

Troubled Reflections: Latino Immigrants' Thinking About Census 2020

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CENSUS RESEARCH PROJECT
SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY HEALTH FUND

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The San Joaquin Valley Health Fund is managed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation with funding support from 18 state and national funders: Sierra Health Foundation, The California Endowment, Rosenberg Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Blue Shield of California Foundation, Wallace H. Coulter Foundation, Dignity Health, Tides, Hellman Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, Convergence Partnership, Health Net, The Grove Foundation, Werner-Kohnstamm Family Giving Fund, New Venture Fund, Sunlight Giving and Heising-Simons Foundation.

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The San Joaquin Valley Health Fund census-related work is made possible with the support from Sierra Health Foundation, Blue Shield of California Foundation, Hellman Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The Grove Foundation, Werner-Kohnstamm Family Giving Fund, New Venture Fund, Sunlight Giving and Heising-Simons Foundation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank funders from the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund for enthusiastically supporting this research.

Survey Research Team

The core research team for the study consisted of five researchers with long experience working in national research with farmworkers and rural Mexican immigrants and in rural health-related and housing studies, Spanish-language radio audience research, and research on immigrant community life in the San Joaquin Valley. This team developed both the research instruments (survey form and the focus group moderator guide) as well as developing data management, data entry, and data validation procedures.

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OVERVIEW

Beyond its practical implications for equitable allocation of federal funding and political representation, the constitutionally enshrined ritual of a national census has been seen as part of our country's celebration of robust growth and diversity. In a 2009 report discussing prospects for continued efforts toward more accurate decennial census data, the National Academy of Sciences aptly titled their goal as being "a census that mirrors America." Reflections from survey research and focus group discussions with Latino Immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley show that increased non-response and variations in response among different sub-populations in the region's hard-to-count communities threaten to distort the census as a statistically reliable mirror of the United States and that this prospect is a cause for serious concern to the affected groups themselves.

Qualitative Analysis of Latino Survey Answers

Introduction to the San Joaquin Valley Census Research Project

Because of the lack of data on what residents in undercounted populations know and feel about the upcoming census and the possible addition of a citizenship question, California Institute for Rural Studies (CIRS), in partnership with the Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC) and with funding from the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund, undertook a short-term research project – the San Joaquin Valley Census Research Project (SJVCRP).

The research reported here, and in both previous and subsequent reports, builds on the growing body of work and is supplemental to the report on survey findings (Kissam, Mines, Quezada, Intili, & Wadsworth, 2019). The prior research provides a sound basis for concern about the impact of the citizenship question on census response rates.

The overall goal of the SJVCRP is to improve understanding of how the citizenship question may impact the San Joaquin Valley, a region with a large and diverse immigrant population. The project is comprised of interviews and focus groups with a broad spectrum of immigrant populations in the San Joaquin Valley. This report draws on findings from an analysis of open-ended survey questions collected from Latino immigrants and

their social networks from September 1, 2018, to October 21, 2018, and three focus groups conducted during December 2018.

The research reported on in our previous reports goes beyond examination of willingness to respond to the Census and examines additional factors involved in non-response, affecting the efficacy of the Census Bureau's non-response follow-up (NRFU) and subsequent undercount. Here we go on to explore respondents' reasons for their decision-making about Census 2020 both with and without a citizenship question.

Designing the research to investigate multiple barriers to census participation allows for study findings to provide a sound basis for advocacy about the citizenship question and for message development in efforts to promote the highest possible level of census participation among hard-to-count populations. It complements national research conducted by the Census Bureau and Young & Rubicam—the CBAMS (Census, Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators) initiative (Census Bureau, January 2019) and qualitative research conducted by Color of Change, NALEO, AAAJ, the Arab American Institute, and the National Congress of American Indians, providing unique insights about the reflections, feelings, and concerns of Latino first- and second-generation immigrants.

In addition, the analysis presented here provides a foundation for reflection about how to move toward a simpler, more user-friendly census to encourage and facilitate Latino immigrant household response along with pathways forward for developing innovative approaches for overcoming operational barriers to census response.

This report draws on interviews conducted with 414 Latino survey respondents in 104 venues in 31 communities. Survey respondents lived in households in 66 San Joaquin Valley cities and towns throughout the region. The observations in this report are focused on why respondents' willingness to respond fell into the patterns observed in the survey. The survey sample is representative of the Latino first- and second-generation immigrants¹ who make up about one-third of the total San Joaquin Valley population.

The vast majority (84%) of survey respondents said they were willing to answer a "simple" census as it was described to them at the outset of the survey, although 10% said "maybe," and 6% said they would not answer the census.

1 These are Latino immigrants who are the first in their families to immigrate (first generation) and those who are children of first generation immigrants (second generation).

After securing these responses about baseline willingness to respond to the census without a citizenship question, interviewers asked the survey respondents about their willingness to participate in the census if it were to include the citizenship question. Almost half of respondents (46%) said they would not be willing to take part in the 2020 Census with the citizenship question included.

This lack of willingness to respond is about four times greater than the previous published national estimate of citizenship question non-response based on analysis of item non-response to the ACS citizenship question.

Contrary to what is generally believed, the impact of the citizenship question is not confined to non-citizens. The question will also have a major impact on the second-generation U.S. born Latino citizens' responses.

In addition to presenting a qualitative analysis of survey responses, the current report also draws on three focus group discussions used to supplement the survey findings. The purpose of the focus groups was to explore in depth the perspectives of these distinctive Latino sub-populations so we could better understand the full spectrum of Latino immigrants' viewpoints about their willingness, concerns, fears, and expectations about participating in the Census.

The sub-populations we spoke with are indigenous Mexican immigrants who make up at least 6%² of the first-generation Mexican immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley. The second focus group was with DACA recipients, a sub-group who make up about 6% of the foreign-born non-citizen Latino population 18+ years of age of the San Joaquin Valley. The third focus group was with second-generation young adult immigrants 19-25, who are a large group within the San Joaquin Valley population.

This report delves into why people responded as they did – in their own words. Transcripts from long answer text boxes included in the SJVCRP survey were systematically coded and analyzed to gain insight into why respondents said what they did and how these responses changed with the proposed addition of a citizenship question. Comments of survey sub-groups are segmented by status since the citizenship question can be expected to affect each of these groups in a unique way.

This analysis set out to answer:

1. What are the underlying opinions, motivations and decisions that cause this shift from willingness to respond to unwillingness to respond to the Census?
2. What are the emotions evinced from the citizenship question and how extreme is the shift from positive to negative?
3. What do the perspectives, reflections, and concerns of the hard-to-count Latino immigrants including sub-populations indicate for census promotion and operational strategy?
4. What are identifiable immediate and medium-term impacts of efforts to add the citizenship question or remove it from Census 2020 for civic engagement and community life?

The Changing Face of California

For many decades, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, California has had more rural residents than any of the 11 western-most states of the contiguous 48. This rural population is changing.

The major demographic change in California during the past decade has been the remarkable increase in the populations of counties that have historically had small, somewhat isolated, rural communities spread over large areas.

A second demographic shift is the emergence of Hispanic majorities in major portions of the San Joaquin Valley, primarily Latino. Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare counties are now majority Hispanic, largely the result of having a mostly young, family-oriented population. Much of rural California is now more populous, more Hispanic, but less healthy, poorer and less well educated than urban California. The conclusion is inescapable: the divide between California's rich and poor is becoming ever wider. As in many agricultural regions, rural California communities face deep-rooted barriers to social, racial and environmental justice that have been inadequately addressed by public policy.

San Joaquin Valley

The San Joaquin Valley—made up of the eight counties of Kern, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin—is one with dense immigrant settlement. Currently, it is estimated to have a population of about

2 Among Latino farmworkers, the estimate of indigenous is at least 15%. See Richard Mines, David Runsten, and Sandra Nichols, "California's Indigenous Farmworkers," 2010.

4.2 million, about 900,000 of whom are foreign-born. The region's population is projected to grow to about 4.6 million by 2020.

About half of the San Joaquin Valley's entire population is Hispanic and about seven out of 10 foreign-born residents of the region are of Mexican or Central American origin.³

We estimate that 20%-21% of the adult population in the region are Latino foreign-born: first-generation immigrants. The vast majority are of Mexican origin although there are some communities with significant numbers of Salvadorans. We estimate that at least 6% of the Mexican immigrant population is of indigenous origin—predominantly Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui.⁴ Another 15% of the region's Latino population are the U.S.-born adult children of foreign-born Latinos: “second-generation immigrants.” Consequently, the study population being reported on here—Latino immigrants, their children and their social networks—makes up more than one-third of the entire population of the San Joaquin Valley.

In terms of immigration and citizenship status, we estimate that more than one-third of the foreign-born Latino population (about 8% of the region's population) are undocumented, while slightly more than a third of the foreign-born Latino adults (7% of the overall population) are legal residents and less than one-third of the foreign-born Latinos (about 6% of the overall population in the region), are likely to be naturalized citizens.

Qualitative Methods

The findings we present in this report are from a systematic review of transcripts gathered from the responses that informants gave to a series of questions in a survey on response and response suppression as a result of the citizenship question proposed on the 2020 Census. After asking the question, interviewers were instructed to record verbatim in a text box what the full answer to the question was. In this way, a quantitative and qualitative response to many of the questions was recorded. The quantitative answers and the methods are more fully discussed elsewhere (Kissam, Mines, Quezada, Intili, & Wadsworth, 2019).

In this way, participants were able to explain or amplify their answers about their willingness to participate in the census—with or without the citizenship question—and their overall perspectives on the decennial census. For this

report, the answers to “willingness to respond” questions with textual responses are analyzed and implications are discussed. Descriptive answers to each survey question yielded from 20 to 50 pages of text. This report also includes related information on census experiences in 2010, and conversations in the course of focus groups with the three subgroups described above.

Qualitative analytical methods were utilized for content analysis of the transcripts. A process of open coding was undertaken using AtlasTi⁵ analysis software. A variable-oriented analysis was pursued⁶, given that the design of the survey emphasized certain variables. Basic, descriptive statistics related to the survey were reviewed to complement the transcript coding and to further contextualize the initial findings.⁷

The open coding yielded a set of holistic codes that captured high-level themes and recurring emotions and perceptions. Finally, the codes were organized in the AtlasTi program using a series of network mapping, quotation clustering and relationship management techniques to identify patterns, trends, and tones within the coded transcripts.

3 American Community Survey Data 2017. The Pew Hispanic Center's analysis of the top 60 Hispanic metro areas in the U.S. ranks the Fresno metro area as #17, Bakersfield metro area as #25, Visalia-Tulare-Porterville as #32, Stockton as #33, Modesto as #39, and Merced as #48. See Pew Hispanic Center, “Mapping the Latino Population by State, County, and City,” August, 2013.

4 The National Agricultural Worker Survey has reported higher proportions of indigenous immigrants in the farmworker population in the past—but proportions may be decreasing. The definitive study of this population is Richard Mines, David Runsten, and Sandra Nichols, “California's Indigenous Farmworkers,” 2010. This research was funded by The California Endowment and carried out in connection with CRLA.

5 <https://atlasti.com/>

6 Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences, A Pluralist Perspective Edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating. Cambridge University Press

pp 198-222 Comparative analysis: case-oriented versus variable-oriented research.

7 For a good discussion of qualitative data analysis, see Becker, 1998:146-214, Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, and Stake, 2010:13-25

RESULTS

Shifts in Tone: Responses about Census Participation

Moving through the survey questions as they appeared on the instrument guides the respondents along a path that progressively includes more variables and more complexity, dependent upon previous answers.⁸

Interviewers first asked respondents if they had heard anything about Census 2020 and, if so, what they had heard.

This report focuses on answers to eight specific questions about willingness to answer the census questions under three different circumstances: self-response, response to a visit from a census enumerator and proxy interviews. At the outset, the questions focus on the census in general and they move on to questions related to the addition of the citizenship question. Our goal is to explore how attitudes shape the decision-making of respondents and drive their evolving thinking about census participation. In addition, we strive to identify the emotional shifts in response.

The survey interviews began with a brief introductory conversation probing what respondents' experience had been in Census 2010 (if they were in the U.S. at that point), who they believed should answer the census, and what they had heard about Census 2020 at the point they were interviewed. Only one out of five (21%) had heard something about it. Most of those who had heard about Census 2020 had heard that it was important to answer. Very few of those who mentioned hearing something had heard about the citizenship question. Some knew there was some "issue" about a citizenship question, but weren't certain what it was. A few of those who had heard something had both heard about the community benefits of census participation and controversy surrounding the citizenship question. A few mentioned that they had heard informational programming about the census—that there was going to be one soon and that it was to count the people in the U.S.

The discussion, then, went on directly to assess the respondent's general perspective about the decennial census. Our analysis begins by looking at responses to the simple question: "Will you answer the 2020 Census?" and ends with the question, "Would you answer the census questions about your neighbors (if they were not home) if it included the citizenship question?"⁹ This sequence of

questions and the way they are phrased led the respondent to consider not only the impact of the census on themselves, but on their neighbors and their community as a whole.

Some conventions will be applied throughout this paper. The questions asked about the census in general will be referred to as "before" questions, they are considered our baseline. These are essentially perspectives on a "simple" census as it has been prior to the Department of Commerce's proposal to add a question on citizenship. The questions asked in reference to the willingness to respond when the census includes a citizenship question will be referred to as "after" questions. This allows us to determine if the shift in tone and respondent willingness is related to the citizenship question itself. Each question is discussed in order below.

