



Public SEMINAR

Changing Social Structures and the Meaning of the “Household” in Federal Surveys

Seminar to Accompany the 121st Meeting of the Committee on National Statistics

May 10, 2013 • Washington, DC



Keck Center of the National Academies, Room 100
500 Fifth Street NW

- 2:30pm Welcome
LAWRENCE BROWN, *Chair, Committee on National Statistics, and The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania*
- 2:35pm Developments at the OMB Statistical and Science Policy Office
KATHERINE WALLMAN, *Chief Statistician, U.S. Office of Management and Budget*
- 2:45pm Program: Changing Social Structures and the Meaning of the “Household” in Federal Surveys
- 2:50 ROSE KREIDER, *Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, U.S. Census Bureau*
- 3:10 NANCY BATES, *Research and Methodology, U.S. Census Bureau*
- 3:30 JUDITH A. SELTZER, *Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles*
- 3:50pm Remarks from Discussion Leader; Floor Discussion
MARGO J. ANDERSON, *Department of History and Urban Studies Programs, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*
- 4:30pm Reception—*Third Floor Atrium*



The Interagency Working Group on Measuring Relationships in Federal Household Surveys

Household surveys conducted by U.S. federal statistical agencies provide critical information on the social and economic conditions of society that inform decisions by policymakers, businesses, governments, and individuals. Demographers and academic researchers also rely on data gathered by household surveys sponsored by federal statistical agencies to describe and explain changing societal conditions. As society changes, our tools for measurement must also change and adapt in order to better capture current and future conditions.

Leading up to the 2010 census, particular questions and concerns were raised about how same-sex couples would be counted. By 2009 several states permitted same-sex marriage or civil unions, which was not the case in the 2000 census. The Census Bureau and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) received inquiries from Congress and others concerned about the household relationship questions used in the decennial census and the American Community



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
1863–2013 • Celebrating 150 Years of Service to the Nation

Survey (ACS).¹ In addition, questions were raised about editing procedures used in cases where a respondent indicated a marital relationship with another household member of the same sex.²

In an August 2009 letter, Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke requested OMB director Peter Orszag to establish an interagency task force to examine issues related to collecting and tabulating federal data on household relationships, including same-sex relationships.³

Given the timing of the request, improved measurement of household relationships could not advance quickly enough to be implemented in data collection during the 2010 census; nor was it feasible to alter the programming for the editing procedures used in preparing the 2010 census datasets. However, the Census Bureau and OMB agreed on the following steps, which have been executed:

- The Census Bureau released detailed tabulations and special reports on married and unmarried same-sex couples measured by the ACS in 2009 and the 2010 decennial census in 2011. These reports presented estimates of same-sex household relationships using data editing procedures that did not alter the self-reported marital status.⁴
- The chief statistician at OMB convened a federal interagency working group to address the larger scope challenges in measuring household relationships, including (but not limited to) same-sex couples. Because any meaningful examination of the measurement of household relationships necessitates a dialogue between agencies that use these kinds of data to develop policies or monitor and administer programs as well as the statistical agencies that collect these data, both “users” and “producers” of household relationship data would be sought to participate in the federal interagency working group.

The Interagency Working Group on Measuring Relationships in Federal Household Surveys was established in 2010, and is convened and chaired by the Statistical and Science Policy Branch of OMB. The working group includes approximately 30 representatives from a variety of federal agencies involved in the collection, dissemination and/or use of household relationship data. The Working Group is currently preparing a report intended to address the following questions: (a) How are household relationships in federal surveys currently measured?; (b) How are household relationship measures in federal surveys currently used by federal agencies?; and (c) How robust are current measures of household relationships in federal surveys?

Today’s presentations provide background and context for the work of this interagency group as well as some of the research conducted under the auspices of the group. The seminar explores themes related to the group’s broader charge to consider the complexities of the “household” and relationships within households in survey data collection.

¹Full-scale data collection in the ACS began in 2005, to permit it to replace the previous decennial census “long form” sample as a source of detailed sociodemographic and economic information about Americans.

²Long-established data editing procedures did not permit reporting of same-sex marital relationships using census data; records of persons identifying as same sex and married to each other were edited to be “unmarried partner” in the final data file.

³Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 USC 3504(e)(3)) and other legal authorities, the Director of OMB has the authority to implement Government-wide policies, principles, standards and guidelines concerning statistical collection procedures and methods, statistical data classification, and statistical information presentation and dissemination.

⁴See <http://www.census.gov/hhes/samesex/>.



About the Speakers

ROSE KREIDER is chief of the Fertility and Family Statistics Branch in the Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division of the U.S. Census Bureau. A family demographer, she held positions with Samaritan Inns, Inc., and Matrix Research Institute before joining the Census Bureau in 2000. Her work, and that of the Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, has focused on statistics on families and households, marital patterns, fertility, child care, children's living arrangements, and child well-being, including shifts in family and living arrangements during the economic recession. She has a bachelor's degree from Goshen college and received master's and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from the University of Maryland.

NANCY BATES is senior researcher for survey methodology at the U.S. Census Bureau. Research areas she has explored in her career as a survey methodologist and survey statistician at the Census Bureau include public perceptions and opinions concerning the use of administrative records in census work, survey measurement issues within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, and assessment of attempts through the media to encourage participation in hard-to-count areas in the 2010 census. She is president-elect of the Washington Statistical Society and a member of the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology, and is active in committees of the American Association for Public Opinion Research. She has a B.A. in public administration and M.A. in applied sociology both from the University of Oklahoma.

JUDITH A. SELTZER is professor of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Previously, she was on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she contributed to the development and implementation of the National Survey of Families and Households. Her research interests include kinship patterns, intergenerational obligations, relationships between nonresident fathers and children, and how legal institutions and other policies affect family change. She was part of a cross-university consortium to develop new models for explaining family change and variation and is now on the research team collecting family rosters and data on intergenerational transfers in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. She currently serves on the National Research Council's Panel to Review the 2010 Census and previously served on the Panel on Residence Rules in the Decennial Census and the Panel on the Design of the 2010 Census Program of Evaluations and Experiments. She has master's and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from the University of Michigan.

MARGO J. ANDERSON is Distinguished Professor of History and Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. During the 2012–2013 academic year, she is spending a sabbatical at the U.S. Census Bureau. A specialist in American social, urban, and women's history, she is a past president of the Social Science History Association and is a fellow of the American Statistical Association. She is author of *The American Census: A Social History* (1988), co-author (with Stephen E. Fienberg) of *Who Counts? The Politics of Census-Taking in Contemporary America* (1999), and lead editor of the first and second editions of the *Encyclopedia of the U.S. Census* (2000, 2011). She has a bachelor's degree in history from Bucknell University and master's and Ph.D. degrees in history from Rutgers University.