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?
Seven distinct pieces of information are included on the envelope.
New Envelope

Still have multiple and distinct pieces of information
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 (1-800-354-7277).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosures
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.
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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

• 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”
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 1-800-726-3780.

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).
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 1-800-330-1117.

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Important Information From the U.S. Census Bureau

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 1-877-733-9225 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. Todo 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

Infomación Importante de la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos

美國人口普查局

重要通知

Thông tin quan trọng từ Văn phòng Thống kê Đất sỡ Hoa Kỳ

Важная информация от Бюро переписи населения США

미국 인구조사국에서 전화드리는 중요한 정보
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