The analysis of responses begins with answers about general willingness to respond to the census. The analysis then moves on to a set of answers related to responding to an enumerator if one arrives at the door. After these, answers to the questions about proxy interviews are discussed. The idea of answering for a neighbor, which is unpopular across the board, becomes far less popular once a question of citizenship is introduced. There is an interesting alteration in these answers from the fear of upsetting a neighbor by answering for her in the simple census to the fear of getting a neighbor in trouble by answering questions about her citizenship.¹⁰

The tone of the answers shifts noticeably through these responses. In the beginning of the survey, respondents are interested and happy to hear about the census. They view it as an important civic exercise that will help them, their families and their communities. Many believe it is their duty and they want to be counted. However, once the prospect of a citizenship question is introduced, the overall tone in the responses shifts to become more suspicious and negative.

⁸ As a result, some responses are from smaller subsets of participants.

⁹ The Census Bureau initially sends out an invitation to respond to the census. In 2020, response will be online. If a household does not respond, there is a possibility that the Census will send an enumerator to gather the answers in person. If this is unsuccessful, enumerators conduct proxy interviews with neighbors.

¹⁰ The reader might see some differences in percentages in the charts between this and the earlier reports, as a reflection of rounding algorithms.

Before: Willingness to Respond and Response to an Enumerator

To ask respondents about their willingness to participate in Census 2020, the interviewer first provided a brief description of what the Census asks, e.g.: *“Let me share some more information with you about the Census. The census asks nine simple questions about you and the people you live with. For example, they ask—how many people live in the place where you live, even if they are not part of your immediate family, and whether you rent or own the place where you live. Also, they ask the race, names, age, and relationship to others in the household for each person living with you.”* After that brief explanation, the interviewer went on to inquire about their willingness to participate.

Self-Response by Mail or Internet

Question 4.1 asks: Now that you know what the census asks, do you think that you’ll answer those questions about yourself, your family, and others who may live there?

In the survey, overall responses were positive with 84% of respondents expressing willingness to respond.

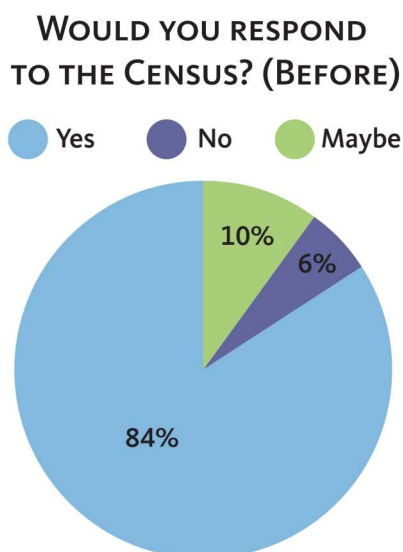


FIGURE 1: WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THE 2020 CENSUS? LATINO SURVEY (N=414)

Relationships among positive responses show a willingness to participate because it is helpful and important to the individual, their family and community. There is a wide range of reasons given for why people think it is important to participate, including some who understand that the census results can lead to better funding for services. Some respondents state that because they pay taxes, they need to be included.

“I am very aware of the importance of giving the information for the census and I also know the benefits for the community.”

“Of course, yes, I will answer. It is good for more services for the city and the needs of the people.”

“Yes, it is good to answer the questions. Why? Because we pay taxes and we want to be counted.”

However, there are also many who did not know much, or anything, about the census. Others who did not comment about their reasons for willingness to respond may or may not have known about the census, and some noted at some point they had not paid much attention to what they had heard about the census.

There are some examples of pride in being a citizen or being a Latino. There is a sense that it is important to “stand up and be counted.” There are those who answer that they want to participate in the decennial count because they count.

“Yes, it is something that as a community we have to do. It is normal. Because we are here—if we are Latinos, it is important that they know our surnames.”

“Yes they have to know that I exist and my son also.”

In the less-common negative responses, there is a relationship between fear and perceived damaging consequences, specifically tied to immigration status of the respondent or the respondent’s family members.

“I will not answer because the census can be used for other purposes. The government uses the census to learn where the hidden people are who don’t have papers—information on other races that the government already has. What they are looking for are the illegals. Those of us who are hiding.”

There are also worries about fraud: that the information the respondents share will not actually be used by the Census or that the request for information received is not actually coming from the Census Bureau.

“Nowadays there is a lot of mistrust, one does not feel safe responding, I do not feel safe giving my personal information. Why does the census want my information?”

“I do not want to give my personal information, someone came to the house recently and asked us for personal information, now we are paying for something we did not even know about. I have a lot of distrust.”

There are many conditional answers as well.

“Only if it’s confidential because it’s going to be my first time participating.”

“It depends on what they use the information for. I don’t feel very safe.”

“Yes, if we are here, yes. But if it is when we are in Mexico, then no. You already know how government policies are. You never know.”

In addition, there are answers that are centered on the impact to oneself specifically while acknowledging that not everyone is in the same position.

“Since I don’t do anything bad I would answer it. You know a lot of people are scared because they do not have papers, but I’m fine, I do not have to worry about that.”

“I would answer it, I’m not afraid, this government knows everything about us. There are people who are afraid because the information can be used against them.”

There is a sense in some of the negative responses that the government already has the information they need, they don’t have to ask each individual. For this reason, some will not participate. For others, the effort is too great or it is simply inconvenient.

And finally, even in this primarily positive group of responses there are direct references to government distrust from the respondent about him or herself and from others that the respondent is thinking about.

“Personally I am willing to answer the questions. But the home owner that I live with doesn’t like or trust people from the government. If he is there we probably won’t answer. If I’m home I will.”

“I would answer it, I’m not afraid, this government knows everything about us. There are people who are afraid because the information can be used against them.”

“I will not answer because the census can be used for other purposes. The government uses the census to know where the hidden people are who don’t have papers—information on other races the government already has. What they are looking for are the illegals: those of us who are hiding.”

Moving on through the survey questionnaire, interviewers delved a bit into why people would decide not to participate in the census at all.

Question 4.3 asks those who answered “no”: Why would you not want to answer the census questions?

This is a smaller group of respondents who had already decided not to answer the census at all. As in the answers above, there are many of the same reasons for not answering. By asking the “why not” question, we are given more detail and personal observation. Most of the reasons given center in the feeling of fear. Some are general fears like a fear of negative consequences.

“Wanting to help, sometimes one ends up with a lot more problems, I prefer not to talk and it is better to keep quiet.”

Others are very specific such as fear of “la migra.”¹¹

“.... the migra comes and sometimes they take you. I heard that a person knocked on this guy’s door, said that his ride had arrived to go to work, but it was the migra and they took him away.”

There are those who have a fear of fraud, generally based on some personal experience.

“I’m scared because something happened to me. I was deceived, I have mistrust. I was deceived by another person about electricity.”

“I do not know much about it. Because I did not go to school. I was cheated by a lady and I did not know she was a salesperson. A lady asked for the phone number and I did not know she was a salesperson. They call me a lot now...”

And finally, there is a general concern that information gathered in the census will be shared with other government offices—a broad mistrust of government—associated with concerns about how census responses might be used.

“Mistrust. I do not trust the government, here the water is no good, we’ve been to Sacramento to give complaints and they do not pay attention to us, that’s why it’s not important—all lies from the government.”

“They ask a lot of personal questions, the government says that it cares and who knows what they would do with those answers.”

After analysis of these initial baseline questions and answers, analysis moved to responses related to the next possible step in the census data-gathering process: enumerator visits.

¹¹ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE

Responses to Enumerator

Q 4.2 asks: Would you be willing to answer the questions about yourself and your household if someone from the Census Bureau (with ID) comes to the door and explains that your answers to the census are totally confidential?

There is a lot more ambivalence in these responses overall and they are divided amongst specific positive responses reflecting confidence in the process, the importance or participation and a sense of surety with ID; and the belief that Census enumerators would be very helpful for those who are challenged by paperwork or language.

“Yes of course. I would ask for help because I cannot read or write.”

“In that case, yes! Because if they send it to me in writing, I don’t know if it comes from the Census or from another place. But if a person arrives and identifies himself, then yes. Because I know they are from the Census.”

“If someone came to my house and helped me fill out the form, I think I would answer it.”

On the negative side, study participants’ decisions to not respond to an enumerator stem from fear of negative consequences from answering to a general distrust in answering the door due to some personal experience or fear.

“I will not give information, not because I have problems with the law. Because when one wants to help it can end up worse. I’m very distrustful.”

“I think not—out of mistrust—I would not give information. Many steal information. I would not open the door.”

The perceived convenience of responding to an enumerator’s visit to the household varies and some responses suggest that the respondent may be considering reasons for not responding.

“I will tell you, well, if I’m at home, maybe I’ll answer. Because I work all the time. Unless those people arrive at my house after 5 pm or weekends—that is when I will have some time.”

“I do not have to, it’s inconvenient. But [yes] if it does not make me late.”

And then there are the adamant negative answers.

“The only way I will fill out that form is for them to force me. Meanwhile I’m not going to answer anything. Giving

information is putting my people at risk. I also do not feel confident about how they will use the information.”

Clearly at the outset there are individuals who are not willing to participate in the census due to fear and distrust. Some will not answer out of inconvenience or, as one respondent put it, laziness. But by far, the strongest reason Latinos give for not wanting to respond to an enumerator coming to ask for their information center around a feeling of uneasiness, fear and distrust.

After: Willingness to Respond and Response to an Enumerator if the CQ Is Included

Once the possibility of a citizenship question being added to the census is introduced, the tone of responses across the board changes. A friendly sense of willingness to participate changes to a sense of suspicion and heightened mistrust. There are also many more conditional answers where respondents have no problem answering for themselves, but are unsure when answering for their housemates or family members and are concerned that those from the broader community will not participate in the census.

Self-Response by Mail or Internet

Q5.1 asks: You said that you would answer the census. If the census includes that [citizenship] question, will you respond to all questions on the census form?

Survey results show that there is a shift in willingness to respond with the addition of the citizenship question. Digging down into those answers we can see a repetition of themes we heard in the baseline answers, such as: I’m okay but my friends and family may not be. Others are more indignant explaining their view that this is very personal information that the census doesn’t need, or that including the citizenship question represents a government stance on social policy that is anti-immigrant and/or anti-Latino.

Some view that by asking this question, the government moves the census away from being a count of residents into something else. They fear that the data can be used to find people and that the citizenship question is a means of intimidation. Many also believe that asking this question will keep many people in the community from participating. There is much more government distrust vocalized with a few angry outbursts. The respondents believe this is just not an appropriate question to ask on the census.

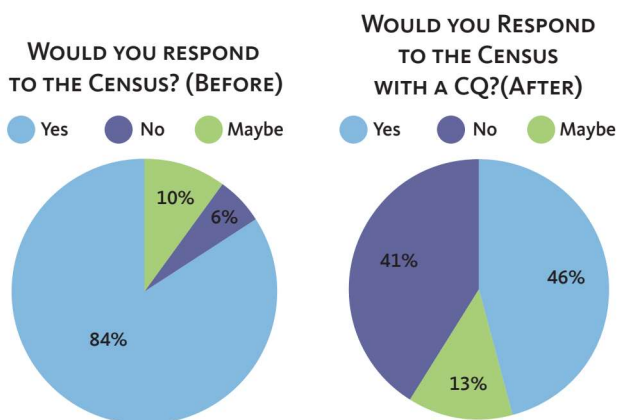


FIGURE 2: WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THE CENSUS (WITHOUT AND WITH) A CQ?

Digging deeper, interviewers asked what, specifically, bothered the people who were unwilling to respond about this question being added to the census.

Q5.3 asks: What is it about that question on the census that bothers you?

While racism is a theme in many of the transcripts, this is the first time multiple respondents express concerns about racism and discrimination being used to target or separate people.

“It sounds like discrimination because they are including the word citizenship. They must exclude that word. For example, when they ask about citizenship, it’s like [asking about] religion depending on religion—you go here, the others go over there....”

“Racism has been aroused by the new president, we all contribute in this country.”

The perception of targeting people through the use of the citizenship question is highlighted here when some respondents answer what bothers them about the question being added.

“Right now there is distrust—about people asking for identification in order to know the status of their citizenship. I do not like it. I do not feel comfortable answering that question, I’m distrustful, I feel uncomfortable responding.”

And for the most part, among these respondents, there is the perception that the question may have been added specifically to identify and remove undocumented immigrants. Even when they answer the question with a different focus, the tone in this set of answers is clearly concentrated on racism and the possibility of targeting vulnerable residents.

“It’s not that the question bothers me but that there may be consequences.”

“For many years I have been in the dark [undercover, in hiding] and with that question it will be easy for the government to find me, that question is double-edged.”

“All this data is saved and sooner or later it will be used as it is not a unified country.”

Lack of trust that the information would not be shared is another prevalent reason for not approving of the question in the census but always seen through a lens of racism.

“So they want to know where we all are together to get us out of his orange hair.”

*“These a**holes have us well counted. This president has aroused racism, it is hurting my people. The census is made to count people.”*

“I would not answer, because it’s a way to intimidate people who do not have papers.”

Many people simply feel like this question is inappropriate, too personal or it just doesn’t make sense. They wanted to know why the government needs that information if not to identify and deport undocumented family members or friends.

*“It bothers me because it has nothing to do with the census, but the f***ing government does not even know how it [this question] can harm people.”*

“It bothers me that the census is losing focus. The focus should be on counting the population not on getting into one’s personal life.”

“It does not make sense why the census wants to know that information. It’s improper to ask this question, it’s not good.”

Closely intertwined with the perception that the question is inappropriate is the sense that this information is too personal. It is not something the government needs in a census. This, as in the previous set of quotes, is clearly a feeling of injustice or unfairness. Those who are citizens need not fear, but those who are not are at risk.

