

Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), 5/29/15, Part 1

Roberto Ramirez: Well, time has arrived, so we're going to go ahead and get started. I think we're just a couple more but hopefully they'll be here and joining us for our special **day today, so good morning everyone. My name is Roberto Ramirez, and I am the Assistant** Division Chief of special population statistics in the Census Bureau of Population Division. I would like to welcome all of you to the United States Census Bureau Headquarters. This incredible building is home to some of the nation's finest researchers. They spend
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their days exploring ways to improve the measurement of our nation's people, places, and economy, and you are all here to help us with a key part of our work collecting and providing data on a diverse population of the United States. We deeply thank you for joining us today.

So before we begin note the sheet in front of you which describes the emergency safety
1:02

procedures. There's a sheet that should be right in front of you so please take a note of that. The most important to know is that if the siren sounds please leave the building as soon as possible through the emergency exits. Don't worry they'll be right behind you, but hopefully that won't happen, and we'll have a full day of interesting discussion. I'm honored to host the expert forum on ethnic groups from the Middle East and North Africa.
1:30

This forum is truly historic. The Census Bureau is committed to collecting quality data on all national origin, ethnic, and racial groups in the United States. And you know we have a long tradition of stakeholder engagement since the first racial and ethnic advisory committees were formed in the late 1970s.

This precisely why we invited you as experts and community leaders here today from across the country. We need your feedback and advice on our classification plans for a Middle Eastern
2:04

and North African category. Your feedback is very important to us as it helps us to continue our research plans for the 2020 Census. Yes we know its five years away but it actually takes about eight years to prepare for a census so I'm very happy for you all to be here. However please know that we're not seeking 100% consensus on these topics today. We recognize the rich cultural history of nationalities and ethnic groups from the Middle East and
2:31

North Africa and their important contribution to all American society over the generations. With that being said I want to remind you that this forum is not a political or religious forum. We are not here to discuss political or religious views but to collect as much feedback as possible on the classification of Middle Eastern and North African responses to the race and ethnic question on the census questionnaire.

This forum will be based on the United States life experience and not on the groups living
3:02

outside of the United States. The Census Bureau is a data collection agency and we do a fine job of doing that and we do not create policies. We are not trying to determine minority status for the Middle Eastern and North African population. Our intention is to develop the means for enumerating all people of the United States who have roots, descent, ancestry, or heritage from this region of the world to help them express their own identity within our diverse
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and complex American experience.

We need your help to accomplish this. Your feedback to us will be officially documented for the public record. Today's forum is being webcast and we'll plan to release our formal proceedings later this fall. Today's meeting not only enhances our relationship we all have making with one other but also provides us with a foundation of developing a deeper

understanding of the Middle Eastern and North African community in the United States and
4:02

the community's unique and shared characteristics.

Okay so before we begin today's presentations I would like to introduce some members of the Census staff who have worked incredibly hard to make today's forum a reality. Enrique Lamas, please stand up is our Associate Director of Demographic Programs, Karen Humes is our Division Chief of the Population Division, Nicholas Jones is the Director of the Race and Ethnic Research and Outreach, Merarys Rios is the newly appointed Chief of Ethnicity

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and Assets branch, Angie Buchanan is our Senior Analyst on Ancestry in the Ethnicity and Ancestry Branch, Rachel Marks is the analyst of Ancestry at the Ethnicity and Ancestry branch, and Beverly Pratt from the Racial Statistics branch taking notes for our forum today.

We also have several other staff members from our division as well as from the decennial management division and our colleagues from the Office of Management and Budget who are

5:00

here also with us today. Now I would like to ask you all to briefly introduce yourselves. Please state your name and affiliation as we go around the room. So I'm going to start here with Randa and then we're just going to make our way around and go to that table we go to this table, this table, and that table. So please Randa, and speak to the mic there's a little button that you just touched.

Randa Kayyali: My name is Randa Kayyali. I think I know a lot of you in this room. I

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am on the board of the Arab-American Studies Association and professor.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you.

Helen Samhan: I'm Helen Samhan and I am affiliated with the Arab-American Institute and Foundation.

Maya Berry: Maya Berry also with the Arab-American Institute.

Margaret Lowry: Margaret Lowry I am also with the Arab-American Institute.

Iman Awad: Iman Awad not with the Arab-American Institute but with the Maryland Governor's

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office for the commission on Middle Eastern American affairs.

Louise Cainkar: Louise Cainkar I am a professor at Marquette University, I am the president elect of the Arab-American Studies Association and I'm a board member of the Arab-American Action Network.

Roberto Ramirez: Excellent. Please over here.

Christina Mora: Christina Mora Associate Professor of sociology at UC Berkeley.

Germine Awad: Germine Awad Associate Professor University of Texas at Austin.

Fatma Muge Gocek: Fatma Muge Gocek Professor of sociology in women's studies University

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of Michigan Ann Harbor.

Sonia Ladjadj: Sonia Ladjadj President of the Amazigh Culture Association in America.

Soumia Aitlelhah: Soumia Aitlelhah. Boston MSO and communities in Boston.

Roberto Ramirez: Excellent, thank you.

Rita Stephan: Rita Stephan former Census employee and now with the state department.

Sally Howell: Sally Howell Associate Professor of history in Arab-American studies at the University of Michigan Dearborn.

7:02

Linda Sarsour: Linda Sarsour I'm the Executive Director at the Arab-American Association of New York.

Oren Heiman: Oren Heiman Chairman of Moatza Mekomit New York organization the umbrella organization of the Israeli community in the New York area.

Joseph Kassab: I'm Joseph Kassab I'm the President - the founder of the Iraqi Christian Advocacy of Empowerment Institute. This is my fourth decennial that I'm working on I started in 1984.

Roberto Ramirez: Oh, Thank you. Great.

7:31

Khaled Beydoun: Khaled Beydoun law professor at Barry School of Law.

Sahar Aziz: Sahar Aziz Associate Professor at Texas A&M School of Law.

John Tehranian: John Tehranian Professor of Law at Southwestern Law School.

Morad Ghorban: Morad Ghorban I'm with the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans.

Roberto Ramirez: This back table please.

Medhi Bozorgmehr: Medhi Bozorgmehr I teach sociology at the City University of New York.

Eric Ketcham: Eric Ketcham I'm in the PhD program at the City University of New York.

8:04

Yuksel Serindag: Yuksel Serindag from Kurdish American Society.

Peter Skerry: Peter Skerry I teach political science at Boston College.

Yinon Cohen: Yinon Cohen sociology and professor of sociology at Columbia University also professor of Israel and Jewish studies.

Steve Gold: Steve Gold Michigan State University sociology.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay is that everyone? Did I miss any?

8:34

Fareed Zein: Fareed Zein Board Chairman Sudanese American Public Affairs Association.

Roberto Ramirez: Great. I believe that's everyone here. So besides the ones - the experts and community leaders that we invited here today, we also have an additional 9 or 10 other ones that unfortunately couldn't join us today, and they're also providing us feedback and we're looking forward to hearing from them soon so thank you very much everyone. So please

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- for today's agenda I ask everyone to pull out their binder follow along with me.

I hope everyone in here has a binder it's really critical and important that you have one because this is feedback about what you're going to provide us today it has all the documentation in there. So Karen Humes will provide opening remarks and Helen Samhan will share a brief history of the support for the Middle Eastern and North African category of the United States, after that we'll engage in the five topical sessions you all prepared for.

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And you all will be invited to provide feedback after each session so I think that's very critical that I highlight that. This is not just about us presenting to you, we need your feedback so after each session we have a number of questions that we're going to be asking you okay? And so what we're going to do is that if you have a question or a comment we're going to ask you to put your name plaque up like this you know have it exactly like Rita right there. And then we'll call on you, but make sure everybody has a voice everybody

10:00

can say what their comments or issues are and have that discourse throughout the day okay? So after each session if you will we'll be entertaining questions and comments. Nicholas Jones will start off with Session A - testing on Middle Eastern asking category on the 2015 National Content Test then I will lead Session B - discussion on term Middle Eastern or North African. After a short break at 11 o'clock I will present Session C which focuses on the Census Bureau working classification on Middle Eastern or North African, and we will

10:34

continue that discussion after lunch.

Following that Merarys Rios will present Session D - potential data products featuring Middle Eastern and North African data. Then we will from the Director of the Census, John Thompson. Finally, I will close the forum on Session E where we'll talk about next steps as we prepare for the 2020 Census. We expect this to be an incredibly rich and robust discussion

11:00

and we plan to adjourn around 4 hopefully. We'll see how it goes right.

Now I am honored to introduce to you Karen Humes. Karen spent most of her career producing and analyzing statistics from censuses and surveys on the demographic characteristics of different populations in the United States. So offered an important historical article on the evolution of racial and ethnic categories in the US census and also has contributed

to many important census briefs and reports. We are happy that Karen was appointed as a
11:30

division chief of the population division this past year. Karen?

Karen Humes: Good morning, everyone. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the U.S. Census Bureau. The first thing that I would like to do is actually recognize the considerable efforts that have been made by members of the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on racial, ethnic, and other populations.

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Members such as Akram Khater, Morad Ghorban, Hassan Jaber, as well as Helen Samhan who is actually a former member of the Commerce Department's Decennial Census Advisory Committee. All of these members have made great contributions to our efforts to improve the quality of the race and ethnic data that we collect here at the U.S. Census Bureau.

Well since the 1980s the Census Bureau has actually collected and published data on the

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populations of Middle Eastern and North African heritage in the United States through the use of the ancestry question that was on the decennial census long form and is currently on the American Community Survey.

And so now for the first time we are testing the possible inclusion of a Middle Eastern or North African category in the race and ethnicity question for the 2020 Census. And

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we recognize that this development has really stemmed from a lot of the leadership support from many of you who are in the room today as well as from a lot of community support that has come from many of the organizations that are represented in the room today.

And really it has been over the years we've gotten guidance and feedback and great advice that has really been valuable to us as we have developed our plan for research and our plan for actually conducting outreach efforts. And so today's event is one more opportunity

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for us to get feedback from all of you to help us as we're thinking through how we want to classify Middle Eastern and North African populations for the 2020 Census.

I am very much looking forward to the engaging discussions that will go on today and I know that there may be many different points of view in the room today and that's okay. We want to hear what you guys have to say and we don't expect that there will be consensus

14:03

on every item and we don't expect there will be complete agreement on every topic that we cover and again that's okay.

We really want your feedback and to hear what you have to say because that will be valuable to us again as we're making our plans for 2020. And the Census Bureau I wanted to reiterate something Roberto said that we are committed to testing a Middle Eastern or North African category in our 2015 National Content Test which you'll hear much more about in a few

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minutes. And it's really the results of that tests along with feedback from the community and feedback from other stakeholders which will show us the way forward.

Another thing that I think is important to know is that it was the participation of the Middle Eastern and North African community that was very valuable in our overall efforts to have a successful decennial census in 2010, and we definitely plan to continue that partnership

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and that collaboration as we prepare for 2020.

So once again I would like to welcome all of you to the U.S. Census Bureau I hope that you enjoy your day here with us, and I want to deeply thank you for giving us your time, your energy, and your wisdom today. So with that I would like to turn things over to Helen Samhan who as she mentioned earlier affiliated with Arab-American Institute and Helen will

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come up and give us a brief history of the support for a Middle Eastern and North African category.

Helen Samhan: Thank you Karen and hello to everybody. My job this morning is to provide a little bit of context and historical overview of how we got to where we are today. And I'm speaking mostly as an advocate in the Arab-American community, and I know that many of you in the room represent other constituencies, but I will share the work that we have done as

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Arab-Americans and then have expanded to include others in the region.

So our work first began in the 1980s as advocates for the ancestry question. I got involved in the mid-80s to try to better capture data on Arab-Americans, and we've been a national partner with the Census Bureau in each decennial census since 1990.

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In the mid-90s the Arab-American community was offered a seat on the Decennial Advisory Committee and that seat was held by ADC for - until from 1994 until 2011. And after 2011 when the Advisory Committee was reorganized then new Decennial Advisory Committee - I'm sorry can I get some water.

The new advisory committee on racial and ethnic and special populations now include 3 seats

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that represent the various MENA regions. In the 1990s there was a question about retaining the ancestry question on the decennial census form. So we formed a working group on ancestry in the U.S. Census. Thank you. Okay - and that working group lobby Congress basically

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to save the ancestry question.

And in 2001 we applied to the census information center. So the Arab-American Institute became the first and only organization that was a repository for data on Arab ancestry in the United States and AAI has been a census information center ever since.

In 2010 we sort of changed gears because in 2010 it was the first short form only census

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and that meant in the outreach for the decennial census there was no opportunity for people from either Arab-Americans or from other MENA region, there was no opportunity for them to identify on the form.

So many organizations encouraged their members to basically use some other race category to self-identify of their own ethnic or racial identification and that really produced a

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lot of data that Census Bureau was able to see. People who felt that the existing racial categories - the undifferentiated racial categories were not really responsive to who they felt that they were so many people filled in the some other race category and the Census Bureau has had a chance to analyze that data.

After they had the chance to analyze that data they invited the first community briefing

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of people from the Middle East region organizations and that happened in 2011 thanks to Rita Stephan who helped organize that. And it was really that meeting in 2011 that kicked off the current campaign to push for testing on people from the MENA region, and we've been working really hard ever since then.

We formed a coalition many of you in the room are part of that coalition and some of you have not yet joined our advocacy group, but we have some common positions and beliefs

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that we would like to share this morning before our meetings gets off. And then one other important development I think to mention is that we got very serious attention from the Census Bureau.

We've had a number of meetings with the director, with the senior staff, and we were invited by the Office of Management and Budgets Interagency Committee on race and ethnic measurement to make a presentation last summer on the importance of testing Arab-American category. And the

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one central goal in all of this outreach and advocacy work is to improve participation in the census, to get more data - better data and that will be of use to service organizations

and researchers. Next slide.

So what we do know from the ancestry question is that we - the ancestry question reveals that there are about 3.2 million people in the United States with origins in the MENA

20:36

region. Our definition - our coalition's definition of the MENA region is all of the Arab countries, Israel, Iran, Turkey, and all of the minority communities that reside in the Middle East.

That is our working definition.

We're going to be talking of course more today about the working definition that the Census Bureau will use. And we've already said that the ancestry data is - while it's not very robust it's not tabulated in the same way that race and ethnic data are tabulated, however

21:05

we do learn some things from the ancestry data. And we learn for example that people from the MENA region have characteristics that differ from the overall white population which is where our data is subsumed.

For example, family size in the MENA population is larger than the overall white population.

There is a considerably lower percentage of native born population; 52% of the MENA communities

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are native born versus 97% of the overall white population. There's a higher percentage of households with where English is spoken less than very well.

In the overall white population it's 2%. In the MENA population it's 22% and then our community tends to be younger than the overall white population. Our median age is 32 and the average white age is 42. Next slide.

What you see here is another thing that we learned from the ancestry data and that is

22:01

the composition of the MENA communities. And it's important to note that this is based on ancestry data from the most recent 3-year I think it's the 2011 to 2013 ACSF, and we have - we show you this so that you can see the proportionality of the various communities.

Now you'll notice that aside from the two large communities the Lebanese and the Iranian there's a rather large piece of the pie that is just Arab, Arabic and that is an interesting

22:35

indication I think for a lot of researchers because this is all self-identification. This means that someone wrote that on the form, and I think it's so interesting to use these self-identification as measures of changing identities as well.

Next slide. I wanted to spend a few minutes just to talk about what we believe in our coalition and the MENA category does. One is it's really a very rare opportunity to

23:02

get accurate on the U.S. populations. It will provide 100% data as opposed to the limited data of the sample surveys and it will improve data quality.

We believe that the boundaries should reflect the most practical, inclusive definition of population who share common US integration experiences and service needs. Next slide.

What the MENA category from our perspective what the MENA category does not do is it does

23:34

not confer or alter primary ethnic identity because we believe that because it's based on self-identification we believe that we will still get all the detailed data that we want on subgroups however it's going to be presented under a regional heading.

We are not proposing a new identification for people from the Middle East. The MENA is also - it's a regional designation that actually originates in the office of management and budget. It is the way the Caucasian race is currently defined as people from Europe,

24:06

the Middle East, and North Africa. So the MENA region really comes from that and it is not - as I think Roberto mentioned it's not philosophical, political, historical term.

And the final thing is important to notice that we believe that it's really not a racial identification as well. People from the MENA region like people of Hispanic origins can identify with any and many or all races. And the final thing that's on the slide is that

24:36

this MENA category testing is actually an initiative of the Federal Government. It is something that the community has proposed and in this climate of surveillance and security I think there will be many people in our communities who are suspicious you know why is the Census Bureau all of a sudden collecting data on people from the Middle East region and that suspicion is well founded.

But we believe that on balance the data that we will collect from this category is worth

25:04

and it's up to us as advocates and researchers to make sure that the data is used for good purposes. Next slide. The recommended scope of our coalition is that we believe it should people with origins in the geographic boundaries of all the member nations of the Arab states which means not only North African Arab states but subherent African Arab states.

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We believe that the Arabic language is more of an important unifier than the continental position of the country. So we believe Somalia, Sudan, Mauritania, that people from those regions should be grandfathered into the MENA region because they have more in common with people from the MENA region than they do with the other Africans. And of course we believe that it should include the other non-Arab countries of the Middle East Iran, Israel,

26:01

Turkey, and we also believe it should include all ethnic minorities and subgroups that reside in the region, the kurds, the Syrians et cetera.

Next slide. This data actually does not come from the Census Bureau, this comes from the immigration statistics and we thought it was important for you to see that over the last 25 years there's been some interesting spikes in immigration from MENA countries and these

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five countries are the fastest growing countries from the MENA region where people are settling. So you'll see that over the past 5 years while this shows a bit of trend over time when you add up by each country of origin over the 25 years people from Iraq have - there have been 212,000 immigrants and refugees from Iraq. From Egypt 155,000, Somalia 138,000,

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Morocco 78,000, and Sudan 60,000. When you add up all the MENA countries over the 25-year period it's over 1.5 million immigrants and refugees just from that period alone.

Next slide. The slide that you see here is not going to be in your binders but this is the way that our coalition had proposed to the Census Bureau to test the MENA ethnicity

27:32

question. Our belief was that it would be more recognizable to people if we presented it alongside Hispanic origin as an ethnicity and then people can choose whatever racial identity they would like.

We're going to be discussing the way in which the Census Bureau is going to be testing, and even though we understand this may not be in the cards we wanted to share with you that this our proposed method of testing. Next slide.

28:03

So the last slide has to do with the examples that we recommend to be used in the testing this September. Currently and we'll talk about that a lot today currently the methodology of the Bureau is to use the largest groups represented in the U.S. ancestry data. We believe however that it's more important to have examples that show the diversity of the

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people from the region. So instead of having the largest countries from the Middle East and the largest countries from North - meaning the largest populations.

We believe it's important to have the breath and scope of the populations from this region.

So we are proposing that for the largest communities which are Lebanese and Syrian we think Lebanon should be a good example. We believe there should be a North African example, Egypt is the largest. We think it's important to have a Sub-Saharan Arab country also used as an

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example such as Sudan or Somalia.

