



- Communicating with Respondents: Material and Sequencing in the ACS

Discussion: Nancy A. Mathiowetz

# Stepping back to move forward

- Applaud the experimentation conducted by the Census Bureau
- Step back, with fresh eyes to look respondent materials
  - Envelope
  - Letter
  - Brochure
- To what extent is the information within and across documents consistent?
- Is the most important information clearly conveyed?

# 2016 Envelope

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. CENSUS BUREAU**

1201 East 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47132-0001

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

ACS-46IM(2013) (12-2012)

The American Community Survey

**YOUR RESPONSE IS  
REQUIRED BY LAW**

**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Permit No. G-58

United States  
**Census**  
Bureau

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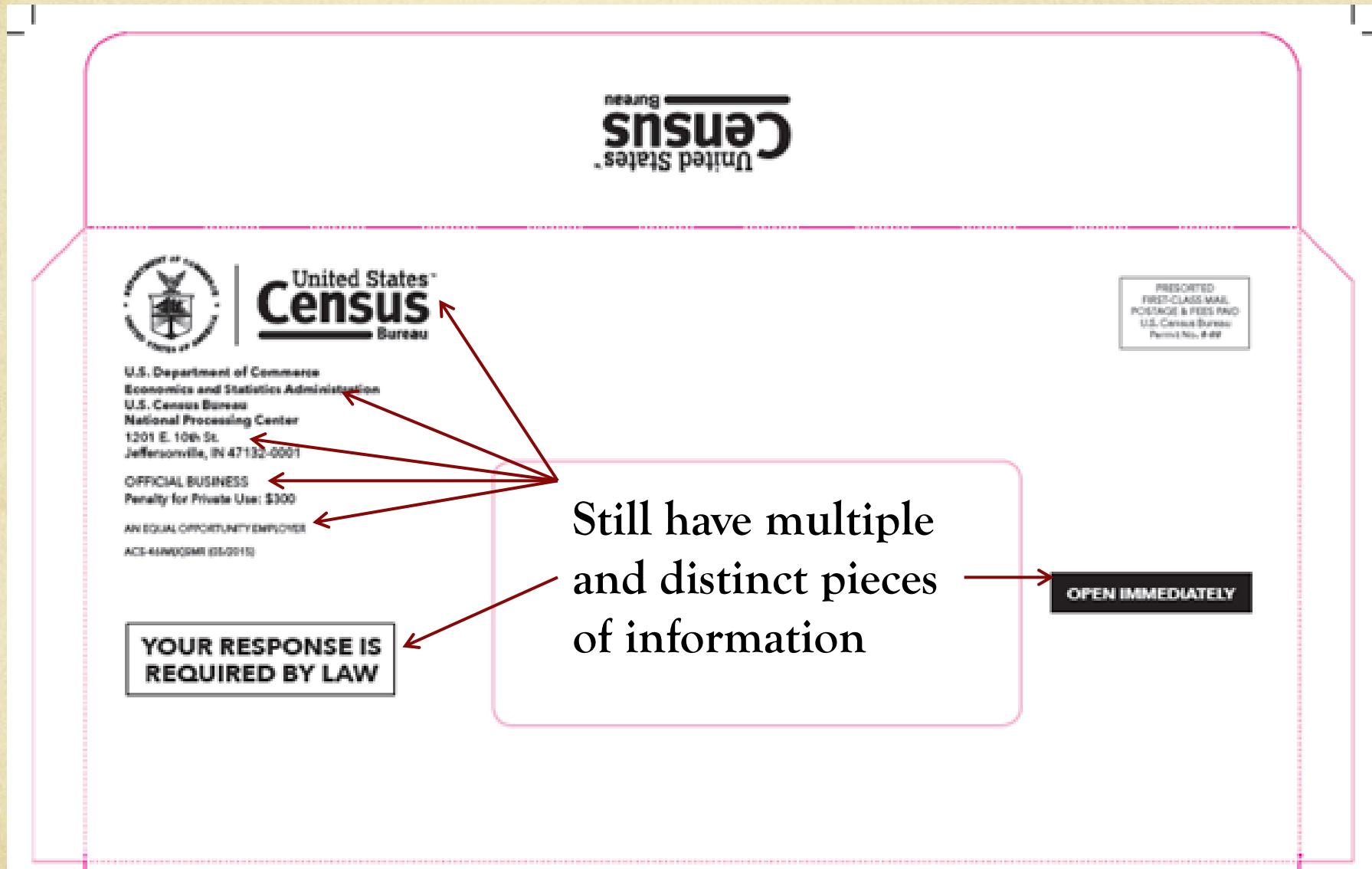
**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

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POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Permit No. G-58

Seven distinct pieces of  
information are  
included on the  
envelope.

United States  
**Census**  
Bureau

# New Envelope



ACS-13(L)(2015)  
(5-2015)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

Your household has been randomly selected to complete a very important national survey, the American Community Survey. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this survey to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live—our education, employment, housing, and more. Using the enclosed instructions, please complete the survey online as soon as possible at:

<https://respond.census.gov/acs>

The Census Bureau is using the Internet to collect this information in an effort to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process your data more efficiently. If you are unable to complete the survey online, there is no need to contact us. We will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks.

This survey collects critical information used to meet the needs of communities across the United States. For example, results from this survey are used to decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed. This information also helps communities plan for the kinds of emergency situations that might affect you and your neighbors, such as floods and other natural disasters.

The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. The enclosed brochures answer frequently asked questions about the survey.

If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John H. Thompson  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

# 2016 Initial Letter

- Density of prose?
- Visual appeal?