“It bothers me because we all pay taxes, this question does not help us, this question is racist.”

“This country is made of immigrants, this question is not good on the census.”

“I feel that this question is disguised as a way to know my legal status and those who live in my house.”

“We all pay taxes in this country, so why do they want to know if I am a citizen or not?” I do not think that question should be asked.”

When compared with responses to the baseline question (4.3), the tone in this set of responses is radically different. Those individuals who have changed their minds and decided not to participate in the census, express suspicion at the question and fear of negative consequences both for themselves and for their friends, family and neighbors.

Response to Enumerator

Q5.2 asks: If the Census includes that citizenship question, would you answer if a Census person (with ID) comes to the door and reminds you that your answers to the census are confidential, and won't be shared with anyone for any reason?

There are many of the same patterns that show up in the baseline responses to the enumerator question, like increased confidence with ID, fear of fraud and mistrust of the government and of people who come to the door in general. Looking at responses to this question, people are clearly more concerned about the motives of asking the citizenship question and the use of gathered information.

For those still willing to answer to an enumerator, there are conditions. For example, many people will answer all the questions except the citizenship question or, more rarely, will answer but with fear.

“Only out of courtesy would I open the door, but I cannot answer that question.”

“I would answer all except my status.”

“With fear, I would say that I am not a citizen even if I am afraid of her [the enumerator] I would give her answers with her on the outside [of the door]. if she comes to the door... it is obligatory to answer, I will say with fear that I am not a citizen.”

One person stated:

“Out of a sense of duty, I would respond to that person, because the person is there – due to fear. Maybe I would

answer if I am in the house when they arrive. It would also be because as I am going to move, they will not find me.”

This shows a willingness to answer out of fear or a sense of obligation. There is an additional fear of repercussions if this person were to stay living in the same place. Respondents clearly are struggling with their civic duty and their distrust of government.

Association of anger with fear is common in these responses. In many cases, the respondents state that no matter who is sent to the door, they will not answer. While there was anger expressed at the idea that someone would come to the door to follow up, in Q4.2 about enumerators coming to the door, the tone of respondents in this set of answers is by far more suspicious.

“Because of the [prevalence of] fraud, you cannot trust anyone. The census wants my information and then can use it against me.”

“This would be like opening a door and then not being able to close it. I would not open the door.”

Overall, those who would choose not to respond simply would not answer the door. There are, again, many reasons for this: fear of fraud, fear of data sharing, fear of deportation and fear of negative consequences from answering.

“Well, I do not understand very well, it confuses me. It can be double-edged. I feel very uncomfortable with that question, I do not want to answer.”

“I am afraid of deportation. In my family, there are many people who don't have papers.”

“With so many hackers that there are everywhere, they steal your information and identity.”

Distrust of the government is again verbalized and the prospect of someone actually coming to the door seems to exacerbate this fear. Below is a sampling of short answers that are representative of this set of answers.

“I don't trust the government.”

“Our government is not honest and for my part, I have too much distrust.”

“I do not know what my husband would answer, but now I'm going to be vigilant to see that we are not harmed.”

Notably, a lot of the unwillingness to respond to the door is similar in Q4.2 but the response in this group of answers is really focused on refusal—refusal to answer the door, refusal to answer the question, refusal to accept that this question is valid and that the government has the right to come to one’s door to ask it.

Proxy Interviews, Before and After

If a person does not respond to the mail invitation nor the enumerator coming to the door, the Census sends the enumerator to a neighbor—a proxy interview. In this set of questions showing the baseline response and the “after” response to participation in a proxy interview, the reasons for answers change radically. Most people in the baseline group who will not answer for neighbors have varied reasons, but many are centered on fear that the neighbor will get angry.

Others state that they really don’t know their neighbors and wouldn’t feel confident that the information they gave would be correct. There is a general disbelief that the government would actually ask someone to answer questions about neighbors. In the “after” responses, some respondents willing to give information about their neighbors initially (Q4.4) shift to unwillingness out of fear of getting their neighbors into trouble.

Q4. 4 asks: When the census person goes to households which haven’t filled out the census form and can’t find anyone at home, or if the people there don’t want to talk to them, the census taker tries to get the basic information about numbers of people, age, and race in that household from their neighbors. Question: “WOULD YOU be willing to provide a census person with this basic information about people in the house next door or across the street if they came to your house to ask you?”

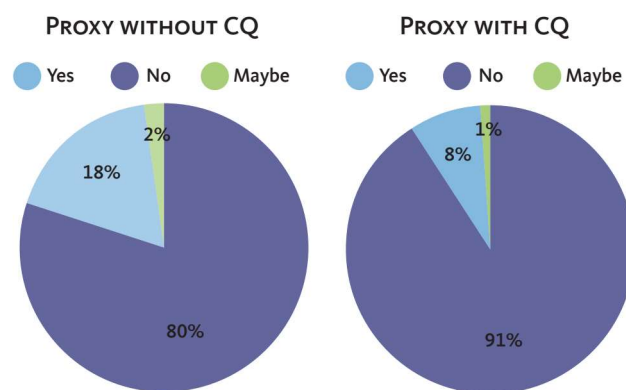


FIGURE 3: WOULD YOU ANSWER FOR YOUR NEIGHBORS (PROXY) WITH AND WITHOUT CQ

Before the introduction of the citizenship question, there is very little willingness to complete proxy interviews for neighbors. However, the responses register very little surprise or anger. There is some puzzlement and an overall lack of willingness to respond for neighbors for various reasons. There is no tone of suspicion evident in these initial answers.

“I know the purpose of the census, and it is not bad at all, they are not personal things, they just want to know general things about people, so I would give information about the neighbors.”

“I would not give it, why do I have to do the job of answering? I should not, it’s not my obligation.”

There is a sense in some of these responses that the census is not doing its job if it has to ask neighbors to complete proxy interviews. In addition, some solutions are suggested to aid the enumerator — I will take them and introduce them.

“I would not give that information. I would take the enumerator to the door and tell the neighbors that they shouldn’t be scared to answer. That they’re from the Census and it is safe. But I would not give the information. If they’re not legal, they are afraid to open door.”

And many respondents who will not participate in proxy interviews say it’s not their responsibility or their place to speak for their neighbors. There is an overall concern for the neighbors’ personal information and the feeling of invasion of privacy. Ownership of personal information is a strong theme.

“They are very private, I think I should not be the one to answer for them. It is not my job.”

“I think it’s an issue of privacy. I don’t think I have the right to tell people’s information. Maybe if I ask them first.”

However, there is a sizeable group who state that they also do not know their neighbors either at all or well enough to answer for them.

“No. We live in apartments and don’t know the neighbors. We don’t know anything about them. We no longer know them and we talk with those who work in the field with us. Not our neighbors. I do not feel good telling other people’s information. It is not good to give what is private.”

“No, because I do not know who the neighbors are. It’s very

different, we do not get involved in their life. I do not want to answer that. I do not know who the neighbor is. If I knew — no. I will tell the person to go to the house [himself], sometimes you don't know who lives in front or next door."

Interestingly, in the analysis of these transcripts, the fear of negative consequences are centered on fear of making a neighbor angry or getting either yourself or your neighbor in trouble for giving out incorrect information.

"I don't want to get into trouble. I know a little but I would not give the information. For example, where I live, there is a son who uses drugs and they have many problems with that son."

"Not my business. I don't want problems with my neighbors. If I knew I would not give that information because it would be disrespectful."

"On this no. I do not know if the neighbors agreed. Maybe they would not take it well. I'm not sure if they're illegal and they're going to think I'm reporting them."

"It's disrespect, it's not my business, I do not want problems with my neighbors. Even if I knew it, I would not give it because it is not correct to give information about another person."

For those who said they would answer for their neighbors, there are conditions in some cases — I would because I know my neighbors; I would but I would ask them first; I would because it's important to be counted. Of those who choose to answer, it is clear that they feel no fear of repercussions or negative consequences for their neighbors or themselves. They feel it is important to participate and they want to be helpful.

"There really is nothing better than asking the person directly — the neighbor. If it's for something else, no. But if it's for the census, yes I would give the information."

"Yes, I know them, yes. Why not? They cannot do anything."

"Yes I would give the information, it's important, to make them count."

There was a strong relationship between knowing a neighbor well and willingness to provide their information to the census.

Q5.4 asks: You had previously mentioned that you would or would probably respond to questions about your neighbors if someone from the Census Bureau asked while they weren't home or if they chose not to respond. Would your choice be affected because the census is now asking about the citizenship of the people living in that home?

After the introduction of the possible citizenship question, those who had responded that they would fill out a proxy interview and those who were on the fence, largely shifted their perspectives. There was a clear sense that this question simply "is not right." There was also a fear for neighbors who are not citizens.

Where there were fears of negative consequences in Q4.4, those were primarily fears of making the neighbors angry by sharing their information, but in these answers, the negative consequences center on distrust of the government and fear of betraying a neighbor.

The shift is clearly related to current government policies on immigration and the consequences that might occur as a result of reporting on an undocumented neighbor. While there were fears in Q4.4 of providing incorrect information, the tension here is that the government should not be asking this question and the repercussions could be extreme for the Latino community.

"I would not give the information, because it is not just. They are my neighbors and I like them very much and I do not want to do any harm by giving that personal information."

"I will not give the information, I do not want to get people in trouble. It's very private. The government should not ask it."

"In case the Census shared information with ICE, it would be cruel of me to put my neighbors in the mouth of the wolf. That would change my role as a friend and I would become the enemy."

There is a clear unwillingness to respond to proxy interviews once the citizenship question is a possibility and more ambivalence among respondents. About half of those who had initially said they would or might provide information about their neighbors (53%) would change their minds if a citizenship question was added.

The tone of comments on this question changes noticeably from one where respondents thought it was disrespectful

for them to share neighbors' information to one where respondents question the motives of the Census.

"I do not want to think that the government's intention is to exclude our community, if the intention of asking citizenship status is to deport them, then I will not answer anything about my neighbors. I'll just say I do not know them."

There are far fewer respondents expressing confidence in the Census, even though they feel it is important.

"Yes I would give it, it's important to be counted, the Census is just doing its job."

There is also a shift in conditional answers where it is clear that people are developing strategies to avoid answering the citizenship question while still providing necessary information for a census that they feel benefits their communities.

"I would not give the status of my neighbors, whether or not they are citizens, I do not know. But I would give the other information, I would give information about other basic things."

"Yes, I would do it but minus the citizenship question."

There are still those who are willing to respond for their neighbors and these respondents feel it is their duty to respond and that their response will benefit everyone.

"Yes, I know, yes, I would answer it. I know how important it is to answer the census, so I would give information about my neighbors. And I know that it will not affect them and that on the contrary, it will benefit them."

"Of course if I would give it, to record that we are citizens is very important. There are a lot of kids who are being born and are citizens, imagine if you do not count them."

Additionally, a number of respondents are willing to provide information about their neighbors, even if they don't know them well, because they know they are citizens.

Perspectives from Different Sub-Groups

An important factor in the SJVCRP survey design, given well-justified and widespread concern about the impact of adding the CQ to Census 2020, was to examine non-response not simply for all Latino immigrants, but for sub-populations within this group that needed specific attention. These included Latinos with different immigration status and indigenous-language Mexicans. The groups we conducted focus groups with were:

- undocumented immigrants
- foreign-born legal residents
- naturalized citizens
- second-generation immigrants (the adult U.S.-born children of Latino immigrant parents)
- Indigenous-origin Mexican immigrants
- DACA recipients

There were other sub-groups we had hoped to include, but could not organize within the tight time frame of this study.

In the following section, we discuss and provide examples of reasons given by each sub-group of survey respondents and considerations emerging in focus group discussions for their willingness or unwillingness to respond to a census that includes the citizenship question. We begin with a review of the perspectives of those who lack legal status. This analysis provides additional evidence useful in thinking about the implications of our previous quantitative analysis of willingness to self-respond, respond to enumerators, or participate in proxy interviews to provide information about neighboring households. The information included in this appendix is gleaned from the survey comments as well as focus groups.

Undocumented Participants' Perspectives on Census Participation

Reasons Given by Undocumented Immigrants for Not Responding

It is not surprising to learn that immediate, visceral, direct fear of providing detailed household information that includes information on citizenship status of household members is common among undocumented immigrants. Many responses were quite direct, for example,

"I'd be scared of deportation. I'm a DACA recipient—but that's how they start and, after a while, they kick everyone out."

"Well that's where it gets tough, what if they throw me out of the country. It's like putting the noose around my neck"

(echarme la soga al cuello—slang for finishing myself off.)

Worries about the breach of confidentiality by the census or misuse of data were serious enough to strongly suppress the willingness of some to respond. For example, one undocumented respondent said,

“I wouldn’t answer. We don’t know what the government’s going to do. They say nothing but one doesn’t know. We’re afraid that something might happen.”

For some, simply raising the possibility of the citizenship question provoked anger.

“Not every human being needs to have papers. We all should be free to live where we want. Why do I have to be a citizen?”

The citizenship question was seen as punctuation to what virtually all saw as unfair exclusion from an equitable place in society. This sentiment was a strong one because most are, in fact, longtime residents in the communities they live in, where many have raised their children, formed friendships, and worked for years.

Undocumented Immigrants’ Reasons for Being Willing To Respond

Comments from undocumented immigrants who would respond to the census even with a citizenship question provide useful insights for census promotion if the citizenship question is eventually included.¹² However, even if the census ends up going forward without the question, it should be assumed that vigorous messaging will be needed to restore Latino immigrants’ willingness to respond. There will very likely be a residual impact from the administration’s vigorous effort to add this unpopular query to the census.