The Arabian Gulf - the Arabians peninsula I should say is also underrepresented in any examples. We think that Yemen which has a large community here should be used as an example. The non-Arab MENA countries, Iran is clearly the largest of those.

We think that that should be an example and finally we think that one of the subnational ethnicities like Syrian or Chaldean should be used as an example because that indicates
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people who are not from a nation state but are from a distinct ethnic community within those nation states should see themselves in the examples. And with that I'm going to thank you for your attention and I look forward to a good discussion.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you Helen for sharing your important perspective with us today. Okay so how many of you does this light up here bother - can you guys see the slides
30:03

okay. Is it blinding is it bothering you? I see many of you squinting and I had someone - I agree because - there you go. How about that is that better? Okay we can leave that one on over there. I think I'm fine with that.

Okay I just want to make sure that you can see me of course and then see the slides and see the presenters up here. Okay all right.

Woman (off camera): Will we be provided copies?
30:34

Roberto Ramirez: Yes. Everything that you see today we'll provide copies obviously after forum and there will be - or at least our presentations will be available online, but we certainly can distribute Helen's PowerPoint as well to everyone here. We have everyone's e-mail list.

Okay, so now I would like to introduce Nicholas Jones who will lead us in our first discussion session, Session A testing on Middle Eastern or North African Category on the 2015 National
31:00

Content Test. Nicholas was recently appointed as a Director of race and ethnic research and outreach in the Census Bureau population division after serving 6 years as Chief of the racial physics branch.

Nicholas is the key leader of the Census Bureau with extensive research to explore alternative ways and approaches for collecting data on race and ethnicity which has you know started with the 2010 census alternative questionnaire experiment or the AQE which we'll probably a lot about today. And he's the leading - our ongoing efforts for racial and ethnic research
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and outreach in preparation for the design of the 2020 Census. Please help me join Nicholas.

Nicholas Jones: Thanks Roberto. Good morning everyone. I'm really pleased and excited to be here with you today as we talk about this important work. This important gathering for our work is important not only for the Census Bureau but for our nation's work to provide data on communities in Middle Eastern and North African heritage.
32:00

32:00

This morning I'm going to provide an overview of the public comments that we've received this year on our testing plans for the 2015 National Content Test to include a Middle Eastern and North African category. And I'll also provide you with an overview of the plans for our research with the 2015 National Content Test.

But before we talk about our research efforts it's really important that we frame the context for today's discussions. So on the next slide to help you prepare for the discussions we provided reference materials such as the 1997 US Office of Measurement and Budget or OMB
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race and ethnic standards.

Merarys this afternoon will talk about these standards in more detail during Session D, but to help us set the context for today's discussions it's important that we go over the Federal Government's definition of the white racial category.

As you can see on the slide this is the definition that pertains to the current racial classification

of Middle Eastern groups and North African groups in the United States. White defined as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North
33:01

Africa, and note the importance of the concept original peoples in the white racial definition. This is the philosophy behind the current Federal Government definitions for this category our coding procedures, our tabulation procedures for responses to the race question. This is why detailed responses such as German or Lebanese or Egyptian are coded currently as part of the white racial category. Merarys will talk about this and more examples during our afternoon session. Now as you undoubtedly know by now this is not a new topic of discussion
33:33

we had some great introductory remarks by Helen to help us get the context for where we are today.

As Helen mentioned in fact the OMB and the Census Bureau and other Federal statistical agencies contemplated the inclusion of a category for persons of Arab or Middle Eastern heritage during the 1990s. During the mid-1990s OMB received a number of request from the public to add a category for Arabs or Middle Easterners so that useful data could be obtained for monitoring discrimination.

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However the public comment process during that period indicated there was no agreement on a definition for this category and a new category was not created. As part of the 1997 OMB recommendations OMB advised that further research should be done to determine the best way to improve data for this population group. And over the past decade and a half OMB and the Federal statistical system have continued to face many challenges including a growing number of population groups who find the current race and ethnic classification system confusing

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if not irrelevant to their own experience or who wish to see their own group highlighted on a specific questionnaire. Leading up to the 2010 census as Helen mentioned many communities including Iranians, Arabs, Brazilians, Hispanics, Jamaicans and many others raised concerns about how they should identify what the questions on race for the 2010 census and they launched campaigns to advise members of their community on how to answer the questions mainly by filling in and writing their own identities on the some other race category.

35:02

These concerns were a major imputes for the research that we undertook at the Census Bureau in 2010. As Roberto mentioned our 2010 census alternative questionnaire experiment research on race and Hispanic origin. This comprehensive effort explored ways to improve the accuracy and the reliability of the results by expanding our understanding of how respondents self-identify given the context of different questions that we pose.

Our goals were to improve the data that we collect and the data that we tabulate for the United States. A key component of the AQE research was a series of qualitative focus

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groups 67 that took place around the country that were commissioned as supplement and compliment the data that we collected quantitatively. These focus groups are racially and ethnically and geographically diverse and 6 of our focus groups were with respondents of Middle Eastern and North African heritage in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC. The AQE research provided us with insights to issues respondents have with the questions.

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They also helped us understand the reasons behind these issues, and we learned that many participants across all the focus groups felt the inclusion of the examples Egyptian and Lebanese in the white racial category was wrong and inaccurate.

These comments were also connected to the recommendation that there be a separate category for those who would identify as Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab. In addition to this important research the Census Bureau's engagement in consultation efforts with external stakeholders such as yourselves or advisors, researchers, and community organizations they've informed

36:33

and contextualized the work that we're doing today.

For example in July of 2013 the Census Bureau and OMB received a formal letter from the Arab American Institute and 25 co-signing organizations and researchers requesting a Middle Eastern and North African category be tested for the 2020 Census. In response to this request the Census Bureau started conducting research on the classification of responses from the Middle East and North Africa and sought advice from stakeholders

37:00

which we'll discuss with you in a few minutes.

So what has happen over the past year? Last summer the Census Bureau's national advisory committee on racial, ethnic, and other populations recommended that the Census Bureau should test a separate Middle Eastern or North African category within the race and ethnicity questions. Last fall the Census Bureau officially announced that a Middle Eastern or North African category would be tested as part of the 2015 National Content Test key dimensions.

37:30

Over the winter the notice for public comment across the United States was published in the Federal register notice and public comment resulted in extensive feedback. Meanwhile our staff worked on extensive research to understand how currently different Federal agencies, organizations, and research universities in the United States classify this region of the world in terms of a working definition for this category.

All of this while planning and developing this exciting forum that we have for you today and we're so pleased to be here and to get your feedback.

38:02

Next I'm going to talk about the notice for public comment on the plans for the 2015 National Content Test which was published in the Federal register on December 2nd. The Census Bureau alerted members of our national advisory committee and hundreds of other stakeholders and advisors and research colleagues and community leaders across the country about the release of the federal register notice and the request for public feedback.

In addition we shared this message during our public briefings last fall and last winter and our ongoing research and engagement helped elicit public comments on the research plans.

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Late last year we developed the 2015 National Content Test pre-submission materials for the U.S. Department of Commerce to publish this federal register notice or FRN.

The FRN presented the overall objectives for the 2015 National Content Test. The notice described the research dimensions for 2020 Census content which were being addressed in the research, that being race and ethnicity, relationship and within household coverage.

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The FRN also requested public feedback on the research plans.

All of the comments that we received from the public were reviewed by Census Bureau experts, responses were developed to address each of the different topics and these responses are included in a briefing document describing the 2015 NCT plans and the public comments received on the test which are currently under review by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for approval.

The responses will be made public later this year, and today we'll brief you on the feedback

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that we've received. Public comments came in from around the country from individuals, from organizations, and from groups of people who collaborated together to submit their comments.

Many of you in the room submitted comments, and we're really happy with that. We received 4,550 submissions about the testing plans through the Federal register process. These submissions generally contained one or two comments about the test but many were multi-page letters that provided extensive feedback on different aspects on the test. In total these

40:04

submissions included a total of 13,116 comments.

Now our graphic illustrates how one submission might contain one, or two, or three individual distinct comments reviewed and analyzed all of those submissions and categorized all the comments into various topics. In the end we had 58 different topics for which we've received submissions. And today I'll walk you through the major public comment topics and talk about
40:32

how we're addressing them in the research.

We received a total of 4,509 submissions relating to testing on Middle Eastern or North African category. These submissions included a total of 12,293 comments covering 11 different topic areas. Now we also received comments on 47 other topic areas but as you can tell the vast majority of these comments were about testing and Middle Eastern or North African category.

We received other comments related to relationship, other aspects of the race and ethnicity question
41:04

within household coverage, language, and other aspects of the test, but again the vast majority of these comments were about testing a Middle Eastern or North African category.

Next I'm going to talk about some of those highlights. The largest topic within the comments 4,473 comments expressed strong support for testing on Middle Eastern or North African category. We received thousands of submissions from around the country expressing support
41:30

for this category and detailing why this data is critical for this community.

In comparison 15 comments did not support testing a category. The second major set of comments was 3,727 comments expressed strong disagreement with the classification of Middle Eastern or North African as white which as you know is how these responses are currently classified in Federal statistics on race.

The third major set of comments, 3,301 comments advised the Census Bureau that this population
42:01

is racially diverse. Additionally 737 comments offered suggestions for the inclusion or exclusion of various countries or ethnic groups as being part of the Middle Eastern or North African category.

As you know, we plan to test in the 2015 National Content Test a category of Middle Eastern or North African, and the results of the 2015 NCT research will inform recommendations on the potential inclusion of this category for the 2020 Census.

42:30

So in summary our responses to these public comments are currently under review with OMB and part of the clearance process for the 2015 NCT research plans. The responses will be made public later this year, and we're confident that our plans provide a strong foundation for examining the issues and the topics raised by public comments for testing a Middle Eastern or North African category and also allowing us to explore new designs for the questions on race and ethnicity. We'll continue to meet with stakeholders and advisors such as yourselves throughout the years as we talk about research and findings, and we
43:04

embrace these discussions. They're not only important for us as part of this preparation of the 2015 NCT but they provide a strong foundation for the 202 census.

Now as I mentioned before, and I want to reiterate this our engagement not our discussions with advisors, with stakeholders, and with colleagues like yourselves has really helped inform where we are today and our plans for the 2015 National Content Test. We're very excited about our prospective research this year which will help us address many of the major two comments
43:30

that we heard from the public, and next I'm going to talk with you in detail about the plans for the NCT.

The Census Bureau's 2015 National Content Test or NCT will begin in the late summer of 2015 just a few months away with the Census day of September 1st. We'll be using a national representative sample with oversampling of key population groups. This sample will include 1.2 million households in the United States and we'll have an oversample with specifics

that are under development, but we wanted to note that for the first time ever this

44:01

will include oversampling of the Middle Eastern and North African population in the United States.

What we plan to accomplish through the NCT is to test key content areas related to race and ethnicity, relationship, and within household coverage, and as you may be aware by early 2017 not too far away the 2020 Census topics are due to be submitted to Congress with the final wording for these questions due to Congress in April of 2018.

The 2015 National Content Test is our primary mid-decade opportunity to compare different

44:34

types of content strategies prior to making decisions and recommendations for the 2020 Census content. Through this test we'll also continue looking at our context strategies for optimizing self-response particularly Internet response building on test that we've done in 2014 and earlier this year.

The NCT will include a re-interview operation to further assess the accuracy and the reliability of this data based on alternative questions for race and ethnicity. The re-interview sample

45:01

will include approximately 100,000 cases to help us do this, and the Internet - I'm sorry the NCT is a self-response test only I wanted to note that it will not have a non-response interview follow up component.

So what are our goals? As we prepare for the 2020 Census and our mid-decade research and testing we're exploring 4 key dimensions. These research dimensions build upon the successful results from the 2010 AQE, the first dimension being question format.

45:30

As we continue to do this testing we're researching the separate questions approach for race and Hispanic origin as well as the combined question approach which we'll talk about in a few minutes.

The second dimension of our research examines the response categories by exploring how to collect and tabulate data for respondents of Middle Eastern and North African origin.

The third dimension pertains to the wording of the questions themselves and also the question terminology that we use by examining ways to optimize detailed reporting and to improve respondent understanding of the options that they have to report multiple race and ethnic

46:03

groups.

The fourth dimension is using web-based technology with the Internet, with smart phones, tablets, with telephone questionnaire assistance to really enhance the designs that we have that can help us go much more beyond paper and to optimize reporting of detailed racial and ethnic groups.

So before I continue I want to draw your attention to this slide. On the left-hand-side we have one of the panels representing a separate questions approach that we explored during the 2010 AQE. This has a Hispanic origin question and a race question. On the right-hand of

46:34

this slide we have one of the panels representing a combined question approach for race and ethnicity that we explored during the 2010 AQE.

When the 2010 AQE research was conducted we announced and we explained that we were emphasizing

and we were looking for research strategies. We were testing not to pick the question for 2020 10 years ahead of time, but to really help us understand how we can move forward with successful work. We also advised and we expected to continue to do this research

47:01

during the decade to build upon the successes of the AQE in order to make recommendations for 2020.

Building upon these successful results the 2015 National Content Test will further evaluate the separate questions approach and the combined question approach that you see here as Dimension 1. These approaches will be tested with and without a distinct Middle Eastern and North

African category, and the results in the findings of the NCT will inform recommendations to OMB and the Federal Interagency Committee on the question design format for the 2020
47:34

Census.

As most if not all of you know we announced last fall again this is 2015 will evaluate the use a Middle Eastern or North African category. This is Dimension 2 of our research. We considered many different design approaches for these questions in our work over the past year including suggestions like the one that Helen showed earlier and other ideas that we've received from various groups around the country.

We developed and qualitatively tested question designs to collect data for both major categories
48:04

such as White, Black, Asian, Middle Eastern or North African but also to collect that detailed data for groups such as Cuban, Samoan, Egyptian, Somalian. We're testing a number of different options for the NCT, and we've provided other examples in the reference materials in your notebooks.

The point I want to emphasize here with this slide is that for Dimension 2 of this research we're testing alternative approaches for including or excluding a distinct Middle Eastern or
48:31

North African category. This slide example provides two of those dimensions that we're looking at. The image on the left includes Middle Eastern or North African examples such as Lebanese and Egyptian as part of the White racial category.

The image on the right places a distinct Middle Eastern or North African category among the options for selecting one or more of the race or origin groups. The third dimension of our race and ethnic research for the NCT is to evaluate the use of alternative instruction
49:03

wording and terminology for improving respondent understanding of the questions that we're asking and the options that they have to report. So for example recent qualitative research showed us that the instruction to mark X one or more boxes is frequently overlooked by respondents. Many stop reading the instruction after seeing that visual cue of an X and they do that, they mark one box. They don't read the rest of the instruction that says they can mark one or more boxes they've overlooked it.

49:31

We found through our research and our qualitative work that we're testing alternative instruction wording to mark all boxes that apply removing the X and noting that people may report more than one group in an effort to really improve the clarity of the question to help respondents understand that they can mark more than one group, and they can select as many that would apply.

In our research we'll also evaluate the use of alternative terminology to describe these concepts and these questions of race, ethnicity, and origin and based on positive result from
50:00

our work this year we're looking at qualitative testing which showed another approach as promising to ask an open-ended question. Which categories describe you? We found that respondents don't have an issue with understanding what this means and they usually don't - they're finding that they can find what the question is asking for them to report without using the words race, ethnicity, or origin so we're testing that as well.

Finally with the advantage of new technology to collect data via web-based designs the 4th dimension of our research is to test the combined question with detailed checkboxes
50:33

for soliciting detailed racial and ethnic origins. Now this web-based design is not just limited to the Internet, you don't have to only do it on your computer at home or in your office. It will also enable people to answer the questions for the census on your smart phone, on your tablet using a call-in feature with telephone questionnaire assistance over the phone. The approach for web-based design provide the series of screens to collect all of the data that we're looking for major groups such as White, Hispanic, Middle Eastern

or North African, Black, Asian et cetera but also for detail groups like Samoans, Iranian,
51:05

Philippine, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and Irish.

On the initial screen that you see here we collect data on the major categories via a checkbox and examples. These are shown for the 6th largest detail groups representing the geographic diversity of the OMB group's definition. So for example if a respondent were to click here that they are Middle Eastern or North African and then click next they'll find that for the categories that received they get a subsequent screen which presents

51:34

several detailed checkbox options and a dedicated write-in area where they can provide additional responses.

So in our example where the respondent clicked that they were Middle Eastern or North African a follow-up screen collects their detail groups such as Iranian or Moroccan and the respondents can enter more additional information to represent multiple groups such as Iraqi or Palestinian.

And after they click next similar screens will collect data for all communities such

52:01

as Samoan, Irish, Mexican, et cetera.

Detailed data for the major OMB categories contain dozens or even hundreds of different national origin and ethnic groups, however our analysis of recent decennial census data and the American community survey data show that for most major OMB categories and their populations in the United States a handful of detail groups represent the vast majority of their respective population.

Our research identified the largest groups in the United States reported for which these

52:33

different geographic regions are represented and we referenced each of them in the OMB race and ethnic definitions. In our design our goal is to provide equity and balance.

This is for the approach for collecting categories, the examples that we use, and our design rationale for soliciting detail groups.

In order to provide sufficient examples and also ensure that the groups which had check boxes on the 2010 Census forum are represented in our new designs we include 6 examples for

53:00

each category to represent the diversity of that OMB definition for the group and we list them by population size order from largest to smallest.

We'll talk about how we identified the examples for Middle Eastern and North African groups in the next few slides. This graphic shows a special tabulation from the 2013 American community survey data on ancestry from Middle Eastern responses and for North African responses.

The yellow bars at the top represent the largest Middle Eastern ancestries reported in the

53:32

United States in 2013 and the blue bars represent the largest North African ancestries reported in the United States.

What we see here is that the three largest Middle Eastern ancestries reported were Lebanese, Iranian, and Syrian, and the three largest North African ancestries reported were Egyptian, Moroccan, and Nigerian. We used these six groups together in our NCT panels to represent Middle Eastern responses and North African responses for the categories that we're testing.

54:04

Now taking a closer look this image shows the Middle Eastern or North African category that we're employing in our research designs. We utilize a major checkbox with the category named Middle Eastern or North African along with six examples groups and a dedicated writing space for respondents to enter their detailed ethnicity such as Lebanese or Egyptian.

We've presented our plans for testing this new Middle Eastern or North African category

54:32

to many of our research colleagues, the stakeholder groups, and the advisors over the past 6 months, and we've received great feedback and encouragement for this research. We're very interested in hearing your feedback today. To start the conversation we've posed three discussion

questions that relate to our plans for moving towards the 2020 Census with this research. The first question is do you have a preference for the combined question approach or the separate question approach for race and Hispanic origin. The second question is do you think

55:01
that the Middle Eastern and North African responses should be classified as white. The third question is what do you think about the example shown in the Middle Eastern or North African category on the questionnaire.

So when you have a comment I'd ask that you please turn your name placard on its side so that we can see each of you that have a question, and I'll call on you in turn as we go through the discussion. Okay so you can go ahead and turn your placard up. I'm

55:30
going to start over here with Louise and please remember to click your mic and the red light will come one.

