Comparison of Focus Group Methods and Findings among Latin American Indigenous Groups Answering Questions about Race and Identity

Leticia Fernandez, Laurie Schwede and Rodney Terry
U.S. Census Bureau

AAPOR 2015 Annual Conference
May 14-17, 2015

Disclaimer: Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.
Overview

- Overall study focused on how different AIAN populations report their race, and impact of using different question wording and instructions.
- We compare findings from two sets of focus groups conducted in Spanish with Latin American indigenous respondents, from 2010 and 2014.
- Different protocols, but one of the forms was similar across studies.
- Assess whether different approaches yielded similar insights about barriers to reporting racial membership.
The American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) population includes indigenous peoples from Mexico, Central and South America.

- In 2010 about 1 in 5 AIAN also reported as Hispanic (natives and immigrants).
- Hard to count: Racial/ethnic minority; undocumented status; linguistic minorities; low educational level.
- Barriers: Unfamiliar with ethnic/racial classification; reluctance to self-identify as indigenous.
Data Sources

- 2010 Race and Hispanic Origin Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE).
  - Three FGs in Spanish about Hispanic origin and race formats, including a *combined* format.
- 2014 FGs as part of the 2020 Census research program.
  - Two FGs in Spanish using the *combined* format to probe a variety of write-in instructions for the AIAN category.
STEM QUESTION AND EXAMPLES IN 2010 AQE FOCUS GROUPS

8. What is Person 1’s race or origin? **Mark X** one or more boxes **AND** write in the specific race(s) or origin(s).

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo, Mayan, Tlingit, and so on. ☑

STEM QUESTION AND EXAMPLES IN 2014 FOCUS GROUPS

What is your race or origin? **Mark all boxes that apply AND print your specific origin(s) in the lines below. Note, you may report multiple groups.**

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Mayan, Doyon, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, and so on.
SPANISH TRANSLATION OF TERMS IN FORMS COMPLETED BY PARTICIPANTS

2010 Focus Groups: “India Americana” (American Indian)

2014 Focus Groups: “Indígena de las Américas” (Indigenous of the Americas)
## COMPARISON OF FG PROTOCOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010 AQE FGs</th>
<th>2014 FGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In common:</td>
<td>Round robin after completion of each form.</td>
<td>Round robin after completion of first form; general probes after completion of the second form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- round robin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- meaning of race / origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other probes differed...</td>
<td><strong>General</strong> probes about the instructions and the vocabulary.</td>
<td>In addition to general probes, <strong>specific</strong> probes about interpretation of terms (question stem, racial categories, instructions, examples).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table above provides a comparison of FG protocols for 2010 AQE and 2014 FGs, including common and differing probes.*
Findings Common to Both Sets of FGs

- Participants’ difficulty in navigating and answering the form overshadowed all other findings.
  - Between 25 to 50 percent did not mark any checkboxes; some wrote something in several categories (e.g., “Mixteca” under White and “Mexican” under Black). This was not observed in other race/ethnic groups.
  - In both studies one third of participants wrote an indigenous group under AIAN.
    - In 2010 AQE: another third identified as indigenous under other categories.
¿Cuál es su raza u origen? Marque todas las casillas que apliquen y escriba en los siguientes espacios sus orígenes específicos. Tenga en cuenta que puede reportar múltiples grupos.

- **Blanco(a)** — Escriba, por ejemplo, alemán, irlandés, inglés, italiano, polaco, francés, etc.
  
  MAYA - Hispano Latino

- **Origen hispano, latino o español** — Escriba, por ejemplo, mexicano o mexicano americano, puertorriqueño, cubano, dominicano, salvadoreño, colombiano, etc.
  
  MEXICANO - Hispano

- **Negro(a) o afroamericano(a)** — Escriba, por ejemplo, afroamericano, jamaicano, haitiano, nigeriano, etíope, ghanés, etc.
  
  Hispano Americano

- **Asiático(a)** — Escriba, por ejemplo, chino, filipino, indio asiático, vietnamita, coreano, japonés, etc.

- **Indígena de las Américas o nativo(a) de Alaska** — Escriba el nombre de la tribu o tribus en las que está inscrito o las tribus principales, por ejemplo, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, maya, Doyon, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, etc.
  
  Maya

- **Del Medio Oriente o del Norte de África** — Escriba, por ejemplo, libanés, iraní, egipcio, sirio, marroquí, argelino, etc.

- **Nativo(a) de Hawaii o de otra de las islas del Pacífico** — Escriba, por ejemplo, nativo de Hawaii, samoano, guameño o Chamorro, tongano, fiyiano, marshalés, etc.

- **Alguna otra raza u origen** — Especifique.
  
  AZTECA
Findings Specific to the 2010 AQE

- Limited proficiency in Spanish more common in this group.
- Lack of familiarity with the U.S. concept of “race.”
  - Some considered their place of origin as their race (e.g. Oaxaca race).
  - Some not sure what race to report.
- Not finding a group with whom to identify.
  - Maya was the only example of Latin American indigenous groups.
Findings Specific to the 2014 FGs

- Participants did not interpreted “enrolled tribe” or “principal tribe” as intended:
  - “Enrolled tribe is the one a person belongs to, and principal tribes are the ones he or she knows about”; “Principal tribe was the original tribe, not mixed with other races.”
  - Instructions are asking “if we belong to a tribe?” “...for the names of tribes we know?” “To talk about our ancestors?”

- AIAN category perceived to apply only to U.S. natives because they have “papers to prove membership.”
  - “I am Mayan but not registered in any books”; “I did not write Tarahumara because I am not enrolled.”
Conclusions

- Main barriers – lack of familiarity with the U.S. race categories and difficulty navigating the forms.
- ‘Round robin’ not conducive to learning about sensitive topics. May have reduced spontaneity and limited range of information obtained.
  - People heard others’ responses and reconsidered their own answers.
- Both sets of FGs provided valuable insights about the range of people’s perceptions, but more specific probes yielded additional information about issues with interpretation of terms and instructions.
Thank you!

Leticia Fernandez – leticia.e.fernandez@census.gov
Laurie Schwede – laurel.k.schwede@census.gov
Rodney L. Terry – rodney.terry@census.gov