Others said they’d answer the census questions—except for the one on citizenship. An interesting issue highlighted by one respondent’s comments is the question about what is required in census response. Despite the Census Bureau notice that response is “required,” she said,

“I don’t see anything wrong with that question as an optional question. I’m going to answer some of the questions, not all of them.”

Undecided Undocumented Immigrants

The undecided group of undocumented immigrants includes many who are long-term community members. Their responses illustrate the cognitive dissonance that

is evident throughout this population: their desire to be counted but their fear of consequences. Comments from some in this group suggested that enumerator communication might convince them to respond.

Some of the comments suggested that assurances about the confidentiality of personal information provided to the census could be useful. The following comment provides a good example of this perspective, for example:

“It’s a bit difficult, because one knows how important it is to answer, but that question on the census makes one think about it [answering]...that question doesn’t belong on the census. Whether I’d answer depends on whether it would affect me.”

About self-response: *“I’m not going to fill out my form, that is an inappropriate question. We all pay taxes. I think that question doesn’t have anything to do with the census.”*

About response to an enumerator: *“If they explained it to me more I would fill it out.”*

Some who wouldn’t self-respond might answer an enumerator despite feeling conflicted. A respondent who wouldn’t self-respond but was in the “maybe” group, said,

About self-response: *“Look, I’ll tell you the truth. I’m an immigrant, that is—I don’t have papers, but I’ve lived here a long time....”*

About response to an enumerator: *“I’d feel obligated. I’d respond to that person [the enumerator] if that person was there [at the door...] I’d feel intimidated, but might respond if I were there at home.”*

Despite the fact that there were few undecided undocumented survey respondents, the indecision among those few suggests that refusal conversion is feasible, though not easy.

12 At the point this report was written, Judge Jesse Furman of District Court for Southern New York had enjoined the Department of Commerce from adding the question. However, the government filed an immediate appeal on January 15, 2019. The administration is now requesting a hearing before the Supreme Court. See Hansi Lo Wang, “Trump Administration To Ask Supreme Court To Decide Citizenship Question’s Fate,” January 22, 2019.

Foreign-born Legal Residents' Perspectives on Census Participation

Foreign-born legal residents' willingness to respond to a census with a citizenship question is only slightly lower than that of naturalized citizens. Like the naturalized citizens, they are mostly middle-aged and have lived in the community where they currently reside for a long time.

Reasons Given by Legal Residents for not Responding or Uncertainty

These are legal residents who disapprove of the citizenship question even if it does not pose direct personal risks.

"It's that it would be useful for immigration to know peoples' situation...It's not that it bothers me so much but it's that you don't need to know that [citizenship status] to know how many people there are in this country...Supposedly the census is just to know how many people there are in the country."

Another respondent, a middle-aged Salvadoran woman, was very thorough in expressing her concern about the broader impact of adding the question.

"I'm legal, but if I weren't, I wouldn't like that question. It's frightening if I put myself in the position of other people. It's categorizing people if you add that question. I could fill it out, but it's more because of the situation in this country that I wouldn't. If we were all equal it would be something else, but it's necessary to show solidarity. I know lots of people who would be affected....why do they want to know that? I'm not totally sure if I'd respond or not, but, as I already said, I don't agree [with adding the question]."

Additionally, some respondents feared that the citizenship question may affect them because they "only" have a green card.

Overall, the tenor of negative comments about the citizenship question from the unwilling legal residents was much more heated than among the naturalized citizens. Some, for example, said the census with the citizenship question bothered them a lot, others said it would be a "bad idea" to answer it, or "bad for the census." Others saw the question as "too personal," "personally invasive" or "discriminatory."

Interestingly, some in this group seemed to feel quite empowered, quite willing to take a stance in opposition to a government decision they disapprove of.

"I'm not at all happy with that question. We're a country of

immigrants, so why that question? It seems to me improper to ask it...I'm not going to answer because I don't agree with it. The census should think better about how to frame their questions."

Reasons Given by Legal Residents for Responding

Legal residents who said they would be willing to respond even with a citizenship question on the census seem to fall into the "dutiful" mindset, similar to naturalized citizens. Their comments about willingness to respond centered on their own status, noting that answering the census with the citizenship question would not affect them.

Relatively few expressed misgivings about the question and these were focused on those in the community who would not respond and the resulting lack of a complete count because of the addition of the citizenship question.

Naturalized Citizens' Perspectives on Census Participation

The responses among naturalized citizens suggest that these middle-aged, longtime settled immigrants fell squarely in the sub-group corresponding to the CBAMS II mindset designated as "dutiful."

Naturalized Citizens' Reasons for Not Responding

The reasons given by naturalized citizens for either not answering or being unsure about answering most often reflected their disapproval of the question. This disapproval stemmed in part from the belief that the citizenship question was too personal, in part from disapproval of the tacit agenda. For example, one person stated that it was "a bit racist," one that, "they don't need that information" and another saying "I don't see how it could be beneficial."

Naturalized Citizens' Reasons Given for Being Willing to Respond

Naturalized citizens who were willing to respond were able to resolve the conflict between their duty to respond and the resulting community benefits and their dislike of the question. Answering was not perceived to have any personal consequences. Although this group worried about local community undercount due to others not responding because of the question, for them their duty to respond outweighed possible negative consequences.

Second-generation Participants' Perspectives on the Census

As reported in the SJVCRP survey results, second-generation immigrants had many concerns about a census that includes the citizenship question. This focus group included eight young adults from 19-25 years of age.

Reasons Given for Not Responding

U.S.-born second-generation survey respondents gave answers for not participating in a census with the citizenship question that were clustered into two major categories—disapproval of the question being added to the census and concern that answering would have a negative impact on their family members.

Some said their level of disapproval would lead them to not answer “in protest” to the question; others said they would simply be dis-inclined to answer. Others among the second-generation immigrants were angrier and more militant.

“It doesn’t seem to me that question belongs on the census. Now one doesn’t even know what they’re going to do to scare our people....This president is awakening the racism that’s hurting my people....If someone comes to my house I’m not going to answer. They just want to use the information to hurt our working people.”

Second-generation Immigrants—Reasons Given for Being Willing to Respond

From data collected in the survey and focus groups with the second-generation immigrants, those who said they would answer the census with the citizenship question show a fairly widespread awareness of census participation as being important for their communities. However, a number also expressed concern that even though they would, themselves, answer, they believed many other households would not or that people would lie about their citizenship status.

Even among those who would answer, there was not much evidence that they believed census responses would be confidential—with a number stressing that answering was not a problem for them personally or that they didn’t have any problem about legal status.

These U.S.-born respondents who were prepared to answer the census even with a citizenship question seem to be aligned with the mindset that the CBAMS II research identifies as “dutiful,” but also had some of the

characteristics of the segment identified as “compliant and caring.” A few of those who were planning to respond said they understood that conducting the census, including asking personal questions, was part of what government was supposed to do. A few also distinguished “the census” from “the government.” And some noted that people should be proud to be citizens.

Still, many were conflicted, saying that they disapproved of the citizenship question. Some, despite being conflicted, said they’d participate in the census.

“Because the President wants to deport people, maybe they’d use that information. But I would answer, I don’t have any problems...”

“Status doesn’t matter. We all pay taxes. We all contribute to this country. The question’s unjust. But even so I’d answer the census.”

For others, recognition of the importance of census response was combined with personal recognition of the threat of the question.

“Myself, I’d respond, but if my parents were [living] in my household, I wouldn’t, because of their legal situation.”

The majority of the discussants in our second-generation focus group (five out of eight) were inclined to participate in the census because they recognized the benefits of a “complete count” for their community, but three were uncertain. However, for two of the three who were uncertain about participating, an important consideration was whether the citizenship question would be included (in which case they would not participate).

Their indecision rested on concerns similar to those many other study participants had on their minds—for two of the three, possible repercussions for family members. The group was, however, conflicted. Three discussants mentioned the importance of census participation—one mentioned use of census data in allocating financial resources, one the need to tally everyone in Fresno. The group’s awareness of the importance of census data as the basis for allocating funding was fairly high. Programs and community investments important to this group included: boys’ and girls’ clubs, youth services, parks, community centers, sports leagues, extracurricular services—all related to keeping youth “off the street.” One participant saw WIC and food stamps being particularly important, and another pointed to a broad range of public sector spending, “Access to clean spaces and fresh foods, monetary support for food and

rent, reproductive services.” One mentioned infrastructure—sidewalks, crosswalks.

Understandably, since they are voting-age U.S. citizens, all agreed that political representation was important to them. One indirectly referenced the current policy dispute regarding apportionment (whether apportionment should be based on CVAP or total population) saying, *“Everyone needs to be represented. They all live here.”*

Another framed her viewpoint in more directly ethnic/racial way, *“There are only 3 Latino Congress members now. We could get more Latino voices. It could change everything.”*

A young man, provided a friendly amendment to her viewpoint, *“Not just Latinos, but other ethnicities....”*

Undecided second-generation Immigrants

None of the second-generation respondents who told interviewers they were undecided about answering a census with the citizenship question were enthusiastic about it.

One emphasized that her decision to answer would rest on the enumerator being able to explain to her the purpose of the citizenship question. Another said it would depend on whether she could skip the citizenship question. Others said they were unlikely to answer or that answering would be “difficult” but were unwilling to foreclose the possibility that they might.

Whether these respondents would, eventually, be open to an explanation about why the citizenship question was included is unclear. Their response indicating potential willingness “if it could be explained” may, in some cases, have actually rhetorically signaled unwillingness.

Perspectives on Inclusion of the Citizenship Question

Everyone in the focus group disapproved of the citizenship question. But they were torn between disliking the question and awareness of the benefits of census response. Two comments summarize their viewpoints about intrusiveness of the question and potential impacts well.

“I wouldn’t want to skip out because I’m worried a large population would skip out. How would that affect my community?”

“Why not just make it, ‘how many people live there, gender, age,’ just simplify it. Why do they want all this information? What more information do we have to give out?”

Two saw the citizenship question as a direct attack on immigrants and refugees. One more generally saw it as burdensome in the context of the national debate about immigrants and immigration policy saying, *“Especially when we’re dealing with all this, why?”*

The discussion then turned to what could be done if confronted with a Census 2020 that included the question. Initially, five out of the eight in the group said they wouldn’t answer and three said they’d lie (presumably about the status of other household members—at least one emphasized she lives in a mixed-status household). As the discussion proceeded, it appears that at least two would solve their dilemma by skipping the question.

The group’s discussion of the citizenship question went into the implications of confronting the citizenship question by skipping it or by lying. The issues raised in the group discussion provide useful guidance for developing an overall messaging strategy—since the questions raised in the group discussion are very likely to occur to other potential respondents. One important issue raised by a discussant is that there are legal repercussions for non-citizens who decide to lie. One participant was concerned about lying because applicants for citizenship are asked whether they have ever claimed to be U.S. citizens. She felt that by lying, her relatives would risk their ability to receive citizenship. The question also arose as to whether skipping the question would draw the government’s attention to the household.

The group’s discussion included attention to what might happen if a household consented to an interview with an enumerator and were asked the citizenship question. Several believed the result might be a break-off in the interview. For example, one young man simply said, *“I’d be rude.”*

As the discussion proceeded, it became clearer that most thought this would often be the case—that, essentially, acceptance would be transformed into refusals. Here are their comments on the topic,

“If one of those people came up, I wouldn’t do it. I’m not going to let people in my house worry about their status. At the end of the day, loved ones are at risk and they’re more important than the benefits.”

“Is there a way to say I’m not going to fill it out—no matter what—so they stop?”

Trust in Government and Confidentiality

The second-generation young adults shared the widely prevalent view that government could not be trusted. As for the overwhelming majority of other study participants, this shaped their perspective about the confidentiality of census data.

All rated the trustworthiness of the federal government as a zero on a scale of one to five. Local government was not viewed more favorably—with five out of eight rating it a zero also. State government was the only branch of government earning any trust at all; six out of the eight discussants expressed a bit or some trust in it.¹³ This over-arching distrust of government in this U.S.-born group of young adults underscores the challenges the Census Bureau faces in countering growing distrust in government and generally increasing levels of distrust in many facets of social life.

The focus group discussion gave special attention to the confidentiality of information provided to the Census Bureau—via self-response or in an enumerator interview.

As was the case for many survey respondents, this group of young adults didn't necessarily believe that the government would definitively violate confidentiality—but they thought it possible. Seven of the eight were not confident census information would be confidential. But they were also more sophisticated in thinking about the processes of information dissemination and potential misuse. One linked distrust regarding confidentiality directly to the administration's stance vis-à-vis immigrants. Another complained, *"There's no transparency. They're saying it's confidential but I don't know what happens after I fill it out."*

Their sophistication led the discussants in this group to be more willing than most of the Latino immigrants interviewed to express interest in holding the government accountable for keeping information confidential.

But it also led them to be more doubtful about confidentiality. Their discussion of confidentiality went on to explore the group's thoughts about Title 13 penalties for violating confidentiality. They explained that details on penalties for violating confidentiality might push them away from trust.