Louise: I just want to say I find very disturbing that Black people from the MENA region have been excluded - I don't know why people from Black - majority Black countries have been excluded from the category of MENA in your definition and I don't understand why that is being done, and I don't agree with it.

56:00

Nicholas Jones: Okay. So Louise thank you for your comment. In the next session what we're going to talk about specifically is the classification that we've come up with in terms of how currently agencies, universities, and organizations categorize the group Middle Eastern or North African.

We're going to get into an extensive dialogue about the groups that are currently in that definition and we want to get your feedback in that session about why you suggest that other groups should be included. That's the feedback that we're looking for there. So I want to ask that we hold that until we present the next topic, and really we will dig into

56:33

that concept.

What I wanted to say about the reporting self-identification when we show these examples for reporting one or more groups we're looking for people to report any and all the responses that they have so if they see themselves as a Black Middle Eastern respondent they can report that in the question and have that data tabulated. We're looking to see through the different types of questions that we pose whether we're getting that accurate reporting from the reinterview or if we're finding that people who are for example black and Middle Eastern don't report

57:01

it because of the different options that we presented.

Louise: So can I comment on Dimension 4.

Man: Yes. Do you mind going to that slide for Dimension 4.

Louise: I just think that if you have - if you put MENA in the race category here and people are - you have Somali as an example for black then is the Somali likely to check the MENA category? I mean realistically are people likely to check both categories?

Nicholas Jones: And that's exactly what we're trying to find out from this research. So

57:30

given the examples that we use, given the placements that we have all of the definitions are what currently roots our classification system. So for example with the Black population being defined as the Black racial groups of Africa, those are the population groups that we have looked to from the data to provide examples of with white being defined as Middle Eastern, North African, or European that's where we make the distinction currently for this research.

What we're trying to find out is how to respondents react to that given an option where Somali

58:01

may be part of that definition as an example maybe another group is not. How will you respond not only if you're Somali if you're Sudanese if you're Ethiopian, Nigerian where are people reporting their detailed origin and then what do we learn from that when we have the re-interview.

That's exactly what this research is going to show us. We don't have the answers yet but we know those are the complexities that we're looking into to see what will happen. Thank you for your comment. Randa.

58:30

Randa: I might suggest that going back to the Dimension 4 screen that if you're rethinking what you're going to term it as so instead of saying for race initial screen for race and ethnicity. You know that maybe isn't the right term.

Nicholas Jones: Right and we're looking at that too. So when I mentioned for example in the third dimension of this research we're testing the use of race, ethnicity, origin, and none of those terms on all different types of variations. So the four dimensions they

59:03

cross.

So when we have Dimension 1 separate versus combined that's going to have a MENA category it's going to have MENA category Dimension 2. It will have different terminology, different instructions across these dimension. We will also a web-based designed and paper design. So we're showing you one example of what we're testing, but keep in mind that all those dimension are being crossed so that we'll find if you have an open ended question does that get us more accurate data compared to when we call it race or ethnicity or origin.

59:32

Randa: Or do people tend to just check one box even online because I think for me that's one of the concerns is that online you're sort of used to just checking one answer yes no or whatever.

Nicholas Jones: And that's what we're looking to try to test different instructions where we already know from our research that the mark X one or more has shown has shown that respondents mark one so we're looking for the mark all that apply to see if that will provide us an improvement both on paper and on Internet and then we're going to be able

60:01

to analyze that to see what the results are.

So these are the dimensions we don't have the answers yet, but from the work that we've been doing we expect that we can find improvements by tweaking what we're asking, how we're presenting

it, and then look to get the feedback. I have a question from Christina and I'm going to make my way around the room so please keep your placard up. Christina?

Christina: Okay. In regards to the first discussion question about the combination or the separation

60:36

and thinking about the Dimension 1 slide about the separate or the combined, I know that there's a large movement among Latino advocates and within the Hispanic population to do the

61:02

combined and not keep a separate sort of Hispanic question in large part because within the Hispanic population if you invert the sort of logic many of them don't see them as covered by Whites, Black, Native American or what not. Many of them see look you know as a racialized category.

Now keeping that in mind and thinking about the MENA category is there an option - so we're thinking one option would be the combined but I'm also thinking about the Helen slides would there be an option then of just a separate MENA question if the Hispanic becomes part

61:38

of the combined?

Roberto Ramirez: So that's a great question absolutely. And actually that's one of the reasons why we actually we're testing a combined approach because exactly what she's talking about. The historical separate question the ethnicity and race question has been very very problematic for the Latino population actually.

Increasingly they are not finding themselves in the race questions as you said they'll

62:00

usually just report they're Latino again, they'll say I'm Mexican and they'll say they're

Mexican again or they'll just leave the race question blank.

So one of the design strategies that came out of the AQE is that perhaps we need to combine these race and ethnicity category into one. We were concerned about having a separate MENA ethnicity question because we thought we were going to have the same issues. In fact according to our AQE focus groups, I know you can't generalize focus group findings but we did do a number of focus groups as Nicholas said during the 2010 census with

62:33

the AQE and consistently many of the participants said I don't find myself here I prefer a separate category within these categories here. And then oftentimes when we did present a MENA category they found themselves really easily in the combined style approach.

Christina: So I guess I just want to highlight the...

Nicholas Jones: Can you speak into the mic.

Christina: Sure. I guess I just want to highlight the difficulty of the two logics. On the one logic you would have this is a multi-racial population so that's also some of the ways

63:02

that people describe the Latino population, but on the other hand if you say that then there's some sort of basic assumption that the categories - the racial categories that exist sort of would cover most of the population at hand. So I think it's just that difficulty of keeping in mind.

Nicholas Jones: And thank you for your comments. These are the complexities that we're working with. So we know for example from the AQE work where we had a combined question approach that people more readily found themselves. We also found that multiple reporting was higher in the combined question because people saw the ability to check more than one box.

63:34

It was a much cleaner presentation they weren't hung up on the separate distinctions between race and origin. So these are the things that are really encouraging where we're thinking....

Roberto Ramirez: And we don't want to steal Merarys thunder because in her presentation we're exactly going to go over a couple of scenarios about that, what happens if they check White and Black or MENA and Black or MENA and White and so those are one of the things that we're highlighting in this test that we're doing that we're encouraging improving or instructions pretty well for multiple responses race and ethnicity.

64:03

Nicholas Jones: For how people self-identify and that's the key component for our re-interview. We're looking to find out from these questions how do you respond items that we post and then we call you back and talk about it in more detail are you matching what you told us or not.

We learned already from the AQE about those mismatches primarily for the separation of race and Hispanic origin that's why we want to be able to do more with this work particularly for the Middle Eastern, North African population, for the Afro-Caribbean population, for the

64:30

American-Indian populations that's why this research is so important and so compelling for us...

Roberto Ramirez: Also if I might add real quickly don't forget in your binder at the very back of your binder you'll see examples of some of the different paper questionnaire experiments that we have there. So there was a lot of different variations that you see okay?

Nicholas Jones: Okay so I want to go next to - and I know I said put the placard on the side but it's Gigi thank you Gigi if you can turn your mic on thank you.

Gigi: Hi. So being the research nerd that I am when I was here in 2011 you presented

65:07

the streamlined approach as a possible option and so given that I had funding for a study I decided to test it with about a little over 500 Middle Eastern, North African individuals. In that sample about 86% picked the MENA category, about 10% picked the White category.

65:33

My question whether discussing whether or not you're going to have the streamline versus the ethnicity separate question. I mean it's sort of you know making the decisions on what's going to capture the most diversity right? So we're really not getting at - at least within this particular sample which is convenience obviously that those 10% we don't know what

66:00

they may necessarily put down and it would be a question of coding right? So what once - I mean and the people in my sample were actually MENA people. So - but the MENA category by itself got the majority of the participants so it worked that way but it does not capture racial diversity right so it captures the pan-ethnic geographical designations.

And so my question is if you have the separate ethnicity category where - in the follow up

66:37

race category are the people that would have put MENA - this would be similar to the Hispanic question are they supposed to then fill out some other race or is there going to be an additional racial category just for people who say I'm MENA and I'm MENA or Lebanese.

Nicholas Jones: That's what Roberto will talk to in reference to Christina's comment that currently what we're seeing when we have a separate concept of origin or ethnicity of

67:03

which there's two defined Hispanic and not Hispanic and then a separate concept of race for Hispanic is not one of those categories.

We often find that Hispanics answer the first question, leave the second question blank or answer it in the same way that they reported before. On top of that what we learned from AQE is that when many Hispanics do report their race, their interview show that that really wasn't what they identified with. They did it as a well I guess I'll choose one of these options or this is the one you wanted me to choose, but it's not my identity.

67:34

With this re-interview for the AQE we're extending that into the same type of re-interview that we're doing for the 2015 NCT. We want to find out when you report on a separate question or a combined question when we ask you all these detailed options about your re-interview follow up what are you telling us about your identity. And the other point Gigi I wanted to make about the streamline version. He's talking about this type of an approach; we call it streamline because people found themselves in a very streamlined manner. All the options

68:03

are listed equally, we're looking to not only collect the larger data in terms of major category boxes but also the detailed information and we're testing different options for wording, check boxes, write-in lines to see how we can get the best high-level data but also detailed data for all communities and that's what the goal of this work is to do.

Roberto Ramirez: I also want to mention I don't think we're doing - we didn't - unfortunately we don't have three days here right to talk about all the plans we're doing for the content

68:32

test, but I think what's missing here is that keep in mind there's several - there's many experimental form that we're going to be testing in the test okay not just these right here what you'll see mainly in your binder.

So Gigi to go back to your question, we're going to have questionnaire designs where there is a MENA box, there is not a MENA box. Okay so we're also testing the improvement of different question wording for example. So you're saying what happens if they just pick MENA and don't have their race right? Well we're going to be improving the instructions

69:02

to see if they check multiple boxes or not with some of the experiment panels that we're talking about here.

What we're finding much like the MENA you're findings by the way are fascinating and very similar to what we found on our focus groups. They don't to say they're White or Black.

They're mostly saying they're MENA. It's very much like the Latinos this is what we're finding. Okay but we're going to find now in this nationally representative sample that we're doing and by the way we're going to toot our own horn here the AQE at the time give years ago was

69:31

the largest - one of the largest race and ethnicity studies we've ever done at the Census Bureau which is hard to believe because we've been collecting this data since our first census in 1790 so this question we have.

This test coming up this fall by far doubles it, 1.2 million housing units. We had half a million in AQE now we have over a million, and we're oversampling for this MENA population targeting this population hopefully they'll respond. We'll see how they'll respond to

70:01

all these different experimental panels okay?

Fatma: Yes thank you. One observation in general I think that in the context of the Middle East and North Africa the issue is not going to be about the Arab category of Arabs. I mean you know be it racial ethnicity however you define it it's going to be with the non-Arabs it's going to be the non-Arabs.

I mean you know - and how do you then include in the non-Arab population all these very

70:34

disparate groups ranging from Turks, Moroccans, North Africans, Israelis and all these. I mean you know that probably is going to be the most contentious issue. So I mean so when you're thinking of racial ethnicity are you then going to have Arab and non-Arabs is like the Hispanic and non-Hispanics.

Roberto Ramirez To answer your question yes we don't want to feel the thunder we're actually

71:02

going to - that would be my session the hardest session which will be the working classification, but I assure you that we have Arab and non-Arab ethnicities and nationalities, and we'll talk about these particular groups that you mentioned. So we're going to very similarly we'll talk about our proposed classification then we want to hear from you if there's anyone else we need to add or not add. And by the way what's critical here you're giving us feedback now but it's critical that you fill out your forms by the in your binder.

71:32

And by the way I'd like to have your name at the corner not the point anyone out and please write your responses there. Hey you're missing this or we're not happy with this or et cetera. So we need your feedback because we're going to produce a summary report from this expert forum. This finding is going to feed into hopefully down the road our recommendations of how they collect and tabulate and classify the Middle Eastern North African population.

Nicholas Jones: One other point I wanted to make I brought up this slide for Dimension 4 thank you, Rachel is that we're looking to see how given these different examples

72:03

of which there's more than just the six that we have because we go into the Internet-based modes.

We use examples for the right end line that include the next largest groups from the Middle East and North Africa which includes Israel, Iraqis, and my glasses are bad Tunisia because we want to see if you're listed as a group does that help you respond if you're not listed as a group do you not respond?

Given these different panels we're looking to see what we're proposing, how does it impact

72:30

all respondents not just the respondents that are in the biggest group Lebanese but how do other respondents from that region report or not report for their interviews. So that's a huge part of our work to see what effectively works or doesn't work.

Fatma: One question I had in addition how did Middle East and North Africa come to be included in the whites to start with?

Nicholas Jones: Okay. So this is a question that I -for or for worse I may look a lot older than I am we weren't the creators of the definitions but it goes back in the history

73:05

of the Federal Government's inclusion of these concepts back to the 1970s where the first racial and ethnic groups were determined.

These are all geographically based and Roberto and Merarys are going to talk about it in our next session. The term White includes the geographic references of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa in a way to other categories for example the Asian category references the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. They all reference geographic

73:33
places for which there are these category definitions.

Roberto Ramirez: Remember that the definitions are in your binders so you can see how it's documented and worded here.

Nicholas Jones: Right. Can you speak into the mic Rita?

Rita: The term was defined by the Court in 1910 Helen wrote an article about that. It's way before...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so I the interest of time we're doing okay but I want to make sure I get to everyone here because we have a lot placard up. So if you don't mind can we go

74:04
to the next - are we missing - who do I see back there? If you can please speak into the mic and state your name.

Sonia: Hi it's Sonia. My question is looking at the people who selected Middle Eastern and North African ancestry from 2013. I would like to know where do you include minorities

74:32
between Middle Eastern or not Africans because a lot of small groups they are from Africa and they don't know which one to choose because this will mislead in the population count in the American data. And the other thing what do you call a small group? How small is small? What's the number?

Nicholas Jones: So great comments, great questions. So this particular graphic - this is the graphic

75:03
that shows the Middle Eastern groups and the North African groups is the bar chart. This is all based on current ancestry data and what it's meant to reflect is that these are the groups that are largest self-reported ancestries from the Middle East and North Africa in the United States and many; many other groups that are smaller in size but for the purpose of this tabulation we just wanted to show the groups that reported the largest numbers.

So our goal for the research we're doing for 2020 is to collect and be able to tabulate

75:33
and report data on all groups here in the United States. We're going to talk later this afternoon about the coding operation that we have where we take self-reported responses and we put them into different categories. So we have many, many, many as I mentioned hundreds and hundreds of different groups for race, ethnicity, origin from around the world that are here in the United States.

We're looking to collect and tabulate that detailed data. So this is just one representation of what we currently see as the largest but is in no mean meant to represent these are

76:03
the only groups that we collect and tabulate. Okay I want to move over to this table next.

Roberto Ramirez: Oh wait wait, we got one more here.

Nicholas Jones: I'm sorry I did not see the placard.

Soumia Aitelhaj: That's fine most of my questions were asked but just going back I also had a question with MENA, how did that come about but also in the category.

Nicholas Jones: Do you mind speaking into the mic a little bit.

Soumia Aitelhaj: The Black or African-Americans - I guess in terms of the you mentioned how

76:30
MENA came about but was there a consideration to put North Africans in the African American or Black category?

Nicholas Jones: So again the definitions that we have - they are based in the 1977 standards that were revised in 1997. The work we're doing now is really part of this whole historical context that we're seeing that many people don't see themselves in the groups that are

currently defined.

We're trying to understand how do people self-identify and how do they report in ways of improving the data that looks towards the future. So part of this we're looking to see how do Sub-Saharan

77:04

groups, North African groups, Afro-Caribbean groups, groups who may be of quote Black origins from Asia or from South America how do they respond when they have these different options.

France is another good example.

You know these definitions that are rooted in geography again they are the basis of the classifications and the tabulations that we provide, but we know that the world is much more complex right? So we're looking to see how do people respond and what can we make

77:30

from that complexity.

Soumia Aitelhaj: Sorry, if I just could. Just a small follow-up.

Nicholas Jones: Sure.

Soumia Aitelhaj: So just in terms of how does that make like the response for that is I guess because of the - just view the political tension this is not the place for it but the political tension - the impacts of that category would I guess representing the other for instance or they can we choose other or you know African-American. I guess my question is how do you kind of

78:00

balance the impact - negative impact especially with the - you know eruption of conflict and political implications.

Nicholas Jones: So we're looking to see from this research again how do people self-identify and is it what reflects their identity, or are they not answering the question for example if they don't see themselves, do they skip it. Do they write in something else in the line called some other race more often than they would in the place where we have the example?

Would someone who is French or have an example there just write French in the some other race line they said I'm not White I'm French. Well we're looking to find out what does that

78:33

mean and why. So we have a lot of examples like that where the world is very complex.

Brazil is a big example. Who are Brazilians? Are they White, are they Black are they multi-racial, are they Asian? How do Brazilians in the United States respond to these questions?

So for all the communities that are represented here in this room and around the country we're looking to find out the best ways that we can collect this complex data that represents your identities. I'm going to go here to Rita and then to Linda.

79:01

Rita: I'm just going to ask you for clarification for the group if we can go to Dimension 1 please. The option - to answer your question you have reference for combined or separate, can you please clarify to the group if we have separate questions then for the MENA population the only option is the examples on the right, they do not get a separate...

Nicholas Jones: Okay so we'll clarify that. So this is meant to represent the current

79:33

questions that we were testing in the AQE where we had a separate question on race and origin and a combined question or race or origin, but in AQE none of those included a Middle Eastern or North African category.

Rita: But in the national testing.

Nicholas Jones: In the national test we will have both the dimension with MENA in separate and without MENA and separate and also....

Rita: Will there be a section saying are you of MENA origin such as the Hispanic question or no?

80:00

Nicholas Jones: No. And that's what Roberto was talking to earlier when he said that we already know from our research that these separate question approaches lead to less accurate data more non-response. And so if we're looking to exacerbate that problem and

do it again we don't feel like that's the strategy to move forward with.

Rita: So if we're all rational actors there's more data for us in the combined question?

Nicholas Jones: We're looking to find that out - from the research but that's what the...

Roberto Ramirez: Let's talk about this for a second. We have a - so we don't all the

80:32

experimental panels believe they're all in the binders. Are they all eight of them?

Nicholas Jones: There are a lot of examples in the back of your binder.

Roberto Ramirez: One of the experimental panels that we have is the separate and we have a MENA category in here. Okay, I think my voice is lost...Okay and then of course we have a streamline approach where we have - right now there's now MENA category this is one of the experimental panels right? So how do people from the Middle East or North African

81:00

origin respond to this? What happens when there is a MENA category you see what I mean?

The same thing with this over here separate. We also have one just like this one and then one with the MENA category here. Okay? So that's what we're testing and so it goes to your question over there how does the population will respond when they see a MENA category or if they don't, and so we're going to be analyzing that data.

Rita: But there will not be a question are you Middle Eastern origin just like the census.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you and you have a comment.

81:31

Rita: My second question if we can go to the detailed ethnic examples and these are the examples that are now from ancestry data and the reason they do not include Somalia and Sudanese is because they're in the ancestry, can you explain that.

