

# Development of Bilingual Interviewer Training at the U.S. Census Bureau



Patricia Goerman, Mikelyn Meyers and Yazmín A. García Trejo  
Center for Behavioral Science Methods, U.S. Census Bureau

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*Disclaimer: This presentation is intended to inform people about research and to encourage discussion. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.*

# Overview of talk

- Two decades of research related to development of doorstep messages to encourage survey participation in multiple languages
- Challenge: how to synthesize findings and get them into the field in a large survey organization
- Current implementation plans and status
- Discussion

# Past U.S. Census Bureau Research

- Census Bureau has done research over a decade related to doorstep messaging across languages
  - Field observation in eight languages during 2010 census
  - Expert review of translated messages in 7 languages (2015)
  - Focus groups in 7 languages (2015 and 2017)
    - English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic
- CBAMS work: (Census Barriers Attitudes and Motivations)
  - Identification of different mindsets attached to census respondents from hard to count populations (e.g. language barrier, unawareness, mistrust of the government, low engagement)
  - Williams, Bates, Lotti, & Wroblewski, (2015)

# Doorstep messages

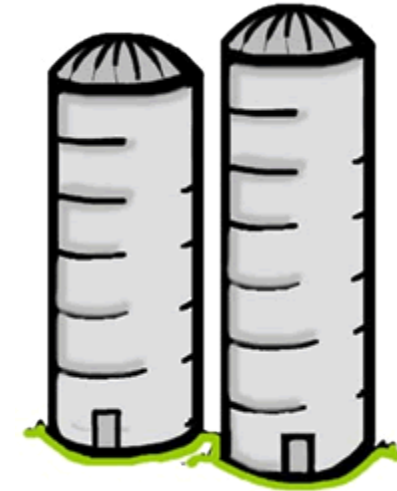
- Messages: statements for face-to-face interviewer to initiate conversation and gain respondent cooperation at the doorstep
- Why important? Hard to count populations
- Types of messages included:
  - Census specific
    - Showing Census ID badge
    - Discuss purpose and frequency of Census
    - Census as mandatory
  - General
    - Introduce self
    - Type of questions on survey
    - Confidentiality and fact that it is safe to participate

# Types of Findings

- Preferred messages/behavior across language groups
  - Appearance/attire, body positioning
  - Confidentiality, protection of data, low burden
- Concerns across languages that might deter participation
  - Immigration status, safety concerns
  - Fear of losing benefits
- Differences across language groups
  - Mandatory message
  - Meaning of terms such as “count”
- Challenges of sorting through large volume of findings

# Sharing Information and Resources in Large Survey Organizations

- Silos, communication challenges
- Offering to provide support/help
- How to best reach out across areas
  - Reach out to as many areas as possible
  - Different survey operations
  - Different teams
  - Apply for existing research and funding programs
    - Increasing operational efficiency program
    - 2020 evaluation program



# Incorporating findings into Census Bureau Operations: 4 Examples

1. 2018 Census test
2. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
3. 2020 interviewer training modules (automated, online)
  - Cross cultural communication (general)
  - Spanish language module for interviewers in Puerto Rico
4. 2020 Interviewer training experiment (automated, online)
  - Targeted to Spanish speaking bilingual interviewers

# 1. 2018 Census Test: Bilingual interviewer Handout

- Creation of 2 page guideline for counting Limited English Proficient (LEP) households
- Topics:
  - Best practices for using Spanish Census materials
  - Guidelines for translation on the fly when no translation available
  - Tips for showing respect and observing cultural norms
  - Best practices for determining what language is spoken
  - Use available translations if you speak the language
  - Use of interpreters in the field
  - Tips for addressing common respondent concerns



## 2. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

- Goal: Prepare Spanish/English bilingual interviewers to administer a newly developed Spanish translation of the survey instrument by creating specialized training materials. Prepare all interviewers to work with interpreters.
- After drafting training materials, we refined them by:
  - Focus groups with experienced interviewers to collect their tips on interviewing
  - Training interviewers for a field test
  - Observing interviewers during field test
  - Focus groups after the field test to find out how well the training prepared interviewers to conduct interviews
  - Revised materials based on interviewer feedback

# NHIS Bilingual Training Materials

- Overview booklet for bilingual interviewers:
  - Highlighted changes to the survey instrument
  - Gave bilingual interviewers a preview before the training
- Classroom training for bilingual interviewers
  - Described translated materials available to them
  - Explained how the translation was developed to gain buy-in
  - Discussed best practices for completing interviews in Spanish
  - 2 paired practice exercises on overcoming reluctance with Spanish-speakers

# NHIS Training Materials for All Interviewers

- Job Aid on working with interpreters
  - Questions for the interviewer to ask the potential interpreter
  - Instructions for the interviewer to give the interpreter
- Classroom training for all interviewers on working with interpreters
  - How to use the Language Identification Card
  - How to find an interpreter
  - Tips for working with an interpreter

# 3. 2020 Census Interviewer Training Modules

- Several pertinent online training modules already exist
  - Info on attitude, attire, messages, delivery, challenging situations
- Goal: to review and add any new information from the research on different language speakers
- Additional topics to add:
  - Identifying language spoken at the doorstep using Language Identification Card
  - Interpretation guidelines

# Virtual town example

## Draft idea from training vendor contractor

*You are an enumerator that is going door to door in Diversity Town.*

*Practice having culturally aware conversations with the respondents.*

*Navigate each cultural scenario and try to complete the interviews.*



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# 4. 2020 Census Interviewer Training experiment

- Experimental Training module for Spanish speaking interviewers
- Sample of interviewers receive training, control no training
- Metrics to evaluate:
  - Response rates
  - Number of contact attempts
  - Item non-response and misreporting errors
  - Field observation and interviewer focus group feedback components

# Summary and Conclusions

- Challenging to take a diverse body of research and pull out concrete, practical findings and get them into field
- Large survey organizations have many groups and layers
- Importance of researchers providing hands on support to technical and subject matter experts
- Researchers can reach out in many areas and offer help to get findings into the field

# Areas for Future Research

- Ensuring that all relevant messages from large bodies of research make it into the field
  - ESRA talk: co-author Yazmin Garcia Trejo
- Tailoring training to interviewers who speak different languages
- How to best coordinate doorstep messages with messages for use across modes/operations
  - Advertising
  - Self administered modes: paper, internet
  - Advance letters, brochures, other materials
  - Doorstep messages



# Seeking Feedback and Ideas

- Are other workshop participants involved in interviewer training development related to 3MC issues for their agencies?
- Have others worked to get 3MC research findings into the field in large or small agencies?
- Do you have feedback on any of our plans?

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For more information, email: [Patricia.L.Goerman@census.gov](mailto:Patricia.L.Goerman@census.gov)

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