Here are their comments on this issue:

Moderator: *So, um, there is a fine of 250 thousand dollars or jail time for anyone who reveals an individual household's answers. Does this give you confidence that the information is indeed confidential?*

Speaker 1: *How many of our politicians have a record or they use their money to wipe out their jail time and their crime history? Come on now.*

Speaker 2: *Yeah like every time there's like a law in place it's because the activity's happening. So like, just knowing that... just makes me more uh, like I don't want to do it.*

Moderator: *Okay so, you're saying now knowing that [there is a law] makes you even more skeptical that it's confidential because why does that exist? If it's not a problem already, if they had to make that law you're saying —*

Speaker 3: *I was just going to say that. Um, kind of like what Speaker 1 said, we've already seen a history of ...people be like, oh, oops, um, here's some money let me fix it. And it's just one sided. If it were to get out like once it's out, it's out.*

Willingness to Respond to an Enumerator

The idea of responding to an enumerator was very unpopular. Only one discussant was open to the possibility.

Speaker 1: *"Okay. ... so it's not that I wouldn't answer it. You know I don't want, don't get me wrong, I would answer it, but you got a lot of people knocking on your door like Mormons and you know, like people trying to sell you stuff and if I don't know who you are ...I'm not gonna answer you know, so that's, that's all it is to me."*

Two discussants explained their parents would be more distrustful of enumerators than they would be. In one of the households, the discussant said her mother was primarily worried about door-to-door scams; the other explained that her parents used language as an excuse for not talking to strangers coming to the door saying, "No speak English..."

These second-generation youth were not simply turned off by the possibility of contact with government, although one who lives in a mixed-status household said she'd be "on the fence" about responding to anyone because she lives in a mixed-status households. The discussants said their reaction would depend on the kind of enumerator that might show up.

13 This trust seemed to be primarily due to SB54, the California State law that prevents law enforcement in the state from sharing information with federal agencies.

Speaker 1: “I don’t think I would mind seeing a younger person. Some old dude, you know... I would be like, “why are you here?”

Speaker 2: “I guess someone that’s like looks like me or... looks casual. Like if it’s someone in a suit or something I probably wouldn’t ... but if it was just like someone more casual I probably would open it.”

Despite their preference for enumerators from the local community who spoke Spanish and could relate to people, the discussants still highlighted the need for official identification.

Some of the discussants envisioned that the enumerators’ roles would involve persuading reluctant respondents to answer the census questions, but one young man who had experience with GOTV canvassing said he’d learned that wasn’t wise. There were some interesting suggestions from this group about resources that would be useful for enumerators—an online link for response, a flyer explaining more about the census. However, the discussants were divided in their opinion about the likely utility of a reminder note (currently part of the standard NRFU process). Another promising idea put forward was to have neighborhood community workshops before areas were canvassed. This may well not be within Census Bureau budget guidelines, but would be a potential area for Bureau-local collaboration.

Media as a Vehicle for Census Promotion

Most in the group were not inclined to trust media. The common strand in the discussants’ viewpoints was that media outlets, like individuals, needed to earn their trust. Two mentioned Radio Bilingue, a local Spanish-language public broadcasting station that includes daily public affairs and news shows, as an example of the kind of media source they would trust, one mentioning Samuel Orozco (host of the station’s daily news show, “Linea abierta”), one mentioning “La Hora Mixteca” (the station’s program targeting indigenous listeners).

In contrast to many of the older foreign-born survey respondents, everyone in this group distrusted TV outlets.

Indigenous-Origin Immigrants’ Willingness to Participate

The focus group with Mexican indigenous immigrants included 13 discussants from three principal indigenous populations in the San Joaquin Valley—six Mixteco/as, three Triqui, and four Zapoteco/a participants. The discussion was moderated by a Zapotec facilitator. The group clearly was representative of a “hard to count” sub-group. Although all of the discussants had been in the U.S in 2010, none had participated in Census 2010 and none remembered anything about any activities promoting census participation in 2010.

Willingness to Participate and Factors Affecting Participation

The overwhelming majority in the indigenous focus group (11 respondents) were inclined to participate in Census 2020—but all preferred responding to a mailed paper form than online and thought this would also be the preference of others in their community.

The discussants believed that there were few households where no one spoke Spanish, but that it would still be very important to have indigenous community members (visibly) involved in census operations.

At the end of the focus group discussion about pros and cons of census participation and the citizenship question, 10 discussants said they would answer the census without the citizenship question; none would answer if the question were included. Three were not inclined to answer the census under any condition.

Benefits from Census Participation Mingled with Fear: “The Doubled-Edged Sword”

Discussants were asked if they thought that answering the census would benefit or harm their community. It was striking to hear the extent to which thinking about the census involved competing views about the pros and cons of census response. Many participants had ambivalence about responding to the census and half of the members of the group referred to fear in their comments.

“The census can end up being a double-edged sword—[bringing] resources but at the same time the ‘migra’ can come down on you knowing how many people are there. They shouldn’t ask about immigration status.”

At the same time, most discussants were aware of the benefits of census participation. The person who referred

to the census as a “double-edged sword” noted that there’s lots of traffic in Madera and that the freeway needed another lane.

Beliefs about Census Confidentiality

The discussants were initially evenly divided in their belief that census data would remain confidential. After hearing an explanation of Title 13 provisions to assure confidentiality of individual responses, the opinion shifted with 11 discussants—including most of those who had said they weren’t certain about the confidentiality of census information—expressing more comfort in answering the census.

Response to an Enumerator Visit or a Proxy Interview

The indigenous group expressed much less willingness to respond to an enumerator than to self-respond. Only one-third of the discussants said they’d be willing to respond to an enumerator. However, one discussant suggested that it would be helpful if the enumerator came along with a community navigator, while another espoused Sunday visits only.

“It would help if the enumerator is from the community accompanied by someone from the community...many don’t know how to read or write or use the Internet.”

“...we go out to work a lot of the time. Let them come on a fixed schedule. Sunday yes, during the week, no.”

No one in the group said they would be willing to participate in a proxy interview.

Confronting the Citizenship Question

The indigenous group was divided about what their personal reaction might be when confronted with a census form including the citizenship question. Half said they would skip the census altogether, while the other half said they would simply skip the citizenship question.

There was a lively discussion about the government’s rationale for the question. One set of concerns related to uncertainty about how information on citizenship would be used. Another underscored political antagonism about the question as part of the government’s immigration policy.

“If they gave us legal status, then one would be more confident,” “Let them give us permission to visit our families, then we’d answer!”

Two other comments focused simply on politicians being untrustworthy. The third perspective was linked to curiosity about what would happen if a respondent skipped the citizenship question—the worry being that it would be used to identify the census respondent who failed to answer.

Perspectives on the census and the citizenship question were clearly shaped by broader perspectives on government. The indigenous focus group discussants expressed little confidence in government. No one in the group said they trusted the federal government or local government. Two said they did trust California state government.

Strategies to Promote Census Participation

Almost all the discussants (10 of the 13) thought that “right now” is the time to start raising awareness about census participation. Two thought it would be best to wait until we were closer to census time, and one had no opinion.

Suggestions about topics to address in promoting census participation were not surprising—some suggested more information about confidentiality, others more information about how census information is used.

An idea that emerged and got some support was the idea that the hometown associations of the indigenous residents could play an important role as a “trusted voice” in promoting participation. Half of the group supported this idea, but three of the discussants did not; the others didn’t express an opinion. It is likely that the mixed support reflects cross-currents of civic perspectives within each migration network.

Most members (9/13) of this focus group thought that messages framing census response as resistance to anti-immigrant actions by the federal government (“the people who want to take away DACA and separate families don’t want immigrants counted”) might be effective. But one commented that even with that message they’d still be scared and might not answer.

DACA Recipients’ Perspectives on Census Participation

The focus group with DACA recipients was composed of six young adults from 20-22 years old. Having grown up in the U.S., they were, as might be expected, quite integrated into U.S. society.

For example, all of them favored online census self-response rather than mail-back. One explained that an online mode of response would give him a sense of urgency about responding to the census and that if it were a paper form he'd put it aside and forget about it.

All but one was inclined to self-respond to the census, but they were much less willing to talk to an enumerator. Their decisions were based on how the enumerator was dressed, what they looked like and if they knew them. Their discussion about responding to an enumerator visit underscores our conclusion that the challenges faced in promoting census participation within hard-to-count communities will not be easily overcome with basic information or standardized messages, that nudging uncertain respondents toward response will require careful attention to resolving conflicting perspectives and ensuring that census workers are connected to these communities.

Positive Perspectives on Census Response

The DACA group was aware of the community benefits of census participation. They thought it was important to get a complete count—both to assure equitable federal funding and political representation. All except one knew that census information was used for “demographics.” Their comments about the concrete implications of a fair and accurate census count reflected a good understanding of the importance of census participation.

Negative Perspectives on Proxy Interviews

The group was unanimously opposed to the idea of participating in a proxy interview. As was the case for many of the survey respondents and other focus group participants, they saw such a request as being practically problematic and, at the same time, violating social norms. They reacted very strongly, touching on both concerns.

Speaker 1: “...No I hate that idea. [overtalk]”

Speaker 2: “Like we're really good friends with our neighbors.”

Speaker 1: “Like I ain't no snitch. No. [laughter] Honestly though, I, first of all, there's, there's a difference between perceived information and information. If anyone sees me on the streets, everyone thinks I'm white. Everyone's like, oh, you're American. But then I'm like the most Mexican person that they've ever met. Yeah, I speak fluent Spanish. I like, I was born in Mexico. I, I have the scar on my arm. All Mexicans

have that, yeah, like it's the false perception. You never know. My neighbors have traffic coming in and out of their house all day. I have no idea how many people live in that house. And it's because I don't actually care to count who's coming in and out. I don't care to count. Like but they're all friendly, but I'm not going to give their information out because that's not my business. And, and for all I know, they're like evading taxes or something and I'm over here and be like, yeah. I'm so, “Henry” lives in that house and they're like, oh dang. I didn't know “Henry” lived there. You know, like, it's not my place.”

Mixed Feelings about Census Confidentiality

The discussants were also very concerned about confidentiality. Half believed that census data was confidential, but half were unsure.

Confidentiality concerns included general ones (“I don't know because my information on Facebook was confidential until 2016”) and specific concerns about government misuse of information.

“...actually, when DACA came out, it actually took me two years to actually apply it to DACA because of that initial fear that I was going to become vulnerable and give up my information. Um, and actually recently since Trump became president, um, I switched my address from my parents to my own address.... So, there's definitely a fear that once they have your information, even if DACA guarantees ... I'm not going to deportation-- there's no guarantee that if it were to, you know, to be completely wiped out, they wouldn't go to DACA recipients and even our parents, since we have to put them down through our application.”

The group was mixed in their opinions about Title 13 provisions meant to assure the confidentiality of census information—in part because none of them trusted the federal government.

“... I feel like if there is a lawsuit, then it's possible that the information might be leaked or if there's just anything, if there is a hole in the contract saying that this is confidential and if they can go through that hole, they can make it bigger, they can figure out a way. ... There's usually an exception to every rule. And so, I'd like to understand the exceptions and the limitations ... prior to putting my full faith into the contract.”

The Citizenship Question as a Double-Edged Sword

There were mixed feelings in the group about the citizenship question. None were willing to fill out the form completely. One discussant suggested, for example, that knowing how many non-citizens there were might be useful in advocating for more immigrant legal services and said that for that reason she'd be inclined to answer it honestly. Conversely, one stated that the data could have the opposite effect.

"I think the only reason I would refuse to answer it all completely would just be by not answering that question. I think it's kind of also like "outing" yourself. Yeah. So they would know like, oh okay. I think I kind of get that that person might not be answering for that specific reason. And I would rather they think that I just didn't want to, I was not interested in the census at all rather than outing myself or my family as undocumented. And I think there's that fear of whoever's in charge of the redistricting they might use that against my community as well."

Five said they would skip the citizenship question and one emphasized that she would not fill out the information on citizenship for anyone in the household. Being undocumented loomed large in the decision-making among these participants and having registered as such to gain DACA was an overriding factor in their choices.

"I remember too, there was a debate going on about DACA. How the Trump administration wanted to get hold of all DACA recipient's info. ... I'm like, why would I want to reveal more of myself to that? To the government..."

Ultimately, in a group "vote" as to whether the census benefits or harms "the community" (Latinos), all but one felt that a census without the citizenship question would benefit the community, but all felt that a census with the question would harm the community. Two believed it would both hurt and help the community.

The Role That Young Adults Can Play in Census Promotion

All of the DACA recipients expected to respond to the census for their household. They all were very positively oriented toward online interactions, but five of the six said their parents were not. They said they would also be likely to be the ones helping others in their extended families respond to the census. Many of the participants implied they would take a major role in filling out the census and deciding how to respond.

"...as of now, my parents don't know. I haven't talked to them about the census. Um, and so I think if I were to talk to them, explain to them, they might be more, um, more, um, accepting of filling it out. But if it just came in the mail one day without me explaining to them what it was, and they started filling it out thinking, "oh, this is something I have to do." And then that they stumbled across that question, they might just stop and put it away. And then think, "oh I shouldn't, I shouldn't be dealing with that." And that might cause them to not send it in at all."

One young man in the group explained that he'd advise his family to fill out the census form but skip the citizenship question. Another discussant disagreed with him saying that she would advise people to fill out of the whole form.

"I would advise people to just fill out the whole thing. Um, as long as they're comfortable with it, at least within like my family... But I also think that that would kind of make a really big statement to say we are not citizens, but we're here. And so you need to get used to it and we need to make changes to try to make things better for everyone, not just the white people that were born here."

"Trusted Voices" and Advocacy

Two of the discussants were community activists and had been involved in get out the vote canvassing. One explained that she knew the importance of trust from that experience, that people had trusted her because she was from the community. The other, who had worked with CHIRLA (Coalition of Human Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles) said his parents would trust it, but probably not some other community organizations. One discussant said that she, herself, would not trust a church, but that most people in the community would.