Nicholas Jones: No no no because they're not currently in the region that we're identifying as the Middle East or North Africa. We're looking to see from the feedback today whether you think that that is a...

Rita: So this examples are subject to change based on the recommendation of this group?

82:04

Nicholas Jones: For 2020 all of the examples are potentially going to change. Our rationale today is that we're looking at the largest groups from Middle East and North Africa, the largest groups from the White European category from Asia as we have a rationale to really define why we posed what we did.

Our research is really as I mentioned earlier you're going to help us learn that these examples are effective, if these examples are helpful or if these examples may not be as effective.

82:30

So again we're looking to see when you have these examples that represent the region how do all respondents from that region identify how do they respond. Next we have Linda.

Linda: So I wanted to answer question number two, and this is more actually for what I would consider our community to really think about this. I'm having a hard time understanding where the context is coming from the perspective of our community. So as a social service provider thinking about what are we going to use this information for? Like I don't really care

83:03

about just counting how many people there are who are quote MENA it's how we utilize this information that can be beneficial to our community. So the answer to number two for me is no because we have to understand that the way that people respond is based on the political context that we live in. So in 2010 we actually started a national campaign that was probably - need a lot more work to do a census bureau but we started a campaign check it right you ain't White. And we actually asked people to go into the other category and identify themselves as whatever, Yemen, Arab-American, whatever they

83:32

wanted to say even though we knew eventually those others go back in the White category, but seeing the response of more people wanting to fill out the census with the understanding that they weren't White.

So I'm very personally just for the - as folks are thinking about the feedback what benefit

do we get as a community from being White in the current political context as Arab-Americans in the United States of America. Does it serve us right to call ourselves White and put ourselves
84:00

back in the white box and then to think about you know for example when we look at accessing federal - you know any types of federal support for example we lose out dramatically because we don't have the separate category to say so we end up even in the area where I live because of where quote White we're not seen as a priority area and for city or state or federal funding.

So we really need to understand what we're saying and how it impacts the community on
84:30

the ground. I'm just trying to push us more in a less academic conversation because I know there's a lot of academia in the room and a lot of researchers which is great and wonderful and we need that, but really understanding what the implications of the data and how it's going to be used to impact community. So my recommendation is that MENA that we are not White and also not be dwelling too much on the categories because at the end of the day it's self-identification. I'm Palestinian, if I want to say I'm Black I'm Black that's on me I can check whatever box. Getting into the nitty gritty there I don't think is really
85:01

helpful for this discussion to kind of move us forward but for people to understand the political context that we live in in 2015 and understanding the benefits of being White or not White and understanding you know kind of maybe because I'm an activist but privilege that comes with being White and not having the white privilege.

I mean these people really have to understand the deep impact this has by considering being able to say I'm Palestinian but then still having to go and say I'm white like I'm personally
85:30

not cool with that.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you for your comment Linda. And that topic which we had listed as our second question I just want to reference that you're saying no to Question 2 is also something that we're going to talk about as we get later into this presentation for tabulation with Roberto.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you Linda for your comment. So that reminds me again every one of you in here has a voice right and opinion and I'm asking you for your feedback just like Linda. So please fill out your forms, tell us do you agree with Number 2 or not.

That's what we want that's why we invited all of you here. I don't mean to put you on
86:02

the spot, but this is what we want, this is what we need okay? All right next.

Joseph: Two things. Based on the comments that you received on your testing that was done earlier it seems that there are - as you see on Page 4 it says 737 comments on which countries or ethnic groups to include or to exclude in this category. Do you have
86:32

any details on that and what has been for just...

Nicholas Jones: We're going to go into those details in our sessions this afternoon where we present the groups were recommended for inclusion and the groups we'll recommend for exclusion.

Interestingly some of those are recommended for inclusion and exclusion so we want to get your feedback today about the additional countries and groups that we're talking about.

Joseph: And the other thing is on - let's see here Page 8 I believe which is the Dimension
87:00

4. I see that you are asking to mark one of the boxes or at least one of the boxes here, but also there is a white box there. So I'm not sure how the respondent will mark here, would he mark the small box or the white box?

Nicholas Jones: Right. So that's the research question for us given the option where there is only one box that is called white that includes MENA identities and when there's one that's called white and one that's called MENA how will respondents who say that they

87:32

are Palestinian or Egyptian or Somali - how will everyone who's given these different options respond. And then when we do the re-interview what do we know about their responses that either confirms or provides some opposition to what they told us on the paper or on the Internet.

We want to find out if you identify as both white and MENA then hopefully if that's how you self-identify that's how you will report, but if you don't have that option and you report differently that's what we're trying to learn.

Joseph: And also on detailed example slide I see here that you have again a small box

88:06

but then a white box and that allows you to mark the small box first and then right...

Nicholas Jones: They're not linked in the sense that you have to do both but part of our work again is to see what respondents mark the box for the larger category the Middle Eastern North African, Black, Asian whatever it is and then will they write in detail.

So we have different options for reporting both your major group and your detailed group.

88:30

When we show the other dimensions we're reporting online for example or even some of the examples that are in your notebooks we're trying detailed check boxes maybe those are more helpful than a write-in line. Maybe they're not we're looking to see that through the research.

Joseph: But the examples given are not adequate enough for all ethnicities.

Nicholas Jones: So that's what we're for all meaning the entire world or the MENA region?

Joseph: No I'm talking about for the MENA region.

Nicholas Jones: Right and so that's what we're trying to find when we list examples. And we know from our work in the past that when we have an exhaustive list or what seems to

89:01

be exhaustive that doesn't work well. And when we have too few that doesn't work well either. We're trying to find what's the balance.

Joseph: So the respondent would be confined to the whatever census given?

((Crosstalk))

Nicholas Jones: So in the work when we have the instructions say to mark all boxes that apply and writing your detailed origins, we're looking to see do we only get the origins that are written or do we get people reporting other things and that's part of the work for us to see.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes. So this is very important and you know we agree with you that's why

89:32

we're concerned. We actually have more boxes here than we ever had before. This is one of the internet. And so for those groups that don't have a checkbox right you're saying well - we have a write in line and we're going to capture all those write-ins okay so they can write in what their origin is there. Even if it's not MENA they can write in Latino in there, they can write in Black, they can write whatever they like capture all those write-ins okay?

Joseph: The reason I'm mentioning this because we want to see the whole community of this particular decennial

Nicholas Jones: Absolutely.

90:00

Joseph: From my 35 years' experience with this I don't see our communities as specific as a communities responding well to this because they are unsure if they are included on that.

Nicholas Jones: Well I can tell you right now the current questions are completely excluded right there's nothing. Right? They're going to some other race and writing it so now we're testing a dedicated question for this community. So we're going to find out how they respond that's one part of the test, and we're going to inform you about the results about how

90:32

the test performed. Okay? Let's go to the next. In the interest of time...

Oren: Quick question. I think MENA more than any area in the world is very much identities

are connected also to religion. How is religion - was it ever reflected in the census or?

Roberto Ramirez: We're going to discuss that in my section about the Ethno religions groups
91:00

and so - yes we're going to get to that shortly.

Nicholas Jones: Let me go back to the back and I'm sorry sir I don't see your name. Fareed please.

Fareed: Two quick comments in the interest of time. So your question about whether the MENA population should be counted as white I think it's a moot point from our perspective. I don't know anybody who advocates for them to be included as white. So if there's anybody that advocates for that then they should speak up, but from our population it's a moot point
91:30

right. That's one.

The other question about examples I think it's helpful to have smaller populations in your examples that will help people identify with that category. It's not if you already have Lebanese for instance which is it's self-evident that they're in that category. I think it's more helpful to have another smaller population like Sudanese in the examples.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you for your comments and again I want to reiterate what Roberto
92:00

said. Please I know we're not doing a poll in the room but please report all of your comments that you have on the feedback paper so that we can record and take that information back. I had more questions at this table.

Yuksel: I see the examples are based on the state as in German cultural identity what about the other ethnic groups such as Kurds, Australians, or whatever Armenians so that
92:34

should be in the examples. And also the website so is that will there be all these groups listed on the website or the website version of this form?

Nicholas Jones: In terms of like every group in the world?

Yuksel: No, no, no under MENA.

Nicholas Jones: Well one of the things that I mentioned before is that we know that we have hundreds of detailed groups within these categories not just countries but also ethnic
93:01

groups and pan-ethnic groups. It's impossible to list every group on the question but every group can report as much detail as they'd like and whatever self-identity they have.

We're looking to find out how do these different options help people to report in that way. So that's what the research is going to help us to see.

Yuksel: Okay. Just the examples obviously include one of the groups which may not have for example state or...

Nicholas Jones: That's a great feedback and we want that so we would like you to - those groups that you said right now hey we want other - we just don't want country of origin
93:33

apples right? You want - write those down on the feedback form, I want to know what those are.

Yuksel: For me Urania if I say I'm Kurdish so you know the state factor is not for me it's meaningless in this case.

Nicholas Jones: Okay thank you for your comments and we have just how many more minutes? Okay let me go to the front table. I'll start with Khaled.

Khaled Beydoun: It's a general observation that I have is just to echo Linda's sentiment
94:05

that the via-mid response to question number two would be no. And to your surprise it might be a mute question but there are significant elements within the broader - specifically Arab-American community who want to maintain whiteness in the MENA-American community more broadly I want to maintain whiteness.

I think it's critical in the point about religion as a selling point how religion others and the intersection of religion and ethnicity has specific authorization on Muslim-MENA

94:32

Americans and the conversation up until this point has been largely Levantine-centric and Christian-driven and the demographics demonstrate that it's shifting away from that. So even though there's strong senses on the ground to maintain you know whether it's per say your ceremonial whiteness the demographics have shifted toward a sensing or a position that really conflicts with that traditional baseline.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you for your comments. Next we have Sahar please.

95:05

Sahar: I'm just going to answer the three questions. The first one is it should be combined primarily because race is a social construct and is not a very helpful term. Now arguably so is origin, but I think that people one, politically are more comfortable with identifying an origin and it doesn't lead to the same kind of what I think are somewhat artificial

95:32

divisions within various communities of I'm white or I'm not white but most people will accept I do have an origin and then they'll decide what is the origin that I self-identify whether it is Kurdish or Iraqi or you know et cetera.

So my personal opinion is if you can put race or origin together it can help to do what I think Linda's pointing out which is not get sidetracked into these details and just

96:01

focus on what we're really trying to do.

The second is I believe that they should not be classified as white primarily because we need to track them for my personal work is in anti-discrimination and so whether it is to shield them from discrimination or whether it is to have remedial programs fund those types of groups if you can't track them you'll never be able to solve what is in my opinion

96:33

very obvious which is a very strong anti-Middle East anti-Muslim, anti-Arab whatever you want to call it but there is some very serious problems right now.

With regard to the third question I guess I don't have an opinion I would defer to the experts in terms of what's the best way to elicit the information but my personal opinion is the more information we can get the more helpful it is both to the government and to

97:01

the activist and to the academics. And I do agree that if you put just nation states that does signal that what we mean by Middle East and North Africa are only nation state identities.

So even if you just an example of Kurd or Syrian, or Chaldean whatever you want to use at least it signals that that is also one way to self-identify it's not limited to the nation.

97:31

And finally I take issue with the fact that white is listed first as opposed to in alphabetical order. It signals to everybody in the country that it's a white supremacist society and so either you have to at least justify why. So you could say this is the largest number of people and you can do that and put a footnote and say we are listing in the order based on - here's the criteria we're listing because otherwise it really does signal white is what matters and then maybe Hispanic matters second and then Black matters third, and then if

98:03

you put MENA last like you matter the least it feeds into the racial hierarchies. So whatever system you choose is fine as long as it's subjective and it's distinguishable because you may not have that intent but I'm just telling you that's what happens.

Nicholas Jones: No thank you Sahar for your comments, and I do want to footnote that that in the point that she made the groups are listed in population size in the United States, but your suggestion was to somehow note that what we're doing. We do get that question

98:31

a lot and the alphabetical question comes up but the rationale is that we're listing groups based on demographic pop-size order. Okay next we have John, please.

John: Thanks. I think this is a great forum by the way, and I wanted to thank the Census

Bureau for doing this tremendous effort. So I'm primarily going to address the second question. I - you know agree with my colleagues my law professor colleagues to my left that unequivocally they - you know Middle Easterners, North Africans should not be considered white
99:01

it's a bit of a judicial fiction that's been created through some case law over the years, and it doesn't really reflect the views of people on the ground in any way whatsoever particularly in recent decades with rising rates of discrimination.

It creates basically a catch 22 or Middle Easterners are treated as non-white anytime. It's to their detriment to - and treated as white only when it's to their detriment as well. So effectively it's created a real problem as I like to tell people I'm not white at
99:33

the airport I never have been and so let's stop the fiction and let's create the separate category.

Along those lines though I would want to encourage maybe a bit of a radical proposal which is if we're disaggregating the white category and taking Middle Eastern and North African out of it why keep that term white on the census? Why not just simply put European and go to the origins directly. The term white is deeply problematic, it's deeply political,
100:02

it has a history of having a radically fluctuating definition over time, and if we're really going to what the core of what the census is saying it's trying to do which is getting ancestry that's geographically determined - when you look at a map there's no place that's called white last time I checked. And frankly it's an inaccurate description no one - I've met very few white people in my life that literally have white colored skin. So let's go with European and disaggregate the category I think that would be a tremendous
100:34

service to diversity in our country and to the future of our country.

One other just quick point on the categories on the third question which is the categories that are showing under the Middle Eastern, North African category. The sub nationality ethnicities one thing I noticed is Armenians weren't listed in there and Armenians weren't really listed in any of the other categories, and that seems unusual because there's a huge
101:01

Armenian population. Obviously it's a nationality in the sense that there is an Armenia but for the purposes of the geographic region there isn't an Armenia and it's a huge sub nationality ethnicity that maybe bares inclusion.

This ties into another point which is if we're discussing ethnicities you know many Iranian-Americans prefer the term Persian and that describes an ethnicity rather than a national origin and that's wasn't mentioned in any of the materials that I saw the word Persian was
101:33

never used, and I think that's especially considering that Iranians are one of the largest groups and many of them don't identify themselves as Iranian country that's only existed really in that name since the 1920s. I think if we're identifying ethnicities Iranians come in many shapes and sizes Armenian Kurdish, Syrian, and Persian.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you John. These are great comments this is the feedback that we really need and we want you guys to write that down again. I just want to assure John
102:02

and the rest of you that we are going to get into the discussion this afternoon about the countries that are not shown here or the groups that are not shown here in the feedback session for you to give us your suggestions about what we're classifying and what we're not or what is not being included. So we're going to get to that this afternoon. I have a comment here from Samer.

Samer: Thank you very much. I'm going to try to be as brief as possible although for lawyer that's sometimes difficult. We are also in the discrimination arena along with Sahar,
102:35

and I'm not a statistician. But where we get a lot of difficulties is when we try to sit

there and talk to state agencies to government agencies and to talk to them about you know the statistics regarding discrimination against the Arab Middle Eastern population. It's incredibly difficult to do that if we're classified as white. I'll give you an example.

103:01

I sat on a commission in New Jersey on police standards, and we were talking about dealing with the consent decree I was entered into between the state police of New Jersey and the Department of Justice because of certain profiling that was being done on the interstates with police stops and what not. And the head of the state police came out and was giving statistics saying look we are you know 80% of our stops in these areas are of white people

103:33

they are not minorities.

So upon questioning I asked him I said well how do you classify Arabs, and he said well we classify them as white. Now they may not have an impact generally speaking but in the sections of New Jersey have a very large Arab population or a large concentration of Arabs that would skew those statistics especially if you're talking about a small sample size.

104:01

So that's the problem when we get folded into the white community as part of people that fight this discrimination we can't point to numbers, and they tend to skew numbers.

The second and final point that I want to bring up and that sort of ties into what Mr. Kassab said and this gentleman said. There is a lot of confusion among the minorities such as the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Kurdish people. If they only see the geographical

104:32

designation they may not know that this is where they should respond to. They may not know okay this is where I can fall into because a lot of them will not identify themselves as being part of that country that geography, With the Kurdish people its huge sticking point. Are they Syrians, are they Iraqis, or are they Kurdish. So if they only see Syria and Iraq and they say well I'm not Syrian or Iraqi they may get confused as to what

105:00

they should put down. So I think it's extremely important that you put at least one example of a minority group. .

Again the issue of the Armenians that was brought up there's also the issues of the Sarkasians which is a pretty distinct minority within the Middle East originally from the Sarkasians mountains in Russia. And now because of that ethnic cleansing have migrated into Syria and Iraq and Into Jordan so that's another group that you may also want to consider.

105:31

They have a huge population in New Jersey as well. So I'll just leave it with that.

Nicholas Jones: Okay Samer, thank you for your comments and we're going to transition now to the next round of feedback. We really appreciate all the comments that you guys have. I want to just encourage you again to write down your comments for us so that we can record them as well. Roberto is next going to talk about our Session B where we're going to get into these different classifications that are being used for Middle Eastern and North African respondents and the term Middle Eastern or North African.

Roberto Ramirez: So actually what I'm going to do is great a lot of people are looking

106:01

at me going break, break, break and I agree. So we're going to deviate a little bit from the agenda, but it is 11 o'clock for a break so this is the deal I'm going to make with you all please come back in 15 minutes sharp okay 11:15, and we'll take a break now have a cup of coffee and we'll get started back on the agenda as soon as you return ok - 11:15 thank you.

Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), 5/29/15, Part 2

Complete Transcript

Roberto Ramirez: Okay, so if I could have everyone back to their seats. We're going to get started here in one minute - so what do you say? So far so good right? Alright, I'm glad now we'll really gonna get into the good stuff. So I have a couple of announcements here: 1. Is that doing your lunch - well we just had a break but doing your lunch and
0:31

we have an afternoon break, please bring your travel forms to the front desk so you can get reimbursed. The front desk is right up here - straight down to the right so, make sure you turn all of your paperwork in to get reimbursed for any travel or anything related to that. So make sure we take care of you on that end ok? Any others announcements?
1:01

So thank you Nicholas. We're deviating from the agenda here so I'm trying to get back to where I'm supposed to be on the agenda. Okay. So for Session B, I will describe our research and how the Middle Eastern and North African region is classified by various organizations in the United States and how the term -- now we're talking about the term -- Middle Eastern and North African is used.

As part of our research efforts over the last few years, we have reached out to state data centers in states with large Middle Eastern and North African populations, such as in
1:33

California, Maryland, Michigan and New York.

And we also talked to other federal agencies to find out whether and how, they collect **and classify data on the Middle Eastern and North African population in the United States**. So, what we found from our research, that is even in states with large Middle Eastern and North African populations, many do not collect or produce data on these groups. Nor do they have a classification on the Middle Eastern or North African population.
2:03

So as you can see in the Census Bureau's decision to test the Middle Eastern and North African population was not made in a vacuum. And, of course, all the previous presenters have said, you know, we have a lot of outreach with critical stakeholders such and OMB and researchers such as yourself.

So, on the next slide, please. In our research, we identified 15 organizations that classified countries and territories from the region of the world and we found that the term Middle
2:30

Eastern and North African was used - was the most common term used to classify countries and territories from this region.

