) Asian, (4) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, (5) American Indian/Alaska Native, and (6) Hispanic. (Currently, the recommended practice is to use a two-question format. First, the respondent is queried regarding Hispanic/non-Hispanic identity. Subsequently, the respondent is asked to

[2] An earlier suggestion required that if an analysis was to look at disparate impact, then multiple analyses would be required. Earlier guidelines suggested that separate analyses be run with individuals placed in each of the categories they selected. Continuing the example cited above, all Asian and Hawaiian respondents would be treated as Asian in one analysis. And, in a separate analysis, all Asian and Hawaiian respondents will be counted as Hawaiian. Since the analyses can lead to differing conclusions, this solution also appears problematic.

select racial identities.)[3]

Results

Table A reports the findings, under both formats, for the fall 2000 freshmen class. Among the individual racial categories for which comparisons can be made, the changes are small, but noticeable. For example, the percent of Asians fell by approximately one percent. The number of African-Americans fell by 1.6%. In contrast, the percentage of White students grew by 0.6%.

Table A

Comparison of Individual Responses	Single Choice	Multiple Choice
Am. Ind./Alaska Nat.	0.30%	0.40%
Asian	14.90%	13.80%
Black/Afr-Am.	10.70%	9.10%
Native Hawaiian/other Pac. Islndr.	n/a	0.50%
White	65.60%	66.20%
Hispanic	4.40%	3.30%

Table B

Movers and Stayers-Of Those Who Changed Identity, where did they go? Changes in response	N	Remained	Moved to*
Am. Ind.	8	12.50%	62% White/ Am. Ind.
Black/Afr. Am.	316	84.80%	3.48% White/Black
Asian	392	89.90%	4.4% White/Asian
Hispanic	130	73.90%	16.2% White/Hispanic
White	1871	98.10%	0.5% White/Am. Ind.

** Note: multiple choices were made, this column represents only the most popular choice*

A review of individual choices among the differing formats of the racial identification question found that respondents who identified themselves only as 'White' remained the most stable when a multiple response format was offered. Table B indicates that of the 1871 individuals who, under a single response format, indicated that they were White, 98.1% restricted their selection to White under a multiple-reporting format. In other words, 1.89% of the original pool of White respondents opted to select more than one race when they had the option to do so. Conversely, among Hispanics, only 73.9% of respondents remained 'Hispanic-only'. Slightly more than 26% of the Hispanic category (under the single-race reporting format) opted to select more than one race. The largest shift for the group was to a white/Hispanic combination. The multiple response formats creates the possibility that conflicting sets of

[3] For analytical purposes, we have combined the Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander responses.

numbers will be employed to describe the racial composition of a campus.

Table C indicates the range of percentages applicable to the fall 2000 freshmen class at the University of Maryland. The minimum percentage represents those persons who selected only one race. The maximum percentage reflects every racial/ethnic combination by individuals. For example, the maximum percentage of Black freshmen (11.25%) includes everyone who indicated part, or all, of their racial identity as African-American.

Table C

Range of Racial Composition	minimum	maximum
Am. Ind.	0.38%	1.60%
Black/Afr. Am.	9.30%	11.25%
Asian & Native Hawaiian, Other P.I.	14.50%	17.20%
Hispanic	3.30%	5.30%
White	67.30%	71.30%

Table D presents similar data, from the Census Bureau, on the national population.

Table D

Range of Racial Composition: US Population	Min	Max
Black	12.3	12.4
American Pacific Indian	3.7	4.5
Hispanic	12.5*	12.5*
White	75.1	77.1

**Note: Separate questions format (i.e. race and ethnicity questions separately) used in the census data does not allow us to get the range of maximum and minimum percentages for the Hispanic population.*

Discussion

Approximately five percent of the University of Maryland freshmen selected more than one racial identity when the option was given to them. Other analysis has provided similar results. Employing data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Annual Freshmen Survey, (House and Rothamer, 2000) found that the percentage of Northern Illinois freshmen selecting more than one race increase rose from one percent in 1985 to a maximum of 5.2 percent in 1997 (House and Rothamer, p.13) . But, as House has observed, (telephone conversation, September 2000), what remains unclear, however, is whether the increase was a consequence of changing social/political attitudes regarding multiple race identity or changing demographics of the applicant pool. Over time, more Hispanics did begin to apply to Northern Illinois University.