The group agreed that the most trusted media voice would be Jorge Ramos, explaining they would trust him because of his advocacy.

Speaker 1: *"There's uh, there's like one, there's like two, three news anchors that I'd probably trust that are like from ABC World News."*

Speaker 2: *"Yeah. I, I trust a few in English. Okay. So I want to say I don't really trust any news anchor 100% with my heart and soul. Maybe Jorge Ramos...you see the advocacy that he has already been through. Like he's already been an advocate for my people. So I figure, well, I..."*

Speaker 1: “I mean Trump threw him out.”

Speaker 2: “So funny. Yeah. But my point is like if, if it’s someone who has proven themselves, then I’m more likely to trust them than someone who says they’ve proven themselves”

There was zero trust in the federal government, minimal trust in local government, but quite substantial trust in state government (with three of the discussants ranking its trustworthiness as 3 on a scale of zero to 5 and two ranking it as a 4).

Messaging about Census Participation as Resistance

All of the discussants liked the possibility of a census promotion message that “The people who want to terminate DACA and separate families are the ones who don’t want immigrants counted in the census.” The responses to this message were positive.

Speaker 1: “An act of defiance.”

Speaker 2: “Yeah, it brings out, the advocacy in people. ... if it’s something easy that you can do to try to make a difference, I feel like people are more inclined to do it.”

Speaker 1: “I like defying people and defying like — if you tell me like, “oh you can’t do this” and I’ll be like, “okay, watch me.”

Speaker 3: “I think dealing with the issues of immigration, especially such a salient topic, will cause some people to actually answer the census because it would put the census sort of like in a partisan way where it becomes more about the immigration issue than about just the census in general. So it might help some people to actually put some importance in filling it out.”

The discussion among DACA recipients underscores the fact that having more general information about the census will not be a “magic bullet” for successful census promotion. Their discussion points to the importance of addressing the ways in which people interpret the information they have and deploy that information to make decisions. For the DACA recipients who are more integrated into U.S. civic life than their foreign-born parents, more information does not translate into certainty. At the same time, they want to better understand how the census works, how data is used, where it goes, loopholes in Title 13 so they can make an informed decision about participating.

They express great awareness of the importance of census participation, but also have more nuanced concerns about the downside of the citizenship question. Resolving their uncertainties and recruiting them into the ranks of census promoters will be an important part of strategic census promotion efforts because of their facility with, and enthusiasm about, online transactions and because they play an important role in household decision-making and will be influential in determining whether there is a rapid, easy online response or a firm no.

Focus Groups Echo Recurrent Themes Emerging from Survey Respondents’ Answers

Discussions in the Latino immigrant focus groups indicate that many of the viewpoints expressed by the Latino survey respondents are shared within the sub-populations represented in the focus groups.¹⁴

Distrust in the federal government is widespread and this distrust clearly plays an important role in shaping perspectives on census confidentiality. Like the survey respondents, focus group participants were not necessarily convinced that the Census Bureau would not share household census information with other government agencies. They were uncertain and dubious that confidentiality of private information could or would be protected.

“...it doesn’t guarantee, and there’s also that fear that for instance, the DACA people want to use some of that information. They want to know how many have criminal records how many have been arrested to be able to use that against us. And so it, it, the information can be used against our community as well. And I don’t know, there’s always that, that just general fear with a government agency having the information about your family or your community.”

As was the case for many of the survey respondents, a number of focus group participants were torn between appreciating the community benefits of census participation and the risks inherent in providing citizenship information to a federal government, which might misuse it to harm immigrants. For some, the worries were immediate— that information might be used against family members. For others, the risks of responding to a census with the citizenship question were seen as being more indirect—community-wide. In each of the groups, the

14 Undocumented, foreign-born legal residents, naturalized citizens, second-generation youth, Indigenous Mexicans, and DACA recipients.

dilemma arose about the relationship between individual behavior and community-wide behavior (the question “What if everyone did what I did?”) and the consequences of each of these.

There was universal unwillingness to participate in a proxy interview. There was not much enthusiasm about enumerator visits, but it was generally agreed that if enumerators were to be successful in non-response follow-up, it would be important for them to be local people, who spoke the language of the community and who could easily establish rapport with reluctant respondents.

The young adults in the DACA and in the second-generation immigrant focus groups could clearly be valuable resources in campaigns to promote census participation. A number either said directly—or implied—that they would be the ones to convince their parents (and perhaps others) about whether they should respond to the census or refuse. The participants in the young adult focus groups are bilingual, community-oriented, and, unlike the older non-citizen immigrants, are aware of—and interested in—the importance of census data for political representation. The DACA recipients and the U.S.-born young adults were digitally literate and, in the second-generation discussion group, favored online response over mail response.

DISCUSSION: OVER-ARCHING THEMES

Seven notable themes emerged from the survey responses and focus group discussions with the Latino immigrants reported here.

Theme 1: Lack of Trust in Government

Including the citizenship question on the census was not seen simply in terms of information exchange—whether or not providing information to the Census Bureau was useful or safe. A census with the citizenship question was seen as an integral facet of administration policies with regard to immigrants and, specifically, Latinos. The recurrent question the respondents posed to themselves and, rhetorically, to interviewers was, “What is the information going to be used for?”

The consequence being faced either with or without inclusion of the citizenship question is that the Census Bureau is now heavily burdened in its ongoing efforts to communicate its commitment to the integrity of the census process and the confidentiality of personal information provided by census respondents. As a result of the Department of Commerce justifying its decision to add the question in such a transparently political way, the linkage between “the census” and “the government” and potential government uses of information about citizenship has been elevated to a level where this question is now perceived as a burning one.

The sincerity of Census Bureau commitment to protecting the confidentiality of household information has been a longstanding concern among socially, economically, politically disadvantaged hard-to-count populations.¹⁵ Distrust has always been an issue to address in outreach that is seeking to increase response.

In an era of burgeoning public dialogue about “fake news,” assertions and counter-assertions about social policy, and separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, public lack of confidence is growing among all segments of the public.¹⁶ This was clearly evident throughout the discussions with Latino immigrants in the SJVCRP survey and the focus groups.

¹⁵ See Bourgois 1990 and other ethnographic research reports from the Census Bureau.

¹⁶ According to a September 2017 Pew Research Center report, “Public trust in the government remains near historic lows. Only 18% of Americans today say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right ‘just about always’ (3%) or ‘most of the time’ (15%).” See also, Patrick Potyondy, “Confidentiality, the Census and Trust in the Federal Government,” National Conference of State Legislatures blog, May 4, 2018.

Survey respondents did not go so far as to state they were sure that household information provided in responding to the census might be misused by government, but they consistently expressed their uncertainty about whether to believe government assurances about its use of census information.

Focus group participants were asked explicitly about whether they trusted local, state, and federal governments. No discussant said they'd trust the federal government. There was not much trust in local government either, although a few focus group discussants said they would trust California state government and some specific state officials (presumably due, at least in part, to a pro-immigrant stance).

The many comments stemming from distrust of government underscore the need for pro-census messaging to distinguish the purpose of census data collection from the legal provisions meant to protect confidentiality. If one trusts the integrity of "the government," then information about provisions that are in place to assure the protection of individual respondents' privacy becomes relevant to a decision about participation in the data collection endeavor. But, if not, such assurances are hollow.

The 2012 CBAMS II research report identifies two prevalent problematic mindsets within the general public—the suspicious and the uninformed. Not surprisingly, more of the Latino immigrant survey respondents fall into the "suspicious" mindset than in the CBAMS II research, which found that 14% of Americans were aligned with this mindset.

Conclusions about Theme 1: Lack of Trust in Government Has Serious Implications for Census 2020 Operations.

Latino immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley are not insulated from the national news or from local news about federal-state-local government conflict. The Trump administration rhetoric about punishing California and sanctuary cities for their pro-immigrant stance and the anti-immigrant stance of the federal government clearly affects their perspectives. They are aware of, and concerned about, the treatment of Central American asylum-seekers and the government shutdown stemming from insistence on a border wall to keep Mexican and Central American immigrants out of the U.S. A wave of

high-profile ICE roadblocks, and detentions at courthouses, in the spring of 2018 are fresh in many immigrants' minds. Inevitably, they are skeptical of government assurances about the eventual use of information they provide about their own household or about neighbors' households.

It is likely that, at some point during the spring of 2019, more attention will be paid to the Department of Commerce's plans to add the citizenship question to Census 2020.¹⁷ This attention is likely to escalate and continue to do so until, and quite possibly after, a court decision determines whether the question will be included in the census. Messaging about the prospect of a decennial census that includes the citizenship question in 2020 is unlikely to be considered in isolation because it will be embedded in community-wide talk—day in and day out—in public venues, social gatherings, civic events, and interactions with a broad range of service providers and immigrant advocacy organizations.

It does not seem likely that efforts to minimize the intense dispute about the citizenship question in the hope of encouraging reluctant respondents to respond to the census will be successful. We believe that the increasing prominence of the national debate over the citizenship question presents opportunities for California census promotion. Campaigns can build on state and local government commitments to defend immigrants. They can promote the importance of census response for the state as well as local communities as a positive rationale for census response. Within this conceptual frame, census response can be presented as "pitching in" to support California in its faithful support of immigrants.

Messaging meant to promote census participation that focuses on "just the facts" about confidentiality and government uses of census information for apportionment and allocation of federal funding will have limited effectiveness. Attitudes about the citizenship question are inextricably melded into a broader conceptual context where there is widespread general discomfort about privacy and information security. In addition to being a sensitive question, asking about citizenship (coupled with instructions to provide the names of household members)

17 UCLA political scientist, Matt Barreto, provides an in-depth review of the research literature on factors affecting survey response. His discussion about how current perspectives on response to Census 2020 if the citizenship question may evolve over the next year before the census is under way provides valuable practical insights for thinking about messaging related to census promotion. See "Declaration of Matthew Barreto, PhD in Support of Plaintiffs' Opposition to Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment," U.S. District Court of Northern California, November 16, 2018. The government's January 22, 2019, motion to have the Supreme Court review the New York District Court's decision that the citizenship question should not be included will generate further news coverage.

catalyzes underlying concerns about whether government can be trusted.

In communities with concentrations of both settled and recently arrived undocumented immigrants, efforts to promote census participation will also need to confront legitimate concerns about the propriety and utility of government data collection in a sociopolitical environment where discussion of “fake news” is prevalent, and where government information may be used to undermine community well-being, e.g., to support enactment of state laws where political representation is based only on numbers of citizens in a political jurisdiction.¹⁸

Theme 2: Underlying Concerns about Privacy and Information Security

Respondent comments discussed in connection with Theme 1 indicate they generally distrust government and are concerned about their participation. But because of government rhetoric, policy and actions toward immigrants, another related, but distinct, strand emerged in which they focused specifically on the issue of information privacy. And this was not necessarily because they were or were not documented. There were a variety of factors entering into the high level of concern about privacy and information security.

There is widespread distrust among Latino immigrant households about the dangers of sharing any personal information. This is quite similar to that observed in the CBAMS II research and in other analyses of evolving attitudes about privacy and information security among the general public.

Conclusions about Theme 2 - Underlying Concerns about Privacy and Information Misuse Sensitize Immigrants to the Citizenship Question

It appears that this broad swathe of worries about potential misuse of information is amplified by the phenomenon that anthropologist Lynn Stephen refers to as “the gaze of surveillance,” the ever-present recognition by Latino immigrants that their societal situation is precarious, that outsiders’ observations of their individual behavior and family lives could have serious negative repercussions for them.

It should not be surprising that the Latino residents of San Joaquin Valley communities are more likely than most Americans to feel threatened by multiple factors in the

current sociopolitical environment—most obviously administration rhetoric, policies, and regulatory actions that are directed toward immigrants, and especially Latino immigrants.

Theme 3: Is The Question about Citizenship or About Immigration Status?

It is important to recognize that the views of survey respondents were not only linked to concern that census response might be detrimental to them personally. Concerns stemmed also from worries about the impact the citizenship question might have on others in their household, about other non-family members living at the place they lived, about potential impacts on neighbors stemming from participating in a proxy interview, and concerns about community-wide response suppression due to fear about potential misuse of information on citizenship. In fact, answering a question about citizenship status is viewed as being tantamount to answering about immigration status. In some respects, growing awareness of the importance of census response as a way to assure equitable representation and funding for their communities potentiated worries about the uncertainties inherent in providing the Census Bureau information about one’s household.

Respondents did not consistently make a clear-cut distinction between the citizenship question on the census as being specifically one about who is a citizen and who is a non-citizen. It was broadly, though not universally, interpreted as one about immigration status.

Due to the breadth of feeling about the administration’s anti-immigrant animus, some were concerned not simply about the impact of the question on people without papers, but also more broadly about the effect on the community at large. A young second-generation survey respondent said explicitly that people answering the census are “exposed.”

“And the questions that are being asked are you know how many people are in the house? Um, the address location. So it’s like everything will be on there and if they’re exposed like that and then someone like ICE gets a hold of that information it could be bad.”

18 The National Academy of Science’s Committee on National Statistics noted in its summer 2018 Federal Register “letter report” comments on Census 2020 operations that the administration had contemplated creation of a citizen registry—a step that violated broadly held principles regarding proper statistical policy. More recently, litigation has revealed that the government contemplated sharing census data with law enforcement agencies, a violation of Title 13 provisions.