And our research showed that most organizations use the term interchangeably with the acronym MENA or I've heard it MENNA, okay? It's like the spelling bee. Did anybody see the spelling bee last night? Are there other pronunciations? MENNA? MENA? There you go.

So, the specifically, 12 of the 15 classifications used in the term - use the term Middle Eastern
3:00

and North African and half of these classifications also use the acronym MENA or MENNA.

Other terms that are used to describe this region are the Near East -- which is used by the US Department of State, Bureau of Near East Affairs --. Southwest Asian or North African or SWANA -- which is used by the University of California at Berkeley. And we also have seen the term Eastern Mediterranean, which is used by the World Health Organization.
3:34

On this next slide, we've listed the 15 organizations we identified to see how they classify countries and territories in this region and we realized that there are organizations out there that

work with or do research on the region. The Census Bureau only focused on organizations that provided an actual classification, which is a lot harder than you think. Believe it or not.

So, for example, how do you define Middle East? How do you define North Africa? Who's
4:00

in, who's out, right? So among the research centers and Universities, we found classifications from the Pew Research Center, the Population Reference Bureau, the Arab American Institute, the University of California at Berkeley and the University of California at San Francisco Medical Center. We - And among non-governmental organizations, we found classifications used by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Organization on Migration and the World Health Organization.

4:31

And finally, we found classifications being used by other federal agencies. The Department of Commerce Commercial Law Development Program. I'm sure you may not have heard of that one. The Department of Labor, the State Department, the Department of Agriculture and International Trade Administration.

So, as you have seen, MENA and the Middle Eastern and North African are commonly used terms to classify and describe this region of the world. Now, what we want to know is

5:00

what you think of the term, and we have a couple of questions for you.

What are your thoughts on using the term Middle Eastern or North African as a category on the Census questionnaire? Do you think that the community will identify with the Middle Eastern or North African term? Are there other terms that the Census Bureau should consider using instead of the term Middle Eastern or North African? And finally, is it appropriate

5:31

to use the acronym MENA or MENNA and - when discussing this population?

So, please turn -- if you have a question or comment -- please turn you name placard on its end and I will call on you. And we'll make our rounds like we did last time.

So why don't we start on the left-hand side this time and we'll make our way left to right and then right to left as we go, throughout the day. So anyone over here? Yes, I'm sorry.

6:03

Medhi.

Medhi: Thank you Roberto. I wanted to bring to your attention some research that we've been doing on the use of Middle Eastern American term, not just the Middle Eastern...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay

Medhi: ...and North African because that refers to the region.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Can you speak to the mic please?

((Crosstalk))

Medhi: Sorry. So basically, what we did is that we sort of had this intuition you know a hypothesis, that particularly after 9/11 the terms that have become much more in vogue

6:35

are Arab and Muslim, rather than Middle Eastern -- you know which really never - had never caught on as a pan ethnic category.

And what we did is then looked at the variety of sources. We looked at organizations, right?

We used major newspapers -- Washington Post, New York Times and Los Angeles Time, and you notice I put Washington Post first because we're in DC. And we used titles of books,

7:03

including several people in this room who published books. And we also used Web searches, you know, like individuals doing, sort of, Google searches, right?

And what we found, actually it's really corroborated our hypothesis. That what we've seen is that no pan ethnic category has emerged and if anything has emerged, is the terms Arabs and Muslims after 9/11.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Medhi: So, what I'm trying to say, is that by the Census not having this category, you

7:34

are giving rise to categories that are really not ethnic categories, like Muslim, and it's becoming so widely used. And, as we know with the experience of Asian Americans, you know, Census was instrumental in developing that pan-ethnic category.

Roberto Ramirez: Right. And along with the Hispanic one, as well.

Medhi: Yes. But that's something that I wanted to bring to - I'll be happy to share the paper with you.

Roberto Ramirez: Absolutely. In fact, I've heard some great research already, being said and mentioned here already and I want to hear - I know a lot about your research Gigi already.

8:01

I have not seen the research that you've done. But, yes. We would like to hear and see more about that.

Fareed: Just two comments on your question. So, first, I agree with the two years of the term. This - on the second questions whether the community will identify with it, in our community, yes they will. But they need a lot of education, coaching.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Fareed: Because this is something that's new to them. And also there's a little complexity

8:32

in our case in Sudan which split into two different countries since the last Census.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Fareed: So that - we're going to need some help getting the community to understand that they're really being - that they're part of the population. So that's my feedback on that.

Roberto Ramirez: That's fantastic. Thank you. Joseph?

Joseph: Yes, I couldn't...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh yes. I'm sorry. Into the mic, please.

Joseph: Sorry. How about we call it AMENA instead of MENA and "A" is for ancestral Middle

9:06

East and North Africa. So that way, everybody will be incorporated in this name?

Roberto Ramirez: That's great feedback. That's...

Joseph: AMENA with A.

Roberto Ramirez: AMENA. Okay?

Joseph: Okay?

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Okay, Linda?

Linda: Oh, sorry. No I didn't have...

Roberto Ramirez: No? Okay. Sally?

Sally: So, I just wanted to sort of augment Matthew's point, in particular. So, on my

9:31

campus, we have -- we don't know -- but we have between a quarter and a third of our students are Arab American. A very distinctive university population.

Roberto Ramirez: Why don't you know?

Sally: Pardon me?

Roberto Ramirez: You said you didn't know.

Sally: Because the campus won't officially count them...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Sally: ...because there is no - they say that they can't count the population because they have to -- for legal reasons -- use the federal government categories.

Roberto Ramirez: Right, which is different.

Sally: So, while the Department of Health and Human Services in Michigan does have a checkbox for Arab Americans -- they do count self-identified Arabs, at least -- our university

10:04

doesn't do this.

And it's incredibly frustrating to try and teach on a campus where you have this large percentage but you can't help people - you know, you can't count them, right. It's very frustrating.

So I'm just encouraging this category very strongly. And I also think that people will self-identify as MENA. I don't think it's a - for some communities, like the Sudanese community in particular, it is kind of complex, right?

Roberto Ramirez: Mm hmm

Sally: The education is involved. But I think it's a self - for most people from the region,
10:34

right? It's a very, sort of, commonsensical label, right? So I think it's an appropriate one.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your feedback. Oh, sorry. Did I miss one over here? Samer?

Samer: This is sort of in the age-old question in our community. Are we going to call ourselves Arabs or are we going to call ourselves Middle Easterners, right? And you are touching upon this right now.

I think, for the most part, I would self-identify as an Arab. Now, there are people in this
11:04

room that will come from the same country that I come from, that will not self-identify themselves as Arabs, because they don't consider themselves Arabs because they come from one of the minority groups there.

So, in a perfect world, I would love to see the term Arab there. However, this is not a perfect world. What we're trying to do is count as many people as possible. And for that purpose, I would probably stick with the Middle East - the MENA category because

11:32

that would put everybody into one basket and would accurately count the people of the region better than simply or purely as an Arab category.

Roberto Ramirez: And thank you for that, because we're - later on Merarys - we're stealing her thunder, poor thing. She's not going to have anything to say when she gets up but, we're going to show you some potential tabulations and data products.

Exactly what Samer was mentioning about how we're going to highlight all the individual ethnic and minority groups, if you will, so - and they're on some of our tables. You know

12:03

potential tables we may for 2020 Census.

Okay. Maya, I believe.

((Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: Oh sorry, my - oh, sorry. Back to John.

John: It's all right. No problem.

Roberto Ramirez: The mic was...

John: Yes, I just wanted to - I'm not sure I have a great alternative to the MENA category, but I did want to express some hesitation about the use of the word. I mean...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

John: ...no one actually identifies themselves as, "I'm Middle Eastern or North African", right? They just don't say that. I've never heard that. I mean, people might say, "I'm

12:30

Middle Eastern", but they don't say, "I'm Middle Eastern or North African". So, really this is kind of a bureaucratic creation that's kind of being brought from above down. Now, that's not to say it's not a bad idea as someone alluded to earlier -- the creation of the Asian American category was done in that way, although it was done with significant support from the activist communities that suggested that bringing together these groups would be of value. But I think it's worth considering.

This is maybe a little bit silly, but I think it should be mentioned, it's also the way it's represented, is people call it MENA, right? And MENA doesn't sound that great.

13:02

It sounds mean. Just saying...

Roberto Ramirez: This is good feedback.

John: ...it sounds somewhat...

((Crosstalk))

John: You know what? It sounds pejorative and...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

John: ...subconsciously, I think that creates an issue. Why have an Acronym that sounds mean. You know, you can tell people to call it MENNA, but you can also tell people to say Iranian instead of Ir(ay)nian, but they don't.

So I think that's the semantics of the word and the subtle suggestions, I think, are important.

13:32

And that ties in, also, with another issue which is, you know, African American is used as a category. Asian American is used as a category. But the word American is missing in here. Now I'm not saying it should be in every category, but if we're going to use American to describe other people, why not these people? Why not these Middle Easterners and North Africans? There is an implicit suggestion that maybe they're not as American as people who are African American. I think that's of concern.

14:00

You know - I mean, Eastern Mediterranean is the only alternative term I've seen that was listed to MENA. It's not great. It certainly - once you start talking about Eastern Mediterranean, what about people who are in the, you know, western part of the Mediterranean area like Moroccan

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, those - right.

John: It's not really...

Roberto Ramirez: Those are terms that we've found from other organizations that we use, right?

John: True. You know, and North African. But - well North African, at least, is Mediterranean. It does about the Mediterranean Sea, so maybe there's some merit to that. I don't know.

But the category MENA doesn't exist. I'm not sure we should create it and certainly with

14:31

the acronym MENA, is problematic and I would encourage maybe Middle Eastern American, also. Although, I will also note, the whole idea of Middle East is, you know, very Eurocentric. The origin of the term is based on, you know, what's Middle East, right? We don't use terms like Oriental anymore, because that's seen a pejorative for a variety of reasons. But, in part, because it's centric to a European perspective in saying, "They're over there in the East. They're in the Orient."

So, why would we adopt a term Middle Eastern that was basically invented by a U.S. Admiral

15:05

who was talking about geopolitical considerations in the coming wars over oil?

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your feedback. That's exactly what we want and it's what we want to hear. So, yes.

Sahar: Okay. So while I agree with John's contextualization of the terminology, I don't know if we can ever find a term that doesn't - isn't problematic because of the way that history has played out and produced the current state.

I'm more comfortable with - so I would like to just express my disagreement with using Arab. Not because people don't identify but because -- in terms of being the term that's on the Census -- people can say, "I'm Arab or I'm Arabic." That's fine. Because that term is highly charged.

We all have had this experience where we're around people who are from countries who are

16:04

Arabic speaking and, "Well, I'm Phoenician. Well I'm Pharaonic. Well I'm Ephesian. I'm Chaldean."

And, what happens is the government is then going to then get ensnared in these divisive conversations that really have no end and are not relevant to the objective here, which is to track people for purposes of either, you know, dignitary rights so, "I want to self-identify and tell you and I have a box" or for anti-discrimination, or for federal

16:35

programs, you know. There's a bunch of them.

So focusing on the objective. I can't think of another term. I think North African is a very important term because that's distinctive and then you can say Eastern Mediterranean if you'd like, or...But I actually think it helps to take - to get away from the Arab, to get away from the ethnic identities. So that we don't inadvertently perpetuate these divisions.

Roberto Ramirez: Right, so I want to just add one more quick comment to you. So we're
17:02

no strangers to this actually. We have a long history of dealing and grappling with different ethnic and racial categories through the centuries in the US. And one particular group comes to mind is the Hispanic Latino category that actually has been around for over 40 years. And even to this day, right now as I speak, there's still issues with that. Why Brazilians are not in there. Why the Spaniards aren't, et cetera. So, I'm not going to get into it but yes, thank you for bringing your comments.

We are - you know the Census Bureau is fully prepared to deal with these type of issues,
17:31

right? How the community will respond?

And that's why we asked you here to start getting your feedback into this and improve and develop a question that can help us enumerate this population.

Okay.

Yinon: One question you asked us is, "Will the community identify with the term?" Some communities will check it if it will be there but they won't identify. For example, Israelis, if they're Jews, you know, they're going to check White and then they're going to check -- if you have a Middle Eastern category -- they will check it. We're from the Middle East.

18:02

But they don't - they're not going to identify with it. Which raises the question, actually, that I've been thinking over the break. Why is Israel inside this group? I mean, geographically...

Roberto Ramirez: And I'm going to tell you in a minute why they are, in a second.

Tinon: ...they're in but they obviously view themselves as White and non-Arab. We're talking about 85% Jews which are...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Yinon: ...in this country.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, shortly I'm going to talk about how we develop a classification,
18:31

like the rationale. And then we can discuss why certain countries are in and some are not. And, of course, we're going to hear your feedback on about who should be in or who should be out, right? So, Oren.

Oren: Taking on what Samer said about - that he would be more comfortable calling it Arab rather than Middle Eastern or North African but then are a few additional groups and what Professor Cohen just said about how Israelis would connect. Would they connect to a Middle
19:00

Eastern or North African term? I personally do not know.

I think that there are other sensitivities for Israeli Americans defining themselves from an identity perspective as part of the MENA group. One of them relates to the fact that more or less 50/50 Israeli Jews divide between those who are originally from Middle
19:31

Eastern and North African -- the Sephardic Jews -- and half of them are from Eastern Europe, Russia and Western Europe, which are the Ashkenazic Jews and where we grow up, identity-wise, are your MENA or are you Ashkenazic?

And now there is even an additional sensitivity of now I'm defining myself as a definition which is used to make an internal distinction inside our communities.

20:02

Second issue, which - I don't know how much this is relevant in this room and I know that this is a topic that we are trying to stay away from but, for a person from Middle Eastern North African who is against - who is from the Arab community and is politically feels

against Israeli policy and vice versa. The people who are more politically strong in
20:33

their feelings. Putting these two groups together - I don't know if this would create a situation wherein someone with strong political views would say, "Well, I don't want to define myself in the group with these other people. I'd rather put myself down as Hispanic or leave it empty or put myself as White." Or whatever it is.

So the way I think, from an academic perspective is possibly, I don't know, do some sort of a survey inside our community asking a few thousand Israeli Americans, "If this was a
21:04

term that would be used to define you as part of a group of Middle Eastern and North African, would you go for it or would you take a...

Roberto Ramirez: That's exactly what we're doing. This Fall, actually. We're inviting - you know we have a random sample of the entire country and we have the different experimental designs and we're going to see how all these different communities -- the Amazigh, for example, the Israeli community, the Kurdish community, the Arab -- how do they identify themselves? As Nicholas had mentioned earlier. So we are going to get an idea about that,
21:33

Okay?

Rita: To follow up on the Israeli question, having worked at the Census with the Middle Eastern community for a while, Israel is multi-cultural society having the Ashkenazi community but also the Jews from Yemen and the Jews from Morocco that we - and Iraq and Ethiopia and
22:00

India. So that's a population that is worth consideration.

And then the other factor is that there is large population inside Israel that is of Palestinian origin that are Israeli citizen as well, and do identify themselves as Israelis. And those do feel they're Middle Easterners. And I think the proposal here is to have it as a geographical area.

Also, having been on their side and receiving calls from people when I was working at the
22:31

Census Bureau, I heard a lot from the community a reaction to the forces of Arabization that took place under regimes that forced everybody to assimilate to a National narrative. And they view their experience in the United States as something that - this is where we can reclaim our identity. And we need to keep in mind that the American part is very important to this. We're not defining there, we're defining here. Thank you.

23:01

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Thank you, very good. Right. Exactly. It's about the American experience, as you say. Okay, so Maya. Sorry for - missed you last time.

Maya: That's okay. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: You get an extra five minutes.

Maya: I'll take at least eight. So thanks for noting the last time, because I'd like to start with -- well, first of all, actually, if we haven't formally acknowledged it publicly -- how grateful we are for all the officials with the Census Bureau and...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh, thank you very much.

((Crosstalk))

Maya: ...who've worked so hard in getting us to the point where we are today. Which
23:31

is pretty remarkable. So kudos to all of you on that.

And I'm also - I always say this to you and the last time we were in Michigan -- I've read the work of people in this room for many, many years. And so I am so grateful for the research that you do and the wonderful work that we've had together.

So with that, I want to sort of say, as a woman of color who has never, ever checked the white box for anything, who's written in "other". Who -- according to my local school

24:01

district -- has one child that's White and one that's Asian, I strong - have very strong

feelings about what my personal identity is.

And I'm very uncomfortable with the way we left the discussion around the second question the first time. And also uncomfortable with the way we are talking about how we identify as MENA.

You said, in the beginning, two things that sort of keep ringing in my head. We don't have three days since the first one. We don't have three days. So while I really appreciate

24:32

some of the conversations we're having, they have to be on task in some way.

And the second part is, we're not deciding things like minority status. We're not deciding things like how my kids identify. That's not supposed to be what's in play here.

So, I think it's critical for us to come back to the idea of how do we arrive at a better count. And I'm going to be very honest and frank in saying to you that the two questions you posed have not been helpful to that process, right?

So, whether MENA should be classified as - whether whatever we're talking about should be classified

25:04

as White or not, is not part of this conversation in any meaningful way in terms of its implication or gathering of better data.

And the second part is, I would never identify as MENA. I don't even know what that is, other than there is an established Arab League definition of which countries fall within that.

The reason we proposed the plus three, the reason we have a map on the back of our binder that suggests that there is geographical area called the Middle East and North Africa, is

25:32

that it allows us to check a box and then place the country within that. I can say Palestine.

I can say Iran. I can say Israel. The point is, it arrives at data which we can then turn around. Sally can use it and say, "Look at the number of students I have at University of Michigan at Dearborn." I can use it saying, "This is an emerging population center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that's produced three Arab American members of congress. Wow, that's incredible."

That's sort of what we're talking about. So, I'm uncomfortable, a little bit, with the

26:02

idea that these declarative statements about we're White, not white. I'm not White. I can declare that for me. I don't feel comfortable doing anything broader than that in this discussion in this room.

So I want to kind of, sort of say, there's a ton of expertise in this room that can help us get to better counts of the communities we care about. There's a ton of expertise in this room that's done research in these areas who really can benefit - we need to benefit from what they have to say about that piece of this discussion as opposed to the

26:33

- what I absolutely love and do all the time, which is the existential conversations about identity and politics. But I'm just not sure that that is going to be the best use of our time today. Good day.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you, Maya. Yes, thank you very much. I know - we knew, should I say, that this was going to be a very dialectical conversation and, you know, we all have a lot of passion. I mean, I certainly do. That's why we're here.

And so I certainly didn't think it was going to be a very easy forum today, if you don't

27:03

mind me saying. But I think what's important is that we do get our voices out and that we hear the feedback from you. And that's why we're having this forum. I think that's what's critical.

We don't - you know, believe it or not, we've never had a perfect race or ethnic question.

It has changed every census since the first census we had in 1790 until now. And it's going to change. Hopefully -- depending on the results -- 2020 is not going to look anything like the 2010.

27:31

And so, this is where we're at and we need your help to accomplish this. Okay?
So, okay so Randa and then we're going to go - I promise I'm not going to forget you over there. So, I think Randa is next.