ACS-13(L)(2015)  
(5-2015)



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Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
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If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John H. Thompson  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

census.gov

# Importance of Language

“randomly”

1. proceeding, made, or occurring without definite aim, reason, or pattern: the *random* selection of numbers.

2. Statistics. of or characterizing a process of selection in which each item of a set has an equal probability of being chosen.

ACS-13(L)(2015)  
(5-2015)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

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The Census Bureau is using the Internet to collect this information in an effort to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process your data more efficiently. If you are unable to complete the survey online, there is no need to contact us. We will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks.

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The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. The enclosed brochures answer frequently asked questions about the survey.

If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John H. Thompson  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

# Message Consistency: Part I

“complete the survey  
online as soon as  
possible”

“...send you a paper  
questionnaire in a few  
weeks.”

ACS-13(L)(2015)  
(5-2015)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

Your household has been randomly selected to complete a very important national survey, the American Community Survey. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this survey to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live—our education, employment, housing, and more. Using the enclosed instructions, please complete the survey online as soon as possible at:

<https://respond.census.gov/acs>

The Census Bureau is using the Internet to collect this information in an effort to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process your data more efficiently. If you are unable to complete the survey online, there is no need to contact us. We will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks.

This survey collects critical information used to meet the needs of communities across the United States. For example, results from this survey are used to decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed. This information also helps communities plan for the kinds of emergency situations that might affect you and your neighbors, such as floods and other natural disasters.

The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. The enclosed brochures answer frequently asked questions about the survey.

If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-251-7271).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John H. Thompson  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

## Message Consistency: Part II

“..chose your  
address, not you  
personally...”

“You are required by  
U.S. law to  
respond...”

# Revised Letter

 **United States®  
Census  
Bureau**

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233

A Message From John H. Thompson, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

Your address has been randomly selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the **American Community Survey**. The Census Bureau conducts this survey each year to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live – including our education, housing, and jobs.

Communities across the country rely on information from this survey to decide where important services are needed, including:

- Improving roads and reducing traffic
- Building schools
- Planning for the health care needs of the elderly

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>

**Your response is required by U.S. law.** Because your household has been asked to participate on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area.

If you are unable to complete the survey online, we will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks. The Census Bureau is using the Internet to collect this information to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers money, and process data more efficiently.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call 1-800-354-7271.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,



John H. Thompson  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

American Community Survey data help determine the annual distribution of more than **\$400 billion** in federal funds to **communities nationwide**.

ACS-13(LX)SMR (5-2015)

census.gov

- Visual Appeal
- Branding
- Dropped the timing issue
- Balance of “carrot” and the “stick”
- Items to still consider
  - Address consistency—not the same as the envelope address
  - “Your response”
  - “Randomly”

# Brochure

The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting the American Community Survey

In a few days you will receive an American Community Survey questionnaire in the mail. Because you are living in the United States, you are required by law to respond to this survey. If you have questions about the form, please call us toll-free at 1-800-354-7271.

## What is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey is an important survey conducted by the Census Bureau. It is designed to give communities current information about its people and housing. In order to make well-informed decisions, a community needs accurate and reliable information. By responding to this survey, you are helping your community to get this kind of information.

## Will my answers to this survey be kept confidential?

Yes. All of the information the Census Bureau collects for this survey about you and your household is confidential by law (Title 13, United States Code).

La Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos está realizando la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense

En unos días, recibirá por correo un cuestionario de la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense. Como usted está viviendo en los Estados Unidos, la ley exige que usted responda a esta encuesta. Si tiene preguntas sobre el cuestionario, llámenos al 1-877-833-5625 para hablar con uno de nuestros empleados que habla español. La llamada es gratis. El empleado podrá contestar sus preguntas o usted podrá completar la encuesta por teléfono.

## ¿Qué es la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense?

La Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense es una encuesta importante realizada por la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos. Está diseñada para brindar información actual a las comunidades sobre las personas y las viviendas. Para poder tomar buenas decisiones, una comunidad necesita información precisa y confiable. Al responder a esta encuesta, usted está ayudando a su comunidad a obtener este tipo de información.

## ¿Serán confidenciales mis respuestas a esta encuesta?

Así es. Toda información que la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos obtenga durante esta encuesta sobre usted y su vivienda es confidencial según la ley (Título 13, Código de los Estados Unidos).

## Important Information From the U.S. Census Bureau

Información Importante de la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos



美国人口普查局  
重要通知



Thông tin quan trọng  
từ Văn phòng Thống kê  
Dân số Hoa Kỳ



Важная информация от  
Бюро переписи населения  
США



미국 인구조사국에서  
전해드리는 중요한 정보



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](http://census.gov)



Issued August 2013  
ACS-9 (2014)



United States  
**Census**  
Bureau

# Consistency, Part III: “in a few days you will receive an American Community Survey questionnaire...”



**The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting the American Community Survey**

In a few days you will receive an American Community Survey questionnaire in the mail. Because you are living in the United States, you are required by law to respond to this survey. If you have questions about the form, please call us toll-free at 1-800-354-7271.

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## Important Information From the U.S. Census Bureau



### Información Importante de la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos

### 美国人口普查局 重要通知

### Thông tin quan trọng từ Văn phòng Thống kê Dân số Hoa Kỳ

### Важная информация от Бюро переписи населения США

### 미국 인구조사국에서 전해드리는 중요한 정보

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

Issued August 2013  
ACS-9 (2014)



United States Census Bureau

BN2013 122785 PL

# Stepping back to move forward

- Not a critique of the work that has been done with respect to messaging and sequencing
- Rather, consideration of fresh eyes to reduce potentially confusing and contradictory information present in current material and build on the revisions that Eli outlined in the most recent tests