Respondents' uncertainty about how household information they provide by responding to the census is not ill-founded. It is consistent with the fact that there is actual uncertainty within the administration about the government's eventual policy regarding exchange of Census Bureau information with other government agencies. The interpretation by Latino immigrants of government intent is consistent with the original purpose for adding the question as first proposed by Chris Kobach and others in the administration.¹⁹ Moreover, there has been fairly widespread ensuing discussion as to how states could use decennial census information to re-shape political jurisdictions based only on CVAP (the citizen voting-age population). Concerns held by Latino immigrants are entirely congruent with concerns expressed by the Committee on National Statistics in its Summer 2018 letter report commenting on the Census Bureau's proposed 2020 operations.

Even respondents who were well-informed expressed suspicions about the government's rationale for, need for, and potential use of, census information provided. They contrasted their accurate understanding of the census as a statistical endeavor to count the U.S. population with the level of detail sought in the additional census questions on the race/ethnicity, names, and relationships between the census respondent, household members, and others (non-family members) who might live under the same roof.

Adding the citizenship questions amplifies underlying suspicion stemming from broad distrust in the government and, inevitably, specifically heightened concerns about how census information might be misused for immigration enforcement. Immigrants' lack of certainty as to whether the citizenship question was actually one seeking information on legal status, of course, heightened concern that household information provided in answering the census might be used for immigration law enforcement. This perspective, understandably, also reflected respondents' uncertainty about the exact way in which information might get from one part of "the government" to another and be used.

Conclusions about Theme 3: Government ambivalence as to whether the question is about citizenship or legal status, coupled with inadequate provisions to protect privacy, raise legitimate concerns

Latino immigrants' worries about potential misuse of census information are not unfounded.²⁰ Even if Census Bureau assurances of privacy gain more credence, questions remain about the effectiveness of Census Bureau provisions for disclosure avoidance and the nature of information exchange among federal government agencies. Secretary Ross's announcement of his decision to add the citizenship question specifically referenced the need for interagency sharing of block-level tabulations of census data. Despite Census Bureau officials' assurances regarding their commitment to the avoidance of illegal tabulation of census data to be used as a resource for targeting immigration enforcement, lack of trust in government makes such assurances empty.

Census Bureau messaging about "disclosure avoidance" to assure that tabulations of census data do not invade privacy has not yet had much of an impact on the public in general, or on the Latino immigrant population in the San Joaquin Valley. Tabulation and publication of data at the census-block level of geography would definitively make a single household's profile available in about 7% of California census blocks, and thus permit targeting of concentrations of immigrants, for example, in immigrant-dense neighborhoods in census tracts with only 2-10 households.²¹

More definitive information about the Census Bureau's provisions vis-à-vis "tunable" disclosure avoidance techniques will be required.²² Although the Census Bureau

19 Further evidence can be found of this original intent in a draft Executive Order from early 2017 immediately after President Trump's inauguration (Memo from Andrew Bremberg, "Executive Order on Protecting American Jobs by Strengthening the Integrity of Foreign Worker Visa Programs," January 23, 2017). The proposed Section 5 (c) states "The Director of the U.S. Census Bureau shall include questions to determine U.S. citizenship and immigration status on the long-form questionnaire in the decennial census." (italics added). Although Bremberg failed to recognize that the long-form decennial census had been abandoned in 2010, the intent was clear—to suppress census response among immigrants.

20 The Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) filed a lawsuit against the Department of Commerce on November 20, 2018, complaining that the Department of Commerce had not complied with the Administrative Procedures Act by failing to release Privacy Impact Assessments of the consequences of adding the citizenship question to Census 2020. EPIC's concerns are that privacy would, indeed, be violated by illegal sharing of sensitive census information—specifically regarding individuals' and household members' citizenship status.

21 Ed Kissam and Jo Ann Intili, "Census Block-Level Tabulation of the Citizen Voting-age Population (CVAP) In Violation of Federal Law on Census Confidentiality," WKF Fund, October 18, 2018.

22 Census Bureau technical papers on its policies for privacy protection provide some details about its proposed policies and procedures—presented in discussion of provisions for "disclosure avoidance." The strategy is generally to suppress or distort tabulations that might violate privacy—but these provisions are designed to be "tunable," that is, adjustable depending on the impacts that disclosure might have on census respondents. Unfortunately, the proposed policy would be that decisions about "tuning" would be made within the Census Bureau and the proposed rationale for adding the citizenship question envisions tabulations of census data down to the census block level—even in cases where there is only a single house in the block.

has attempted to ameliorate public concerns about confidentiality protection, its communications regarding this issue have been too generic to show up as even a blip on the radar screen of immigrant community conversation about the census.

Theme 4: Latinos' Quest for Inclusion and Equity

Many survey respondents understood the effort to add the citizenship question as one with implications extending well beyond its immediate impact on an individual household's well-being. This has further positive implications for efforts to promote census response. They saw themselves as members of their local communities and part of U.S. society, irrespective of legal or citizenship status. A number of respondents raised the issue of paying taxes as a mode of civic participation linked to census response and as an indicator of one's right to be counted. A number of others raised the same issue in variations on the theme of paying taxes as assuring them the right to be counted—but without the hostility of the citizenship question or the intrusiveness of such personal questions.

Conclusion about Theme 4: Pride in Citizenship Motivates Some Sub-Populations to Respond

This perspective appears to explain in part the fact that the sub-population among the Latino immigrants most willing to respond to Census 2020—even with a citizenship question—are the naturalized citizens. They are proud of having earned U.S. citizenship. This sort of perspective will need to be reinforced, underscoring the desire to stand up and be counted as essentially being in conflict with the implicit hostility conveyed by the citizenship question.

The pride of community inclusion, civic integration, signaled by naturalized citizens' willingness to respond to a census that includes a citizenship question, contrasted with some U.S.-born respondents' and long-time settled immigrants' anger about the citizenship question as a divisive tactic, are signals that should not be ignored. They indicate that messages of census participation as an affirmation of cultural pride and framing of census response as affirmation of the importance and power of the Latino community will be effective for some but not for all.²³

Theme 5: Listening to the Dog-Whistle: Widespread Concern about the Social Policy Implications of a Census that Includes the Citizenship Question

It is not surprising that the citizenship question triggers immigrants' concerns as to how detailed personal information about a household might be misused by the government. What is surprising is the breadth and depth of concerns about the social policy and messaging implications of adding the citizenship question among Latino households who have legal status or citizenship.

The sociopolitical context of the citizenship question is a pervasive concern. For example, one young U.S.-born woman said, *"I feel like a lot of people have purposely rejected being in the census... if they're undocumented because they're scared. A lot of our community's really scared of being ... deported ... which is totally understandable. But it's like— avoiding certain types of people in public And avoiding certain roads or avoiding going to certain stores. Our immigrant community has become so afraid that these are the things that they're doing. They're going outside of their everyday lives to try to not get deported."*

Responses include expressions of anger, as well as practical concern about potential misuse of census information. One respondent put it as follows, *"I'm a citizen of this country and I'm indignant that the census would put that question on. I don't agree with that at all. Lots of people already don't answer the census, with this they're even less likely to."*

Many others expressed similar concerns. For example, a U.S.-born second-generation teenager who said he would not respond to a census with the citizenship question straightforwardly focused on the broad community impact, saying, *"I don't agree [with adding the CQ] because it will frighten undocumented people. That would be super-bad for the country...As a form of protest, I'd refuse to fill out the census form because it's intimidating and we don't know why it [the CQ] is being asked."*

Another respondent framed his concern eloquently, *"It's separation in a way. Asking that question divides the nation, families. I don't believe that question should be included."*

Another commented, *"I'm not at all content [with this question]...This country is made up of immigrants, so it doesn't seem appropriate to me to pose this question."*

23 This message is consistent with findings from NALGO's focus group research in the summer of 2018.

Many among the U.S. born citizens and the long-term legal residents for whom the confidentiality and safety of answering the census was not a primary concern were, nonetheless, concerned about the addition of the citizenship question to a survey that has been widely promoted as a national ritual of self-awareness—the census as “a mirror for America.” For them, participating in a census with the citizenship question represents collaboration in deliberately creating a distorted profile of a diverse U.S. population.

Conclusions about Theme 5: Including the citizenship question raises concerns about whether the census will undermine immigrant integration and community unity

For many of these respondents, thinking about inclusion of the citizenship question in the census raised deeply felt concerns about community-level impacts and showed ways that merely asking the question would impact the sociopolitical environment of communities. These are basically concerns about the impact a census that includes the citizenship question would have on social capital in their communities due to its broad negative impact on general levels of community trust:

“Right now there is distrust—about people asking for identification in order to know the status of their citizenship. I do not like it. I do not feel comfortable answering that question, I have distrust, I feel uncomfortable responding.”

“The government wants to use it [the citizenship question] to get those who do not have papers, it does not seem fair to me, people are just here to work, they are paying their taxes and everything, the counting is not necessary, the census already has that information.”

This pervasive concern about the meaning of a census that includes the citizenship question highlights the need to go beyond cut-and-dried assurances about the safety of providing personal information in responding to the census and to confront head-on the widespread hostility toward participation in a flawed census that is viewed as an exercise in promoting racism and denying immigrants equitable access to services.

Special efforts will be needed in messaging to second-generation Latino households who are well-attuned to the fierce conflict in U.S. public life about immigration policy and the place for immigrants in America. Being a “bridge”

generation between their foreign-born parents and the lives of their friends and children as Americans, they are sensitive to the ever-present questions of equity and inclusion. If there is to be any hope of overcoming the incipient wave of protest among the younger second-generation Latinos, messaging and outreach will need to address concerns within this group, which stem not from lack of information, but rather from being well-informed and attentive to political cross-currents and nuances in public dialogue. However, this group will need to be better informed on procedural aspects of the census.

The safety concerns being expressed by participants relate not simply to possible repercussions from non-confidential census information, but also to the safety of mandating an official government data collection effort that will fragment communities that have embarked on a struggle to build togetherness, civic unity.

In order to address this strand of concern, census participation will need to be re-framed as pro-immigrant civic activism to resist anti-immigrant efforts by the federal government, not as coerced collaboration with a government known to be hostile to immigrants. That re-framing may not be tenable unless the citizenship question is left off Census 2020. This message will not resonate with all Latino immigrants, but will be important for sub-groups who play important roles in influencing community-wide perspectives and aspirations.

Theme 6: Thinking About the Prospect of a Visit from a Census Enumerator: A Threat At The Door or Someone Who Can Help?

Widespread worries about the potential practical implications of answering a question about citizenship, and unwillingness to answer a census with the question, are even more pronounced in comments about responding to an enumerator visit than in the context of self-response. Distrust of the government is ever-present and the threat of someone actually coming to the door seems to exacerbate this fear.

Conclusions about Theme 6: The Prospect of a Visit from an Enumerator.

Many respondents gravitated to the notion of “the enumerator at the door” as a metaphor to rely on in framing their conceptualization of census response as “opening the door” or “closing the door” to government intrusion into their personal lives—set against the backdrop

of experience where contact with government was only infrequently positive and rewarding.

Hiring local, culturally competent and linguistically competent enumerators might make a contribution to “refusal conversion;” however, enumerator training would need to include careful attention to establishing rapport with distrustful and uncertain respondents and convincing them that their responses are confidential and that the information they provide will not be misused.

It is not clear that this is the case. Census Bureau planning to date has focused on recruiting an adequate number of enumerators for NRFU (especially when confronted with extraordinarily high levels of non-response). It has not yet focused on communication skills. Difficulties experienced by Census Bureau area and local offices in securing waivers to hire employment-authorized non-citizens will undoubtedly dim the prospects for refusal conversion by enumerators.

The Census Bureau’s commitment to quality assurance in NRFU by requiring enumerator-household communications to follow a standard script will attenuate the success of even the enumerators who are skilled communicators and who might potentially convince a reluctant household to provide them with household information.

Theme 7: Latino Immigrants’ Conceptualization of Census Response

The semantics of how census participation is visualized and talked about by the Mexican and Central American immigrants interviewed is worth noting.

In the Spanish-language interviews, the concept of census response was often spontaneously framed in colloquial Spanish as “registrarse” (to register oneself) or “inscribirse” (to sign up) as well as “contestar” (answer). This is notable because of its potential to nudge respondents toward visualizing possible census participation as more threatening than if it were anchored simply to the concept of answering a series of questions. This is because the verbs “registrarse” and “inscribirse” stem directly from references to the process of list-making or voting, thereby embedding census participation in an official/institutional context.

Conclusions about Theme 7: Performative Verbs Affect Attitudes about Census Response and Consequently Influence Behavior

Verbs such as “register” and “enroll” are what philosopher J.L. Austin has referred to as “performatives.” Semantically, they imply not just communication or information exchange, but rather, action (often with important social, economic, and legal consequences as in utterances such as “I, hereby, marry, contract, agree, promise, subscribe, certify”....etc.). It is not surprising, in this sociolinguistic context, to observe that the act of answering personal questions is seen as being consequential and as a first step toward being put on some sort of government list.

It is very likely that the census questions about the names of household members, and P1’s relationship to each, further reinforces this conceptualization.

Keeping this in mind, if/when the broader sociopolitical context of the administration’s reasons for securing information on citizenship status become more widely known, it is reasonable to expect further response suppression among Latino immigrants. In particular, plans to use census-derived data about citizenship for apportionment based solely on number of citizens in a jurisdiction, as well as follow-through on Secretary Ross’s idea of using administrative records to “correct” household answers about citizenship status, pose serious risks to willingness to respond to Census 2020.²⁴

24 Paul Overberg and Janet Adamy, “Trump Administration Plans to Check Your Answers on Census Citizenship Question,” Wall Street Journal, April 3, 2018.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CENSUS PROMOTION STRATEGY AND MESSAGING

1. Census Response Should Be Promoted As Community Empowerment

For many Latino immigrant households, willingness to respond is not determined entirely by clear-cut expectations of personal consequences. Survey respondents and focus group discussants recognized the census as a national endeavor to understand the United States as a diverse nation. While individual respondents varied in their framing of the notion, many saw the census as an opportunity for asserting their own identity and that of Latinos, for affirming their place in America.