Randa: Yes, I just wanted to caution people. I think that one of the things that might come from having a MENA -- and I'm going to try and say that now, after John's comment -- category, is really thinking that it's not a religious category and I think that

28:01

most Americans will perceive MENA as being Muslim. And I think that this is something that is good about MENA in that it is not a religious category as well as it's not an ethnic category.

So, I just want to sort of underline that I sort of see that as an advantage in terms of comprehending the diversity within the Middle East including Christians of various sects as well as Zoroastrians. I mean there's a lot of different ethnicities and religions

28:31

within the region and I think that that's going to be a challenge for us as scholars to explain that, perhaps, when we're using data, if the streamlined, combined version comes to pass.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your comment. Okay, so my eyesight is not as good as it used to be, so, Joseph I believe?

Roberto Ramirez: Then we'll go left and we'll go from you and then we'll go back. It seems like everyone here has a question, right? So, okay, we'll start with Joseph and then

29:01

to his left, all the way around. Okay, so please.

Joseph: I turn my back to the table (Crosstalk)

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, please Joseph. Speak into the mic. I won't take it personally.

29:12

Joseph: Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: You can actually lift the mic. You can lift the mic. There you go.

Joseph: Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Perfect.

Joseph: Good. So I'm turning my back again to you. Sorry about that.

Well, first of all I want to thank Maya and also blame her for stealing my comment. So,

29:34

yes. So basically I would like to second what Maya said.

Now speaking on behalf of the Lebanese community -- being the Lebanese voice here -- what's important for the Lebanese, I think, is to be recognized as Lebanese. That's the important thing. That's first of all. In matter of number, achievements, et cetera.

Now, when we talk about a broader categorization then, as you can tell maybe from previous

30:03

also research or testing that you did, the Lebanese might check Phoenician, might check Maronite, Druse, some of them might check Arabs also. And some may not.

So, it's important for them, again, to be recognized as Lebanese. Now, if you tell me about the categorization of MENA, that's more acceptable, yes, as far as region. And I would be maybe with Middle Eastern or North African but if you say Middle Eastern North African, they might say, "Well I'm not North African, I'm Middle Eastern." So leave the "or" in

30:34

the middle somehow. That would be my comment.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Thank you. It doesn't work? There we go.

Soumia Aitlelhaj: Yes, I think these questions are really helpful in terms of just - I am pushing it back, I'm disagreeing with - in terms of that they're not helpful. I think they're very helpful because they bring the conversation in.

31:02

Especially, for instance, the North - I mean, someone mentioned who should White be on the - at the beginning. But my hesitation is also, why should the Middle Eastern be first then

North Africa? Why couldn't it be the other way around?

And, more importantly, like, as a member of a group who are in Chad, who are in Neshia area in Mali that, you know, they don't want to be associated with the Middle East people. And, even I disagree with Eastern Mediterranean. That just completely takes North Africa and

31:31 there's a big division between North Africa and the rest of the North African continent.

So I disagree with that.

My suggestion would be in terms of, like - I don't know how this, do the policy with this, but just separating the two. Just because the more we get into specifics, for instance Arab, as soon as we want to tick identity then there is, you know, an open box. No one wants to mention that.

So, I think just - it will be helpful to simplify Middle East and then North Africa. And then have categories. So, thank you.

32:03

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Sonia: All right. For the first one - first question, should we use the term Middle Eastern or North African as a category? I would say no because North African is not a race and it's not an ethnicity. So, not just North Africa. The whole Africa - African people

32:31

don't want to be included in MENA or Middle East, because they don't see themselves like that. And if we use that it would cause more confusion in the population count and everything. And the one you do - do you think the community will identify, like, the Middle Eastern or North African term? I say no, because a lot of people I know -- a lot of communities -- do not want to be included.

33:00

In Ohio, we have, like, in some hospitals, the term, like, Middle Eastern and people do not see themselves. They're not White, they're not African American and they're not Middle Eastern.

So as Amazigh people or Berber people, we'd like to have our own classification and add from other countries that are in Africa, but not from North Africa. And, like, in the middle center Africa. And they are not Arabs. They are not Middle Eastern. And we should not

33:34

include that.

The Amazigh population or community is large and big in the United States, in America, and I'd rather have Berber or Amazigh American as term. Like African American, Kurdish American. This would be helpful for us. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay, so that's good comments. And so that's a great example of a great feedback that we want to hear from you so if you, please, could fill out the form and tell us exactly

34:01

what you just said, I really would appreciate that because that's the kind of feedback we want.

Fatma: Well, this is interesting. I'm here, obviously, to represent the Turks who do not belong anywhere. They've never belonged anywhere, anytime.

Roberto Ramirez: That's what we found, too.

Fatma: And so big and they've also have Germanization the rest of the people of the Middle Eastern and North African, so as a consequence, you know. It's very hard to know where we sit.

Obviously, with the Whites, when you think about the Germanization bit. I mean, I'm saying

34:34

that flippantly.

But the important thing here, though, is I think we have to make a distinction, probably -- in terms of time and space -- which we do not seem to.

I mean, there is, in the Middle East, a lot of conflict, obviously. As I represent myself.

And power inequalities in the Middle East. Then what happens is that you move across and you become a part of the body politic of the United States.

35:04

So - but when you come to America itself, there also time and space matters. I mean that is why, for example, you cannot flippantly use Europeans for Whites because White is associated in the United States. With power. And non-White is associated with disempowerment. So what I'm trying to say is, what it means to be - what identity means in the Middle

35:31

East context is something different. I was there. A Turk, right? But when it comes to the United States, what a Turk means in the United States is different for me now. It is not the same as what it means to me as a Turkish citizen in Turkey.

I mean, what does it mean for me to be a Turkish American? That is probably what we need to take into account. That our identities in the United States are different.

But, nevertheless, there are power inequalities there, too. And that is probably what we need

36:05

to be cognizant of. When you sort of say Middle East and North Africa, it does cover a space. And I would, as a Turk, identify with Middle East or North Africa, yes.

But then there are many inequalities in that category of MENA. How are those inequalities going to play out in the American context? That is what we need to probably discuss.

Roberto Ramirez: And that's exactly what we hope to find out in this National Content

36:31

Test this Fall. How does the Turkish community, for example, respond with a MENA or without a MENA category? How do they do? What do they do? What do they check? What do they don't check? Those are the things that we want to find out and through the interview process that we have in the part of the test, which is really unique.

Most of our National Content Tests don't have re-interview component. We're going to go back to those folks and say, "Hey, you said you were Turkish here." And then we re-interview them. Do they reidentify again, do they not? What do they tell us? So those are the things

37:02

that we want to find out.

Fatma: Well there is an - we also have to take into account generational difference because generally people identify differently. This is definitely something we know in the Arab communities in Dearborn. And, you know, with the Turkish community I think the secular aspect will be very important for older generations. The religious aspect will probably come in with younger generation. So I would also alert you to the generational or age factor there.

37:30

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, good point. Okay, Gigi.

Gigi: Very briefly, I just wanted to say in response to the comment that people will not choose MENA. That's not true in the samples that I've - I have two separate samples in which, overwhelmingly, people choose MENA when it is there, because there's nothing else there. And I actually tested it and compared it to some other race, as well. So they will choose MENA.

So I just want to be very clear that no term is ever going to be perfect, but I think we

38:05

should try to move towards the most inclusive term we can get. And I think MENA is the best thing that we have.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, last - I think we're right on time. So, we've got one more, right? Christina?

Christina: Yes. And I'll just be brief. A few things - when it was said that, sort of, nobody - so, one is the separation between identity and identification. I think that's

38:32

important to keep in mind. Identity is to - we all have personal various things, or whatnot. But identification is what we're willing to check off. What we're willing to see ourselves amongst a list of things. One.

Second, when thinking that, sort of, MENA doesn't exist as, sort of, an identity or what people call themselves, nothing exists before it's created.

When the Hispanic category -- Latino category -- was being discussed in the 1970s lots of people did not know what this was. This is a huge effort throughout the 70s to get people

39:03

to actually recognize this. It involved the media. It involved activists.

So, if we're unsure about whether it exists or not, these things will take on a life of its own.

And I think the third part is, I actually do think that the race question is going to be really important with this. In large part because, if we think so -- I know much more about the Latino category -- if we think back about the Latino category and how it was when it was created and when it was being debated in the 1970s -- the fact that it wasn't an

39:33

ethnicity created huge problems for collecting statistical data.

So, we've mentioned different places that will follow the Census Bureau's lead but not every - so, for example, school districts collect data. Hospitals collect data. Vital statistics offices collect data. Oftentimes, throughout the 70s and throughout the 80s the argument was, "Well we only collect racial data." Right? And so, this ethnicity category - so, to the extent that lots of people follow what the Census Bureau does, but not everybody.

40:04

And race is still seen as, sort of, the master categories here. I think that's an incredibly important aspect to keep in mind here.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes. Thank you for your comments. One of the -- you know, I want to disclose this -- one of the things - one of the reasons why I invited Dr. Mora to come talk to us is because a lot of her research and books that she's done, is look at the pan ethnicity development of the Hispanic term. As she mentioned in the 70s, where you had Cubans and you had

40:32

Venezuelans and you had Puerto Ricans, who said, "I'm not Hispanic. I don't know what the heck that is. So why are you trying to put me under that umbrella?" So...

Christina: And there's no Hispania.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, exactly. So, there's a lot of parallels that what's happening here with the Middle Eastern and North African category, if you will, right? Same things we're hearing with you right now. Like, "What the heck is that? What do you mean? That doesn't even exist, you know. We're not going..."

So that's one of the things we want to test because, you know, remember folks, this about a census, right? We're trying to come up with a way to enumerate the population here. Okay?

41:01

So we've got to come up with some kind of umbrella terms -- if you will, for lack of a better term -- to have the community as inclusive - trying to come up with a term that's as most inclusive at all.

So, and thank you for your comment about yes, there's not perfect term or question, as I mentioned earlier.

So, thank you. Okay, so looks like we're back on time. I believe I didn't miss anyone. Oh, we've got one more? Do - we're done over there, right? Okay, so we're back to you, Morad.

41:30

We'll take this last question and then we'll get to the following session.

Morad Ghorban: I believe Kassab.

Roberto Ramirez: Oh, sorry. Kassab. Okay. No, we...

Morad Ghorban: I just want to really back up what Joseph and Maya said. I think for the Iranian American community, the most important thing for them, is to be counted as Americans of Iranian or Persian ancestry.

When it comes to the race - racial classification, I think you'll see a split in the community

42:01

whether they want to be identified as white or not. When there is an open registry that was the number one concern that was reflected back to us. "Hey does this mean a new racial classification for us? What does that mean?" And our response was, like, "No. This is about

just identifying your ethnicity or your origin."

That's why I strongly support a combined question that allows respondents to self-identify themselves.

42:31

Whatever their race or their ethnicity. Roberto Ramirez: And we've got some great slides in Merarys presentation that's going to talk exactly what you're talking about, should demonstrate to you how anyone can report more than one or self-identify with more than one category or one - exactly.

Morad Ghorban: And I really oppose having a separate MENA category in the race question, alone, without the Hispanic origin being in it. I think it's going to confuse a lot of people that this is a new racial category.

43:03

And then in regards to the MENA identification, I think you're going to get so many different answers and so many different opinions. But I think, if you're looking at geographic locations, this is probably the best way you could term it.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you, Morad. Okay?

Khaled Beydoun: I think it's really key to be forward thinking, right? In terms of maybe

43:32

there might not be considerable buy-in immediately after the classification is framed and adopted. But there's a cascading effect, right?

These classifications are going to be adopted on college applications, on employment forms.

You know, different mediums that are going to adopt and endorse this classification.

And when that happens, and people tie in ticking that classification with a specific interest, then there's going to be buy-in.

So, in the long term, the buy-in's going to come, especially when the classification is

44:04

echoed, endorsed and adopted by alternative mediums in the educational context, the employment context and so on. So the buy-in will come.

And again, really important to be forward-thinking.

Roberto Ramirez: You know, I'm actually happy that you said that, because I just wrote it down -- you know the buy-in. So, I think this is somethings that's really important to understand.

So when we - first of all, we have never had a MENA category before, right? In a census environment. So we're going to do a test this Fall. A census-style test, right? What happens

44:35

-- imagine this -- what happens if the community doesn't respond? Just hypothetically. We don't know. We don't want to be - what happens if they don't embrace it? That is information for us, right? What happens if they do? What happens if they do respond to the category?

They check the box -- they write in Lebanese, Amazigh or Kurdish, and they start writing it in there -- and by the way, because of the design of the question, you choose more

45:00

than one box.

What happens if they check MENA and White? MENA and Black? MENA and everything else?

That's part of the test. You see, I think that's critical to understand. That is part of the test.

Right now, we're testing the MENA category, right? It has not been decided whether we're going to do this in 2020. We're testing it in '15, right? When the results come in, data-driven decisions, right, are going to be made. What happened? How did the American public respond?

Right? And so then, based on those findings, we'll make our recommendations whether we have a category or not. So I want to keep that in mind, you know, as we go through it.

45:33

Because remember, it's not just a scientific process, right? It's also a buy-in process and a political process, as we're going through this right now. It's always been this way, by the way.

Khaled Beydoun: I hope you don't mind. I think that the immediate response, also, is not going to be indicative of buy-in necessarily, right? Because right now what you have is

the intersection of heightening surveillance and the emergence of counter-radicalization

45:56

policing, right? Which is going to suppress how people authentically identify, in the

46:01

short term.

So, once immediate - if this classification is adopted, for instance, and the nominal buy-in isn't that great, that's not going to necessarily reflect whether people want to identify as such. So again, being - you know, the long term horizon and being forward-thinking is specifically important with regard to this community - these communities and the population more broadly.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. We'll go - looks like we're going - it looks like we're starting

46:30

over again. So, hold on one second. Let me confer with my staff. I lost track of time here. Just give me one second.

Okay, all right. Okay.

Sahar: Just a quick for - at least in the international relations, international development, international diplomacy, Middle Eastern and North African is a very staple term. I didn't - I actually when I saw it - I'm very familiar with the term in that context. I realize people

47:01

do not, individually socially say, "Hey I am Middle Eastern North African." They might say whatever ethnically or national origin-based identity.

So, I don't - that's one reason why I think that train has left the station. MENA is used -- or MENNA is used -- in so many other discourses and so I don't know about individuals but it's not an unfamiliar term. And if it's pejorative, we can always redefine it through what Ed is talking about, over time.

47:31

Roberto Ramirez: Okay, so Joseph.

Joseph: Quickly. Let's say after the testing we arrive to a certain name. Whatever name it's going to be. Don't you think that the US Congress has to agree to it in order to add...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh yes.

Joseph: ...to the form? So what makes you think that the Congress will agree to it?

I mean, how are we going to convince the Congress?

Roberto Ramirez: I do not know that, actually. And I'm going to make this very clear. Thank you for bringing that up.

Joseph: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: We're going to discuss that in our last session.

Joseph: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: But, you know, remember, it's like a three-prong..

48:00

Roberto Ramirez: Well, you know besides the stakeholder engagement that we're doing here. Talking to the experts and stuff, right? And all the different communities. We also work with OMB, right? We have an interagency community examining these issues.

But as you said, sir, we also work with Congress as well. Like, we're going to talk about in a minute, when we have to submit the topics to Congress for approval and then the actual forms themselves in 2017 and 2018.

So, yes. Anything could happen between now and 2020. And, by the way, it's happened.

48:30

Many times. In fact, half the race question we have right now has been legislated to us. You're going to do this. You're not going to do that. So, we're also very used to doing that, as well. Yes.

So, we're fully prepared for that might happen. Okay, so I think that is the last question, I believe? Oh, Linda, please.

Linda: Okay. I just wanted to um...think about that buy-in piece, because the success of

the collection of data eventually is going to come at the - I think, on the backs of
49:02

the grassroots community organizations.

Roberto Ramirez: Absolutely. I totally agree with you.

Linda: And just to be observant in the rules. That is not really a group that's not very well reflected here. So, policy organizations are important. Advocacy organizations are important. Academia is important. But they're not the ones on the street that are going to be doing the Census.

So, I think that figuring out a way to engage that population of grassroots social service human service organizations -- those running the adult education programs, the active school programs -- these are the community based organizations that need to buy in, because

49:32

they're the ones that are going to be doing the work.

And that's exactly what happened in 2010. It was on our backs to push the Census in our communities. So we need to make sure that their voices are at the table because if they're not a part of the conversation, they're not going to feel like they want to be a part of something that they weren't a part of originally.

Roberto Ramirez: You're right. And that's a good point. I want to end real quickly to say that as we approach the 2020 Census, other - the decennial Census Programs are going to start kicking in. Not only just the paid advertising campaigns but our great partnership

50:01

programs, so, as we lead to the 2020 Census.

So, we are going to be working with those community leaders as we enumerate the population in these communities. We like to work with the partnership program.

And oh, by the way, in your binder, at the very end, you're going to see language guides that we have in different languages. You're going to see, I believe, it's in Arabic there.

We have it in Farsi and et cetera. So, I think one of them is Turkish, I'm not sure. But - so you're going to see - we hope to expand these programs and, you know, so definitely work with community and share the information as we move forward.

50:32

So I'm going to take one last question and then we're going to...

Fatma: One - yes - it's not a question or a comment. I totally understand the advocacy part of this. Of course they are the ones negotiating meaning production. But, as academics, we also do knowledge production. We're usually the ones who write the books, as well. So, please, you know, make some states for both of us here. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Well, I mean, I'm going - in the interest of disclosure, if I say I have another motive of why we -- we at the Census Bureau has a motive - of why we invited you

51:03

here. It's about misinformation, right? Now we hope that you go back to your communities, you go back to your schools and see what we're actually doing.

There was a lot of misunderstanding about what the Bureau was doing. We were making everyone Arab. Well, you're seeing that we're not, right? So, those are the things -- and you're going to see a lot more about what our plans are -- so, those are the things you want to go back to say, "Hey, I was there. We're talking to them. We know what they're doing. We've been working. This is not a bureaucratic decision that just came up that Roberto said he wanted to do it."

51:30

This is working from the grassroots. We cannot take any credit for this. This is -- as Helen mentioned earlier -- this has been going on for the last 30 years. They've been knocking on our door saying, "Hey, open up. Let's do something about this." So, here we are.

Okay. So, I'm going to do this next presentation real quickly, so bear with me. So we're going to usually do the style I do, which is no talking points but - no, I'm just joking.

All right, so. If we run that on slide 32. Okay.

So, in our next section, I will discuss with you how we develop our working classification

52:02

on the Middle Eastern and North African category for the 2015 National Content Test.

So, on this slide we have a reference map to help emphasize the Census Bureau's proposed classification of Middle Eastern or North African groups that, you know, that's geographically based. This is the case for all the Federal Government definitions of major race and ethnic categories, such as Asian, White and Black, you know, we just discussed that. With the current OMB standards. The Census Bureau's proposed geographic region of the Middle East

52:34

and North Africa includes both Arabic-speaking nationalities and ethnicities such as Egyptian and Jordanian, but it also includes non-Arabic-speaking nationalities and ethnicities such as Iranian and Kurdish.