Harris and Sim (2000) addressed the issue of stability of racial identity over time and venue. Employing data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health for 1994-1995, the authors analyzed a database of 21000 junior high school and high school students on the issue of racial identity. The analysis found that eight percent of the respondents selected more than one option in response to a question on racial identity.

Initial results from the 2000 census indicate that approximately 3.2 percent of the population selected more than one response pertaining to racial/ethnic identity. This total

includes individuals selecting more than one of the four racial categories (2.4%) and 0.8% of Hispanics selecting one or more races (Census Bureau, 2001, p.10).

Our findings of a 5% multiple response rate are bracketed by those of Harris and Sim (8%) and the Bureau of the Census (3.2%). This range appears appropriate. Research has indicated that the likelihood of selecting multiple responses to racial identity diminishes with age (Harris and Sim, 2000); and the Harris and Sim study covered a population younger than our entering class. Conversely, the Census statistics reflect a population that is older than our students.

Similarly, when analysis shifts to looking at individual racial categories, our population appears slightly more volatile than the national population. Approximately 10 percent of University of Maryland Asian freshmen altered their responses to select more than one race. Based on the RAETT, the comparable statistic was approximately seven percent.[4] Similarly, among Maryland freshmen, the percent of Blacks and Hispanics that altered their responses were, respectively, 15 percent and 26 percent. The comparable figures nationally (from RAETT) were 2.1% and 19.4%.

IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The issue of historic crossover in the data i.e., the trend analysis has yet to be resolved. The OMB is considering multiple options in solving this problem and would be presenting specific recommendations sometime in the near future (OMB, 2000). To complicate matter further, since racial/ethnic identity is a social construct, and identity does appear to change over time, future research responsibilities might entail querying student populations on their racial/ethnic identities at both the beginning and the end of their college careers.

Few, if any, methodological issues in the social sciences have more consequences for contemporary American society than the measurement of racial and ethnic categories. In the history of census the year 1960 was a major turning point when self-identification became the new method of data collection (Hirschman, Alba and Farley, 2000). The data collectors were absolved of the responsibility of racially categorizing people and whatever the respondents selected was reported as such. With the latest changes in this arena, this responsibility seems to have been shifted on to analysts' desk. As discussed earlier, the final numbers used depend entirely on the objective of the data analysis, and the decision of judiciously categorizing the population is left to the analyst. Another related concern is the 'phenomenon of different numbers floating around'. At any given time, a person on campus could come across a range of numbers for each of the racial and ethnic categories –all correct- and this could lead to considerable confusion and distrust among the campus community. Institutional researchers have to gear up and recognize their role in educating the campus of the imminent changes and how the new form of data can or can not be used. Management of data quality, extraction and loading issues that arise while processing the current and legacy data-for e.g. the transactional data and the data that resides in the data warehouse –needs to be accorded high priority and made integral part of the planning process.

[4] It should be kept in mind that the RAETT over sampled minority populations and has not been adjusted. Thus the results represent indicators rather than can be validated via inferential statistic.

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APPENDIX

Definitions For the Old Categories

The basic racial and ethnic categories for Federal statistics and program administrative reporting defined according to the (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 are as follows:

- **American Indian or Alaskan Native**. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- **Asian or Pacific Islander**. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa.
- **Black**. A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Hispanic**. A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **White**. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East

Definitions for the New Categories

The basic racial and ethnic categories for Federal statistics and program administrative reporting defined according to the (OMB) Revisions to the standards for the classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity are as follows:

- **Asian:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam
- **American Indian or Alaska Native:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Hispanic or Latino:** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **Black or African American:** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.