This perspective blends in with appreciation of census participation as a contribution to their community's ability to secure a fair share of funding for services and infrastructure investment. However, they saw the effort to add the citizenship question very clearly as it was intended—as an attempt to dilute their community's political voice and to deprive their community of a fair share of federal funding. Some also saw it as a proactive effort to promote racial divisiveness. Thus, the individual willingness or unwillingness to respond to the census reflects not simply an assessment of private (personal) risks and benefits, but also a perspective on proper public social policy.

In a sense, the extreme reluctance of survey respondents and focus group discussants to participate in proxy interviews—providing enumerators with information on non-responding household composition—reflects a form of civic commitment, to be concerned about the well-being of one's neighbors.

To be sure, altruistic concern about the potential consequences of providing census enumerators with information on neighboring households is mingled with a consideration of personal consequences (being seen as nosy, irresponsible in providing private information to outsiders). Nonetheless, the tacit notion of the Census Bureau that neighbors will “help out” in a federal government enterprise is made particularly suspect by virtue of including efforts to secure information on the citizenship of everyone in every household is out-of-date and ethnocentric.

2. Potential Respondents Need Conceptual Support to Help Them Navigate Uncertainty about the Perceived Pros and Cons of Census Response

The desire to affirm one's presence and importance as part of the one's own community was evident in responses from long-time settlers—the naturalized citizens, the legal residents, and even some of the undocumented respondents. There was also awareness that census response contributes to community well-being. But the mindset characterized in the CBAMS taxonomy as “compliant and caring” and the mindset of “suspicious” often competed.

Participants' comments provide the basis for a more nuanced understanding of the fear among San Joaquin Valley Latino immigrants that supposedly confidential information might be misused.

Many of the respondents made reference to “worries” or “uncertainties” or incorporated into their comments and conversations “what if” scenarios about possible use of information for immigration enforcement into explaining the reasons for their reluctance or likely refusal to answer the census.

This pattern reflects the Latino immigrants' perspective that the decision to participate or not participate in the census is an exercise in risk assessment. They were aware that census responses were said to be confidential, but were not inclined to trust “the government” assurances. While the first-generation respondents expressed generic distrust, the younger-age cohorts—both the second-generation and the DACA recipients—were able and willing to formulate scenarios with specific ways in which confidentiality might be violated.

3. Deploying Social Capital—Going Beyond Reliance on “Trusted Voices” to Craft Powerful Authentic Messages

“Trusted voices” will, indeed, be an important part of census promotion strategy. Reliance on trusted voices will be a necessary condition for successful campaigns, but not so clearly a sufficient condition. Reliance on “trusted voices” to promote census participation is an important part of strategy—but the messaging will not have impact if it is purely informational. Many in Latino households—both citizens and non-citizens were aware of the basic information about census confidentiality and benefits to

their community but, as is the case for many in the current social environment, were torn between conflicting impulses (since they were unsure about the assurances regarding confidentiality).

The psychological barrier to responding to a census that includes a question almost universally considered to be, at best, worrisome, at worst a threatening extension of a multi-pronged anti-immigrant, anti-Latino government campaign, is very high. What this implies is that there will need to be very careful attention to determining ways to support “trusted voices” in delivering persuasive messages. The overall tenor of survey responses reflects a mindset where even trusted voices are second-guessed.

Practically speaking, it is hard to see how the Census Bureau might, in the current context where the proposal to add a citizenship question remains alive, or even in the standard context of public sector messaging, adequately address distrust in the confidentiality of census information.

Bland assurances about “commitment to confidentiality,” detailed explanations of “disclosure avoidance” provisions, and recitation of Title 13 provisions will have limited effect. The pervasiveness and depth of government distrust is very worrisome—because this fundamental distrust catapults the Latino immigrants’ thinking about census response out of the realm of straightforward information dissemination into a struggle for hearts and minds against a backdrop of information wars over “fake news” and government deception.

Community-based organizations can potentially play an important role in census promotion—but they will not be able to fulfill this promise if they simply circulate information bulletins. Assuring suspicious individuals that a message is “from people like you to people like you” is challenging. If messaging intermediaries fail in this endeavor, the result is that messages will be discounted or ignored entirely. The de facto assumption in many pro-social messaging campaigns is that repetition strengthens the impact of messaging. This is seldom the case. Messages will need to be varied, vernacular, and diversified to connect with the concerns to households with distinctive mindsets and concerns.

The SJVCRP survey findings give cause for concern that California’s investment in outreach in order to “get out the count” in hard-to-count communities around the state, and, specifically, with Latino immigrants such as those in the

San Joaquin Valley, may be placing too much blind faith in the power of “trusted voices” to impact reluctant respondents’ behavior. Trusted voices will need to learn how to convey compelling messages.

There are analogies to the dynamics observed in research on Get-out-the-Vote (GOTV) campaigns in California communities. In *Mobilizing Inclusion*, Lisa Garcia Bedolla and Melissa Michelson stress time and again how crucial it is for canvassers to engage in a genuine, authentic conversation with the households they contact.

Fact sheets, posters, informational pamphlets and wallet-size cards, rigid canvasser scripts, will not do the trick, because the reluctant census respondents need to work through the difficult process of risk assessment to find their way clear to census response and canvassers’ preparation to engage in dialogue with them to do this will be crucial.

4. The Need to Develop an Articulated and Evolving Messaging Strategy

There is no single best message to convince reluctant Latino immigrants to participate in a census that includes a citizenship question. The variation in perspectives linked to legal and citizenship status makes it clear that a campaign to encourage census participation within this hard-to-count population will need to be very carefully articulated—so as to include messages crafted for, and targeted to, distinct sub-populations.

Census promotion will not benefit much from simply translating and widely disseminating generic messages about census confidentiality and the community benefits of widespread census participation. To be persuasive, pro-census messaging will need to be authentic, and in order to be authentic, messaging will have to acknowledge the extent and depth of distrust in government. The apparently cost-effective strategy of translating carefully crafted generic advertising copy into Spanish will not actually provide much traction because—whatever the cost per impression—the Latino immigrant households in the San Joaquin Valley communities we studied will discern that they are not authentic, de-value them, and reject them.

But even within each of the sub-populations of Latino first- and second-generation immigrants there are diverse perspectives. These viewpoints can, hopefully, be further inventoried, building on the insights stemming from the

San Joaquin Valley Census Research Project to date and contribute to developing persuasive communication strategies to address different sets of concerns. Ideally, census promoters—both within networks of community-based organizations committed to working toward a complete count and census enumerators themselves—would then be able to draw on a compendium of possible strategies and persuasive messaging frames to guide their discussions with reluctant households.

For example, naturalized citizens were surprisingly willing to respond to the census even with the citizenship question included. These older, settled immigrants who had taken the initiative and been successful in going through the difficult process of naturalization, are oriented toward conformity, and census response is often seen by them as a civic duty. In contrast, conversations with the younger U.S.-born, second-generation immigrants about non-response show that unwillingness to respond to a census with the citizenship question often stems from respondents' disapproving of the semi-covert political sub-text of the addition of the question. This makes non-response more or less a protest vote against compliance with a request from an anti-immigrant federal government.

Arguments to persuade potential non-respondents with different mindsets to go ahead and participate in the census process will need to address how the meaning of a civic ritual—typically framed as a celebration of civic unity—that has been transformed into a divisive ritual can be re-framed into an action that affirms both civic unity and ethnic diversity. Messaging strategy will benefit from diligently tracking evolving perspectives and monitoring the street-level texture of community conversation about census participation.

In particular, census advocates will need to be prepared by the summer of 2019 to engage in dialogue with hard-to-count communities, like Latino immigrants, and with distinct sub-populations within them about a census. Whether the census goes forward without the threatening citizenship question or includes it.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The survey respondents' answers to questions probing the reasons for their prospective decision to participate or not participate in the census, along with focus group findings, show that most are not idly undecided about what they might or might not do.

They are, instead, torn between recognizing the benefits of participating in the census and fear about the potential consequences of sharing personal information with “the government.” Focus group discussants expressed similar dilemmas—pulled in multiple directions by the prospect of a census that included the citizenship question.

It is crucial to recognize that the backdrop to patterns of willingness to participate in a census that includes the citizenship question is very widespread belief that information provided to the government is not necessarily confidential and the citizenship question is really one about immigration status.

The proposal of adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, in and of itself, has created an atmosphere of distrust and fear of government among Latino residents in the San Joaquin Valley. While many Latino residents in the SJVCRP start out both excited and willing to do their civic duty by participating in the census, this attitude changes drastically when discussing the possibility of a citizenship question being added to the decennial count. There is clearly a personal battle going on between the need to do one's civic duty and the fear of doing so.

The decision to add the citizenship question will seriously degrade accuracy for the San Joaquin Valley 2020 Census. It is clear that asking about citizenship will suppress willingness among residents to self-respond to the census, decrease their willingness to participate in an interview with an enumerator who visits, and virtually eliminate their willingness to participate in proxy interviews. To understand the dynamics through which non-response translates into undercount, see Kissam, 2019.²⁵ The analysis, based on a cascade model using data from the SJVCRP, underscores how important it will be for census accuracy to pay attention not only to messaging and outreach focused on improving self-response, but also to adopt innovative strategies to ameliorate operational causes of census undercount that emerge during non-response follow-up.

25 Kissam, Edward, 2019. A Cascade Model: How Latino Immigrants' Lowered Response Will Lead to Differential Undercount in Census 2020, San Joaquin Valley Health Fund.

The cascade model cited above suggests that strategies for getting out the count that are focused only on self-response are imprudent.

The idea of answering about one's own family or part of one's family, but not including others who live in the residence emerged spontaneously from time to time. It will be necessary to proactively explain that lying about citizenship is not a wise strategy for risk management. Immigrant advocates and census promoters will need to make it a priority to explain that lying about one's citizenship status poses serious legal risks for both undocumented immigrants and legally resident non-citizens.

Census promotion also needs to focus on the safety of responding to enumerators as well as the desirability of self-response. This will be a steep hill to climb in gaining the confidence of San Joaquin Valley residents, many of whom have low educational attainment or may not speak common languages, like English and Spanish. However, there are those residents who would welcome assistance in filling out the census if they could receive it.

Hiring enumerators who are local, naturalized citizens and second-generation immigrants could be particularly useful in encouraging those who are fearful to respond. Distrust of the government was a strong component in the unwillingness of people to participate in the census—both with and without a citizenship question included. Local residents may be particularly well-prepared to provide authentic and effective persuasion.

There were participants who stated that they would answer an enumerator if they were at home when he knocked or if he arrived on the weekend. It would be in the best interest of the Census Bureau to develop schedules for enumerator visits on weekends or after working hours to secure responses from households where most adults work long days, every day.

In the past, outright refusal to participate in the census has been uncommon. Relying on past experience does not provide sound guidance for planning census operational efforts in 2020. Based on our research and that of others, it can be assumed refusals will be much higher in 2020. This is certainly the case if the citizenship question is included and now, quite possibly, even if it is not included (due to lingering apprehension about the purpose of the census created as a result of the Commerce Secretary's proposal). Messages to assuage fear among San Joaquin

Valley residents are essential, but it will be challenging to build trust in assurances from a federal government that is so widely and profoundly distrusted.

Going forward, those who see the value and importance of an accurate census count will need to determine how to motivate residents to participate in the 2020 Census. This effort would include the willingness and ability of the Census to engage with local and state census stakeholders, including community-based organizations that have long-standing relationships within communities that are historically hard to count.

Despite the best efforts, it is quite possible that the 2020 Census will fail to reap an accurate and complete count in the San Joaquin Valley. Efforts by the federal administration to add the citizenship question to the census may have already caused irreparable damage. California may need to plan independent targeted research, post 2020, to gain an accurate measure of 2020 Census response and evaluate the patterns of differential undercount across the state, especially in diverse immigrant populations.

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APPENDIX 1: MEDIA CHOICES

Media Preferences

The SJVCRP survey included questions about current awareness regarding Census 2020 and preferred media sources for information on public issues. Developing effective messages to promote census participation is probably a more pressing challenge than determining the best combination of media as vehicles for message delivery. Nonetheless, a short summary of survey findings regarding media preferences of those who responded about their favorite medium is worthwhile here.

Television

About one-third of the respondents (31%) mentioned TV as their preferred medium for getting information about issues such as the census. Univision was by far the most favored source of information, being the specific station favored by more than half of the respondents who identified a specific “favorite” TV station. Telemundo was a distant second.

Radio

About one out of six survey respondents (16%) identified radio as their preferred source of information on issues such as census participation. La Buena was the most commonly mentioned station. Other stations mentioned, in descending order, were Radio Bilingue and Radio Campesina.

Social Media

Social media ranked third in terms of media preferences with 14% of respondents ranking it as a favorite way to get information. The only responses specifying a specific app were those mentioning Facebook.

Personal Communication

Personal communication—face-to-face conversation, via mail, or e-mail or text—is important in information dissemination, but does not yet appear to be very important as an easily-identifiable source of information about issues such as census participation.

Community-based organizations were seldom mentioned as sources of information about issues. It is clear there is some discussion in circulation about the pros and cons of census participation, but, as noted earlier, the survey findings are that, for the moment, relatively few of the survey respondents have the census on their minds as a high-priority issue.