Again, it's important that we note that the core of the race and ethnic categories used by the Federal Government are geographically defined. So - and we're going to talk more about these classifications in the next session or two.

53:01

So, among the 15 classifications we examined in our research, we found a lot of variation in how this region is classified. So, on one end, the classification from the U.S. Department of Labor had - they had the least number of countries or territories, at 12. Okay?

How they define MENA, for example. They had 12 countries and territories of what that definition was - classification was.

On the other end, the classification for the University of California at Berkeley, had 29 countries and territories, okay?

53:30

So, you see a wide variation, right? The average number of countries and territories was about 20 among the 15 that we found. However, we found that most classifications overlap.

So, for example, Jordan is in all the classifications that we saw. And overall, 19 of the countries and territories were used in more than half the classifications.

However, all these classifications are geographically based, as we mentioned here, and also in the American states, if you will. And that ethnicity base, which is important to keep in mind as

54:01

we try to develop a Middle Eastern and North African classification for the 2020 Census.

To illustrate this, we created an infographic to show you what we found. I hope the colors come out here. The colors don't really come out too well here, but. So, let me explain what you're seeing here.

This word cloud shows all the countries and territories that we included in the various classifications or research, as I just mentioned. The countries in the largest font -- in the

54:31

dark burgundy -- are the countries or territories that were in all 15 of the classifications researched by the Census Bureau. Like, for example, like Algeria, Yemen and Lebanon.

And additional countries in the next largest font size shown in a dark orange -- I hope you can see that -- were in 14 of the 15 classifications. These include countries such as Libya, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Countries and territories that were progressively fewer in the 15 organizational classifications

55:01

are represented by different colors and increasingly small font size.

So, we see countries such as Turkey and Afghanistan shown in purple, are included in just few of the definitions that we found - of the 15 that we found. Okay?

And in the smallest font sizes of the slide -- shown in red -- are countries or territories which were only in one classification. So - someone mentioned earlier, where's Armenia?

Well, that's - you know, Armenia was only in one classification that we found. For example.

55:31

Okay? So, please note that we're, you know, we're only talking about countries and territories here. We haven't added any of the ethnic or national groups that many of you have mentioned here and we'll talk about that in the next few slides.

So, based on these results the Census Bureau developed a working classification on Middle Eastern and North African by including all those countries and territories that were in over half of the 15 classifications. So as long as they were in 50% or more of those classifications, the Bureau said, "We're going to, you know, start this as a working classification."

56:02

Okay? And this, of course, includes - we're talking about the transnational and pan ethnicity groups that we'll talk about that in a minute.

So, as you can see here, this is the current working proposal as to classify a person of Middle Eastern or North African if they have any ethnic origins or different roots or heritage from any of the following nationalities that you listed here. So these are the 19 that -- right now -- the Census Bureau is proposing.

56:31

So I know many of you here are shaking your head and - but you know what? That's why we're going to ask you right now, in a second, what you think about this. How do you feel about this? Who should be in or out? So we're going to talk about that in a minute. Okay?

So, you can see here, we have Algeria in here. We have, you know - someone mentioned Israeli in here. We have Israeli in here. This is a current work in - working definition. And so all the groups here that you may not see that you would like, and we want to hear from

57:00

you on that.

So, on the next slide, as I mentioned, we also include - included other Middle Eastern and North African ethnicities with, you know, cross national borders and whose origins are from this region. So, for example we have Amazigh or Berber. We have Arab or Arabic. We also have Assyrian. We have Bedouin. We also have Chaldean. We have Kop, Druse, Kurdish and Syriac.

We also included general and pan ethnicity terms such as Middle Eastern or Arabic, Arab

57:33

or North African. These are basically individuals that just wrote in North African, for example. Or just wrote in Middle Eastern.

In our focus groups -- believe it or not -- these were very popular terms that the participants wrote in. Now we can't generalize from the findings from the focus groups. One of the reasons why we're going to do this test is to see is if these pan terms are popular among the population or not. We're going to get through - so, in response to the federal registered

58:01

noted, that Nicholas mentioned to you earlier - remember all those thousands of comments that came in in the last few months? We also received over 700 comments of which - on which countries or ethnic groups should include - should be included or excluded as far as our working classification.

So, for example, many said, "Hey, you know, you should also include Cameroonian" for example, "or Djiboutian or Mauritanian, Somali, Sudanese and Turkish." for example. "Hey, where are

58:30

those? Where are those folks? Why don't you have those in there?"

But on the other hand we have -we received other comments that said, "No, those should also be removed. Why do you have those in there? Those are wrong. They're not in the - those are not geographically in the Middle Eastern/North African categories." So, we've gotten comments on both ends, if you will. Okay?

So, it leads to my feedback for you and questions I have for you. So what nationalities and ethnicities should be added or removed from our working classification of the Middle Eastern

59:00

North African category? So, that's one question I have for you right now.

And then, are there other classifications within this population that we should consider?

So, for example, if you did not have - if we did not have a MENA category, is there another classification that you would recommend? I think I've heard some of it already over there. But, you know, keep that in mind as we ask for this feedback.

Okay, so we went - started this way. Then we went that way. So now we're back to here,
59:32

right? So, we're going to - please, Louise.

Louise: Okay, good. So this is my comment from earlier. I think, like most of Middle East and North African history, these classifications were written by outsiders who didn't really know what they were doing and I don't think we should reproduce them. In my view, the Arab League defines who's a member of the Arab State and that includes Komaros, Jabouti,
60:02

Mauretania, Somalia, Sudan. I don't know about South Sudan, I can't speak to that - perhaps our guest here. Faharowi I see is missing here. I think that's - you know, its contested territory.

Roberto Ramirez: Be sure that you write that down. Thank you.

Louise: So that's my personal perspective. I'd like to hear other people's views. I think the word Bedouin is Orientalist, but I'll let other speak up on that. And I wonder about Copts, because that's a religious group.

60:30

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

(crosstalk)

Roberto Ramirez: Right. We do have what...

(Crosstalk)

Roberto Ramirez: ...we call -- and I'm not an expert in this. I'm not going to pretend. This is why we're here. That's why many of you are here -- and to talk to us about what we call these ethno-religious groups, right? Like the Copts the Chaldeans, for example. You know, we're now emphasizing here more the ethnicity part, here in the US, okay? Many of you may or may not know that we're actually barred from collecting religion. Period. So we're not - that's not on the table. I just want to make that clear. We're talking about ethnicity, race of origin. Okay?

So, to go back to your comment real quick. One of the things that the Census Bureau is
61:06

doing, is we're revamping all of our code lists. So -- Rita will attest -- that you're right. A lot of our code lists are a little and, you know, they've been around a long time, but this past two years, we have been contacting experts to examine and look at all our code lists. We have already done a lot of that process already. Looking at the White code list the Black list, Asian, MENA.

In fact, in your binder right now, there's a code list for MENA. Check it out. We want
61:31

you to look at that list. You just mentioned a couple of groups that wasn't, you know - please mention them in there. Tell them you need to have this in there or not. So that's what we want to hear from you, okay?

Okay, so Helen? Yes.

Helen: And most of these categories are actually given by respondents. So a Bedouin...

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Thank you.

Helen: ...someone identified themselves as Bedouin or Copts. So, for us, do we take them out or do we include them or count them? Or count them something else?

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, that's an excellent point. Thank you. I know sometimes our code
62:00

listing is kind of strange and antiquated. We sent -- I have to share this with you, because everyone gets so serious, but -- we sent a code list to an expert. I'm not naming the expert. And they wrote back and said -- I think it was the White code list, I believe -- and it said, "Is this a joke? Are you ridiculous?" Because we had terms like Babylonian in there. And we had terms that, you know - what was the Arabic name for farmer? I'm (unintelligible).
62:31

Right. Exactly.

But why? Why did we have it on there? It's because what Rita said. It's because people

reidentify and write this in.

And just to show you how serious we are about how - what we capture people's identity. The best we do is capture those write-ins and then we try to figure out where we put them under. This is some of the struggles that we have with our code lists that we have.

So people -- believe it or not -- people identify this way. People write in these kind of terms. Yes, Helen.

Helen: Thanks Roberto. I've already, kind of, given my opinion about how inclusive I
63:03

think the categories should be. I totally support all the Arab League countries. Even those in sub-Saharan Africa.

I also believe that it should be as inclusive as possible with all of the ethno-religious minority community. Because what we're really talking about is, we want a place where people can find themselves and I think it should be as broad and inclusive as possible.

Let me say a word about the methodology that you used in order to come up with your most
63:34

commonly used terms. And I'm not faulting you for the message -- all of you -- but I'm just - I would like to say that it's a little bit constrained by the fact that agencies -- many of the agencies that you use -- are agencies that deal with exporting. So...

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Very true.

Helen: ...of course there's not going to be sub-national categories on there. Of course there's going to not be Armenia on there. Or Armenia's going to be tiny. Because they're
64:04

not talking - we're not talking about exporting to the country of Armenia. We're talking about the Armenian American population -- done research -- the majority of which come from a Middle Eastern country and might identify this way.

So, the methodology was constrained by the fact that you were using many agencies that are dealing with exporting to the MENA region. Not with the populations that are existing here. Which is why that slide...

64:31

Roberto Ramirez: That's a good point.

Helen: ...is a little bit skewed towards the commonly understood countries. So...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes. So, in her response - that's a good point. An excellent point.

And guess - but that's where we're - that's what we struggled with. We couldn't find many organizations that actually had a definition or classification for the region. Try to find it. It's very difficult.

It wasn't just only these government agencies, right, that were mostly in the business export import. But, you know, we did find a lot of reputable organizations -- like the World

65:01

Health Organization, Pew Center -- that did have and proposed classifications that we use.

And we also contacted many universities -- as I mentioned before -- to see, hey, how do you classify this region of the world? And so, we included those too, in our classification.

So do keep that in mind. But yes, you're right. There is no consensus about how this is classified.

We're hoping -- through your feedback -- that we can come up with one as far as, you know, getting your feedback in. Not to say we have to have 100% consensus on it, right? But to

65:32

say who all should be in and out. And then based on the results from this forum and, of course, the National Content Test, we'll - the Bureau will finally make a recommendation down the road when all the results are in. Okay?

Okay, so then, we're going to skip to the other table back here.

Fatma: Well, I want to just say a few things about the Turks. You're probably going to get a lot of push-back from the Turkish State itself, unfortunately. Because the Turkish

66:02

State defines the Turkish identity as an umbrella identity, even though it is an ethnic one.

As a consequence, I would, for example, like to have Armenian, Cypriot, Assyrian, Chaldean, Druse and Kurdish as well as Circassia, included in the Turkish category.

But the problem is, because they do not see these ethnicities, the moment, for example,
66:30

you include the Armenian. Most of the Armenians in the United States are from Western Armenia. And they arrived here as a consequence of the Armenian genocide. But the Turkish State does not recognize the genocide.

As a consequence, they're going to not recognize the Armenians, even though the Armenian State is in Eastern Armenia, which is not considered the State for many Armenians who live in the United States.

So that is - Cypriot is going to be a problem again, because half of it is Greek. The other
67:02

half is Turkish. But the Turkish occupation is not internationally recognized either, so that's going to be - they'll probably push the recognition of Cypriot but not the recognition of Armenia or Kurds, of course. Because they're not, again, within Turkey recognized.

Or Assyrians, Chaldeans or the Druse because there's also a lot of massacres throughout history -- Turkish history -- against these groups. So that's just giving you a head's

67:32

up about what's going to happen in the future.

Roberto Ramirez: So we're aware of the some of the delicate issues that you mention, right?

But again, you know, we're talking about self-identity and so if someone writes in Turkish or Chaldean or, you mentioned Kurdish or, right?

Fatma: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: We're going to capture all that, you know? In the write-ins or in the check boxes. So that...

Fatma: I don't know how much push-back you'll get from local governments and states in the region with respect...

Roberto Ramirez: In the U.S.?

Fatma: No, actually outside of the U.S. because...

Roberto Ramirez: Well, so where - right. That's a good point. And so remember, it's about
68:02

the US experience, okay? We know the very complex history -- even our own country we have a lot of complex history, right? We're not going to avoid that -- but you know, again, I want to - we probably would be here until next week to just talk about, you know, the history of the Middle East alone, right?

So - but it's about the U.S. history and about the groups experiences here. So I do want to bring that, you know, bring that home.

Fatma: I totally understand what you are saying but the Turkish in the United States is actively
68:30

being used by the Turkish State in influencing the American foreign policy too, so you cannot say, "We are only looking at the United States" when these governments or states think that they have a stake on what's going on in the United States. Likewise with Israel, for example. These are very strong ties...

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Exactly.

Fatma: ...that you cannot overlook, in a way. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your comment. Absolutely. Thank you. Next.

Sonia: All right. I have some comments and questions, please. First, I would like to
69:01

know, where did you find these participants who answered about the classification, like, the map we saw?

The second thing. The Bedouin are just a group of people. It is not race or ethnicity. It's a group of people who live in the desert. Who live outside of the city. We can be everywhere, worldwide. Not just in Africa or Middle East. So that's that second thing.

And the third thing, the Arab League is political. So they included other countries to make them

69:37

self powerful and have been, like, fighting for, like, four years now, to get my country out of there. Because we're Amazigh. We're not Arabs. We don't want to be included in the Arab League but we're not here to talk about that today. And I just wanted to tell you that the invasion did that.

So, and for the countries that I would like to be excluded: Armenian, Azerbaijan, Komoran, 70:08

Cypriot, Jebujan, Georgian and Maltese. Because they are nowhere near North African or Middle East.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Sonia: Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: So thank you for your feedback. Again, you know, that's why we have the feedback forms. And I want to reemphasize again, that, you know, again it's about the US experience.

And third, I'm going to answer your first question. So where did we identify the organizations?

70:30

Where did we come up with the classifications? This was research that we've done over the last two years. Contacting these organizations, doing internet research. Me personally going to these organizations and talking to them.

These are the organizations right up here on the slides right here -- the ones that I've mentioned. So, that's where we found the classifications from. These are the 15 organizations that actually had a classification of this MENA region.

So, going back to Helen's, you know, concern is that, you know, we were very strict in the sense that we only wanted to identify organizations that actually even offered a

71:02

classification. There were many organizations that did mention MENA. As you said, it is popular. You're right, it is written a lot in the literature, but no one defines it.

Most of the time they do not define it. So where does the Middle East start? Where does it end? And so we struggled with that. And so this is where we started. This is where the Census Bureau started with.

Okay? All right, so. Back this way, right? Over here? Am I missing him? Sorry. Joseph?

Soumia Aitlelhaj: Sorry. Just, again to say the quick emphasis. Just - I had a question

71:34

in terms of the total population of North Africa versus the Middle Eastern. The reason I say that is because a lot of, you know, in terms of - coming here, in terms of a lot of people left even as you mentioned, they left their countries and came to the United States or Europe because there was more, kind of, freedom to have their own identity than in their own country. So that's important in terms of the American experience.

And I think - I disagree with the MENA. Especially, again, you know, Middle Easterners, Africa.

72:05

I think they should be separate just because of the power dynamic, you know. The Arab League, the historical consequences. They still taking effect. So I don't think we should push them together, just because there is so much tension. It just brings up conflict. So I think, you know, it's good to have those - Middle Eastern, North African but they should be separate categories.

And if you do have that combination, I think, diversify in it adding more countries, like,

72:32

you know, Chad, Mesar, Mali. You know, the borders people in terms of the twenty group. As well as, you know, Iran in the Middle East as well. So the more diversity, the more we diffuse the ethnic issue.

And just as a small, small, small in terms of the entity of Berber, I prefer to just to not use the Berber. Because it's just discriminatory.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Thank you for your comments. So, where - what we're going to do is that we're going to take Joseph's last question for now, before we break for lunch.

73:03

Because we're running a little tad late. And what we're going to do --we're not going to forget about you -- when we get back from lunch, we're going to answer the questions over here because I see number of name placards up. So just keep it up. Promise we'll get back to you as soon as we get back from lunch. So, we're going to have you ask your question and then we're going to break for lunch. And then we'll come back.

Joseph Gebeily: Yes. It's a very brief comment. Listening to what's been said earlier, I think - and thinking about, also, the members of the communities in general -- I think it's

73:31

important for, I guess, for us who interact with the community but for you too, to explain to the members of the communities that this is not about - the governments from that part of the world have nothing to do with this. Because they might think this way.

But I think it's important to reiterate this message. Here, we might understand it, but thinking about what the comments were -- the comments mentioned earlier -- yes, some of them might think that their governments might interfere in this. So they might have a say in this. So, I think it's important for us to clarify this point again and again.

74:03

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Thank you. Yes. Very good points. And so, we plan to continue this stakeholder engagement now until 2020. This is, by the way, will not be our last, you know, outreach that we do with the community. We plan to continue have - conversing, including more members and others, as well. I like the recommendation that Linda mentioned earlier about talking to grassroots organizations and things like that. So we plan to do that. And we will continue to do that. So yes, so what we're going to do is break for lunch

74:31

now. I ask everyone to be back in 45 minutes - 1:15 sharp - 1:15 sharp and we'll get to these questions over here when we get back so the cafeteria is right - coming out to the right, go to the left - it's all the way down there and hopefully we'll see you in 45 minutes.

Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), 5/29/15, Part 3

I hope everyone enjoyed their lunch. Glad to - happy that you are all back.

So I'm really happy to mention that we actually have a full hour of feedback. So you're not going to have any slides from me or anyone else up here for the next hour or so. We're going to continue the conversations and comments that you have. And I believe we left it off over here on the left-hand side. And so, what we're going to do - or over here. Okay. So, and then we're going to just keep going around and around until we exhaust all the comments

0:32

etcetera, and questions that you have. So, I believe we have until 2:30, right?

Okay. So, now we're back, officially. So, Rita, you have your name placard up or Sally.

Sally, you go first.

Sally: So, I just want to, sort of reiterate things that have already been said. In particular, something Helen said earlier about the idea of making it be as inclusive as possible.

And I think, especially now -- if you're doing the research, right, for this research phase

1:03

-- you want to include some of these national identities - it's like if you exclude them now, we'll never know. But if you include them now, we'll have a better chance of knowing.

And I do understand that there's some education. There's an education factor involved, especially with some of the African communities, you know. So it might be that you get a certain kind of response this first time around. Or to the whole MENA category, right?

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Sally: So I'm hoping that this survey that you're doing now is a - you understand that

1:32

it's one moment in time and then it might be that we need to do it again, right? But anyway, I just want to reiterate how I think the more inclusive your category is now, the better data you'll have in the future.

Roberto Ramirez: One of the things we plan to do is when the results come in - the data comes in -- is that we're going to look at different classifications. The size and things like that. That's part of the research as well, right? How people identify but also looking at the classifications of you recommending. The experts, right? So - and other stakeholders

2:01

that we're engaging with. So that will be part of it as well.

Sally: So, I also, -- like several people before -- I have a real problem with the word Bedouin being on the list. Bedouin is not necessarily an ethnic identification. It is a category. So you were saying in the old days you used to have the work fellah, peasant. Bedouin is a counter to - either you're Fellai or you're Bedoui. Or you're Modena.

Those are like three categories. You're a city person, you're a farmer or you're a Bedouin in the Middle East region. Right? So it's not - it's not the same as these other terms.

2:33

So...

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your feedback.

Sally: ...in the region.

Roberto Ramirez: We'll definitely - we'll re-examine and look at that term again.

Sally: And then, I have a question about your over-sample. So how are you going find - so you're saying you're doing 1.2 million people plus and oversample of the MENA community.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Sally: So, how large will that oversample be? How are you going to find people?

And then, I think, I'm so happy to hear that you're doing this. And it is a very large

3:04

number. You know, 1.2 million people, however you're oversampling people. But I'm also concerned that you have so many different kinds of questions that you're researching and I'm worried that,

you know, that that will really water down the response.

Roberto Ramirez: Right. So, we may - what we're going to do - we don't have our statistician -- our survey statistician experts -- sampling experts here. We - this is POP division and of course, we work a lot with the subject matter.

3:31

We do work with another division that is in charge with the actual - the selection of the sample, if you will. But I can talk at a very high level to tell you that, very much like our previous Census Content Tests that we have done leading up to a census - right? That's how our content - our content is really determined by these content tests that we do throughout the decade.

And so we traditionally have over-sampled for, you know, race groups like Black, Asian, etcetera. And one of the things we want to emphasize is that, for the first time in this content test we're going to be over-sampling for this particular population. The Middle

4:02

Eastern North African population.

And we're using data from the ancestry question. Which is really the only source of data we have at the national level to identify this population.

So, we don't know the size of that sample except for how many housing units we're targeting, which is the 1.2 million. And it is - I do assure that it is a representative sample of the whole country.

I don't think we have anyone here that could speak to any more of that particular, but we could get back to you on any more specifics on that sample selection and et cetera.

4:33

Sally: But you're not doing 1.2 MENA people. You're doing...

Roberto Ramirez: No, 1.2 million housing units...

Sally: Yes. That's what I thought.

Roberto Ramirez: ...total, okay?

Nicholas Jones: Similar to what Roberto said earlier that we have a large, nationally representative sample. The key is that we're going to be able to have strata for key population groups.

So we'll be able to devote part of the sample to a MENA over-sample or to a Black over-sample or a Hispanic over-sample.

We did this successfully in the 2010 AQE where we had -- for the first time -- different strata for different populations where we're looking for areas that have larger proportions

5:03

of those groups. To ensure that we can get them into the sample.

Roberto Ramirez: And that they're representative in the sample.

Sally: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: Because even in that strata you would likely miss that population, for example. Okay?

All right. Excellent question. Okay. So, Rita.

Joseph Kassab: Sure.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Joseph Kassab: Just wondering. I want to revisit the issue for classification. Is there intention by the Census Bureau to revisit the criteria for classification? For classification of

5:36

ethnicity?

Roberto Ramirez: Sorry. Repeat your question. I'm sorry.

Joseph Kassab: Is there intention by the - your Census Bureau to reclassify the ethnicities here, based on what we just read here. Or, is that an intention?

Roberto Ramirez: Well, you're specifically talking about the Middle Eastern North African category?

Joseph Kassab: Right. The MENA categories.

Roberto Ramirez: So we're - so right now we have -- as I mentioned -- we have a working classification that we're proposing, right? And so, of course, this is why we invited

6:01

you here. To give us feedback on the classification. And I've been hearing a lot of great things here, you know. Mostly okay, but there are some issues, right? And so we want those feedback forms to say whether groups should be added. So yes, we are examining that classification.

Joseph Kassab: Yes. But what about the classifications already in place? If I remember very well, in 1984 and beyond, we visited the Census Bureau with a group of scholars, academia's on this issue. And we discussed that, especially on the issues related to the Chaldeans of

6:31

Syria, Syriac people, and we managed to convince the Census Bureau that this particular group ethnicity has to be classified.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Joseph Kassab: So why are we reinventing the wheel?

Roberto Ramirez: Well that's a good question. Well, one thing is that we met with - it was mentioned in a 1997 standards, as Nicholas mentioned earlier. And we did have a number of experts come and testify and say, "Hey, this is what it should be." But at that time, there was no recommendations made from OMB, okay?

So we did not have an Arab or a MENA category coming out of the OMB standards. And we still

7:04

don't have one right now, as we speak. As far as MENA category.

So, we're revisiting. We're certainly looking at those classifications but this is why we're present day now, because we're testing it. We didn't test it before. Right? And so that's why we're asking for the classifications for the feedback now. I'm not aware of any MENA classification in 1984.

Joseph Kassab: Well not that. I'm just talking about something you mentioned earlier, before

7:31

we broke off for lunch. And that is, you mentioned that, you know, the groups like Copts and Kushans - I mean, Chaldeans, can be maybe as a Kushan category or a religious category. And that isn't the case that we proved to the US Census. And there is legal case based on that, with the U.S. Census back in 1990. So we don't want to change that.

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Are you specifically talking about the Syrians/Chaldean lawsuit?

8:00

(Crosstalk)

Joseph Kassab: Yes. And in fact there is a category a fine for this particular group...

(Crosstalk)

Joseph Kassab: ...number 482 for ancestries.

Roberto Ramirez: So, in regard to that lawsuit, what we know we have individual codes for Assyrian and Chaldean and we plan to have that. In fact then, in your binder you will see that we have proposed classification individual codes for that.

And in Merarys presentation, we're going to show you some potential data products that are going to be showing these specific origins, if you will. Not just the pan terms, but all

8:34

these different origins

So, yes. So I just - I want to assure everyone here that we have not decided what the classifications are going to be. So we're going to continue those conversations. And we certainly don't want to undo what's been said to us in the past, for sure. We're definitely going to consider all that information as we move forward. Okay?

Joseph Kassab: Just to add to the participants here, Chaldeans, they were not Kushans for

9:00

four thousand years until the advent of Christianity to take - you know, took over. Chaldeans are the descendants of the Chaldean Empire from Southern Iraq and was the very first civilization started in the world was in Iraq and Southern Iraq and Chaldeans they come from all of the Chaldea. That is the place where Prophet Abraham was born.

Roberto Ramirez: Well I am glad to mention that we are planning to have an individual code for Chaldeans. Someone writes in Chaldean, we're going capture it. We're going to code

9:30

it.

Joseph Kassab: Okay. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Absolutely. Okay, Rita.

Rita: Just some clarification. Can we go to the map slide please?

Thanks. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: You mean the reference map?

Rita: The reference map. And I - being on both sides I realize that the task at hand here is to define and identify the Middle East and North Africa and who's included and who is not included. And, I think, that since it's not fair to ask the Census Bureau to

10:04

draw the line and say, "Where do you want the Middle East and North Africa to end? Where would you draw the line and in Africa where would you draw the line? And in Asia or Europe, for that matter?"

And this is why we are here, to tell them where these lines can be drawn based on our expertise of the region. One thing that I see that has been brought up time and again

10:32

in this meeting is that the basic national definitions or boundaries are part of the puzzle.

But the puzzle is much bigger and includes histories and includes identities and grievances.

Not just grievances in North Africa but also grievances here in the United States. And

the Armenian case is a great example of where the grievances even exist in the United States.

11:01

Again, the American experience. I want to bring that back to that.

So, with that challenge I think Helen's point is let's be as inclusive as we want - as we can. And the alternative is nothing. What's - if you don't want to be included in this

MENA category, then you don't have an alternative way to get data on your constituency or your population. You can get it from ancestry data and the Census folks can talk more about that

11:34

but not this 100% count. And I, can you talk a little bit...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes, well - well there is some other race, right?

Rita: Yes, so...

Roberto Ramirez: So there is always - we plan to have that category there and we're not planning to remove it. And so, you can definitely - and so remember -- one thing I do want to mention -- is that, remember folks, is that because of the new strategies coming out of the AQE that study that we did five years ago -- the design-style question -- one of

12:00

the things we're doing is that, we're providing write-in lines for the first time for groups that didn't have it before under the White and Black categories.

And people can write in their nationality or ethnicity groups there. And we plan to capture all that. We plan to capture it, code it and tabulate it. Okay?

In this environment now, where we're testing multiple race categories, ethnicity categories, okay? So just keep that in mind, too. They don't just have to write it in the MENA category.

They can write it in the White in the Black or in some other race.

So I think that's also really important. Because, you know, at the end of the day, there's no

12:33

really right wrong, right? It's about self-identities. How people feel about the categories that are there.

We do know one thing right now. There's a lot of Americans that are not very happy with the categories there. They're not seeing themselves in the current categories. They're not answering the questions. They're finding they're struggling with the categories.

This particular MENA - Middle Eastern North African category has come out of the grassroots work over the last 30 years. As I mentioned before, saying. "We don't see ourselves here.

13:03

We want a category."

By the way, and not just this group. We have many other groups, for example, the Caribbean folks. We have the Brazilians as well. We have other groups that also want to come to the table to find themselves.

We believe this type of questionnaire strategies that we have now in testing, have seems to be working well. And that's why we continue testing it. Not only the combined but as well as - the separate as well. We're continuing to test these strategies. Okay?

All right. So, I believe we're going to go over here?

13:33

Khaled: In the spirit of inclusion, in the ethnicity section you should include Nubian -- Egyptian Nubian and Sudanese Nubian -- as two distinct ethnicities.

And just a general comment I'll make is that, I think it might be useful to envision adoption of a classification as a springboard versus a permanent kind of gesture, right?

I think if you can craft and adopt a classification you can polish over time. You can tweak over

14:04

time. You can perfect over time. Make it more representative. Make it more inclusive and make it more reflective of a demographic that's always going to change.

Classifications are flawed. Classifications are fluid. Largely, in part, because demographics and populations are fluid themselves. So, they're going to evolve. They're going to change in line -- ideally speaking -- with the changing nature of the demographic itself.

Roberto Ramirez: My goodness. I swear I could be here till midnight. That was so - Let me tell you what. He's absolutely right. And let me tell why he is. So, let me give you

14:35

an example.

So, for example, like the Hispanic category, which we introduced, actually, after 1970.

In the 1980 Census was the first time we used the term Hispanic, right? We didn't have the term Latino until in Census 2000. And why? Because we were having many Hispanics not identifying with Hispanic. They didn't like that term. And so, what they were identifying with Latino.

So this is a great example that, over time, right, there' changes that could be made.

15:04

Depending on how the public responds and how they - what are they saying. So he's right.

It's not permanent right now. Maybe this may look like this now on 2020 but after 2020 there may be other categories or other examples on there. So do keep that in mind. It does change. It's a relationship we have with the American public. It's not just us dictating what is should be or not be, right?

Okay. Next. There's so many over there, I don't know who to pick. (Femir).

15:31

Morad: If it's okay, I'd like to ask a question about the test itself and the sampling. You know, so just a concern I have -- and you guys probably have the answer to it -- is, how will you guys make sure that you, kind of, sample a good cross section of the Iranian American community, for example. So the feedback you get represents the entire community and

16:00

not one particular segment of the community?

Roberto Ramirez: Right. And my understanding...

Morad: And my follow-up question...

Roberto Ramirez: Sure, go ahead. Absolutely.

Morad: ...to that is, what role would community organizations - will there be a role for community organizations in helping the Census with doing a sampling of the broader community and promoting that test, as well?

Roberto Ramirez: Well let me start out with your second question. That is happening right

16:30

now, right? We're already meeting with you. Many of you are community leaders, experts in the area, so we're hoping to get back - the message back. We are actually - this National

Content Test is one of many tests that we've been doing -- that we've done already -- that the Census Bureau promotes. We were just, for example this Spring, we were in Savannah, Georgia. And, I believe, what was the other in Arizona?

Morad: Maricopa.

Roberto Ramirez: In Maricopa, where, you know, we're testing strategies. Contact strategies about how we're going to enumerate the population, right? And so we also have several other tests

17:01

coming up in '16 and '17 that we'll talk about in a minute.

So is this - so, yes. We advertise the testing that we have. We contact the experts. We have a National Advisory Committee that meets twice a year that is also representative of the communities that we're targeting, for example. And they go back and tell them about the things that we're doing.

And so, we have a long-standing stakeholder engagement. And so, we don't do everything in a vacuum. We just don't do tests or do anything without informing all the communities, of course. Of course the Government and Congress as about all the testing that we're doing.

17:33

Right? So that is one part - aspect of it.

Now, in regards to your first question, a more technical question is that, well -- just like we've done with everything else in oversampling for targeted groups -- you know, we go after where they're at. And so in the case of Iranian, for example, we go and target - you know, we'll look at the ancestry data. Where are they concentrated at? And we sure they oversample in those targeted areas and those states and those counties etcetera.

So, that's where - that's the plan and the plan for all the major MENA categories that

18:05

we're targeting to do. Now, one of the things we do keep in mind is that some of these populations are very small. And so, you know, there are some population size concerns. You know, that you may not get representative samples of all these groups. But I believe that it's - the intention is to target where all they're located demographically in the country.

We've never done this before with this particular population. And so we're going to - you know,

18:30

we don't, unfortunately have these experts here with us. I would be more than happy to follow up with you with these more technical questions and explain to you exactly what the methodology is of how that's going to be implemented. Okay?

But, I do assure you -- like many of race and ethnicity content tests that we have done in the past -- we have taken very careful consideration of these populations - of targeting these populations to make sure that they're represented in our sample. So we can make inferences about the population. Okay?

19:01

Unlike your sample over there, right? You said that your study was basically based on self-report. Which is very valuable, by the way. Because normally, you start out that way and then you come up with a national representative sample to do that.

But we assure you that this test that we're doing here is an opportunity for, you know, targeting this population throughout the country. It's not just going to be in Michigan. Okay?

All right. Samer?

Samer: Yes, I just want to make a couple comments. One general and one more specific as to the

19:35

category.

My understanding is that we're here to come up with a way to more accurately count the people or come up with a (unintelligible) way of counting the people from the area.

Or, coming up with accurate numbers for us. I don't think we're necessarily here to bring up political complications or political situations or political problems that we're having over there and then to use that as a basis to how we're going to divide it up.

20:01

So we're going to sit here and start saying, "Well, we're going to divide up categories

pursuant to political complications or political disputes." In this region, you're going to have about 30 or 40 different classifications in that case. Okay?

I think it's important that we use a catch-all. That we use a category that everybody can feel inclusive and add their name to it. But as you said, they'll mostly have to mark it.

If, you know, for whatever reason they don't want to mark Middle Eastern then they can just mark all or they can mark White and they can...

Roberto Ramirez: That's right.

Samer: ...choose whatever they want. And it's also my understanding is that all the codes - those - this is going to be available, correct? So if I mark down Lebanese, at the end of the day, after the Census is done, I'll know how many Lebanese are...

Roberto Ramirez: That's the plan.

Samer: ...in here. Or how many - so each one of us will know exactly who's in these various categories.

Roberto Ramirez: Actually, even something better. Because after the Census, they release a public file that you can create your own categories if you like.

21:00

Samer: Okay.

Roberto Ramirez: You know, after the data is done.

(Crosstalk)

Samer: So in regard to the specifics of what should be included or not included, these countries -- I'm talking about the Arab League countries -- have chosen to tie themselves together. They've said, "We have several things in common. We're going to work as a block." To then cut away some of those -- for whatever reason you have -- and just say, "Well you're not going to be included with the rest of them", I think is just a little bit problematic.

21:30

I mean, the Arab League has said, "These 22 countries are all associated with one another where we have a lot in common. We act as a political block." So for us then - the Census for then to, kind of, carve out people, I don't think is appropriate. It sort of - it gives another way for the West to define the region.

And so that's, I think, problematic.

My suggestion would be to go to the 22 - the Arab League Nations plus, plus, plus.

Regarding specifically some of the ones that are not included -- and I'll go back to the

22:06

ethnicity section -- I think you should definitely include the Armenians and the Circassians.

There are very large populations of Armenians and Circassians in the Middle East and the ones that are here will identify with this, especially the Circassians community in New Jersey, for example, they are Circassians Syrian.

A lot of the Armenians will say we are Syrian Armenians, okay? So, these people are living

22:33

in the region because of various ethnic cleansing programs that occurred in various countries.

So they came from the Middle East. The people in the Middle East protected them, housed them, sheltered them. And they've, sort of, now identify themselves as also being of the - sort of like, with Americans here. You know, Italian Americans, Greek Americans. You have Circassians Syrians. You have Armenian Syrians. So a lot of them will also identify themselves

23:00

here. So I would also include those, as well.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your feedback. Be sure to fill out your form.

Okay. Eric. Way back there, I believe. Hopefully I didn't miss anybody over here. Okay.

Eric: I have a few comments and questions. First, I wanted to - even though many of them are not actually coming from Armenia or from Russia but actually from Middle Eastern countries. So it may be important to include them and use it as an ethnicity and not necessarily a national origin.

Let's see. Oh, I also wanted to say, I think it's important to include as many of these smaller ethnicities or different ethnicities that are being listing as code. And as separate

codes, because with the 100% data from the Census, it may be the only chance to really pick up meaningful data from - go back to the question about Armenians being part of this group.

Running some numbers from the ancestry data on the ACS, it's actually - it's a pretty
23:30

large group. A little bit smaller than Lebanese but on par with Iranians. About the same. But, as has been mentioned already, a large portion of the US-born Armenian population is from the Middle East.

And then, also looking at the country of birth or place of birth for people who mark Armenian as their ancestry first or second in the ACS, about 90% -- if you include the US there -- are from the Middle East.

24:00

So it is important

some of these groups especially if they're smaller groups that you may not see them in the ACS. So as a data user, I think it's very good to have those in the 100% sample that you might not see in a meaningful way in the ACS.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay. Well we have a lot of experience at developing codes, you know. You think you have a - you think there's a lot of codes in what you're seeing now? Have you seen the Alaskan Native - the American Indian and Alaskan Native code list? There's over a thousand codes there. So yes, to answer your question. Yes, we understand. We have

25:02

codes...

(unintelligible)

Roberto Ramirez: There could be thousands of different ethnic - racial ethnic groups from the Middle East. And, absolutely, there are, actually. Right? Which is why we're focusing in the U.S.

Okay. So, thank you for your comments Eric.

I cannot see back there, who - Steven? Oh well yes, the mic.

You can have it.

Steven: Well, like many other people, I support the idea of including the sub-ethnicities.

25:35

And you briefly spoke about that, because the establishment clause, you can't ask religion.

But I think religion is very, very important for a lot of the smaller groups

People have a strong identity with that and in many cases, I think, some of the groups - even though there's a mixing of ethnicity and religion. So even though it might sound like a religious term, it really implies an ethnicity or region or something like that,

26:10

beyond the nation state.

Also, there's the idea that these definitions vary across localities. So what's seen as a religion in the US might be seen as a nationality in another part of the world or under another nation's state context.

And finally, it's almost - I mean, this whole process has to do with identifying categories

26:36

and the language that works appropriately for that, and it's especially vexing because some of the accepted national or ethnic groups are, in fact, religious categories.

You know, like Chaldean or Assyrian or something. You - that's accepted as an ethnic group even though you know the religion. Other religious categories aren't able to be used.

So, given we have this opportunity, can you speak a little bit more about how that decision

27:03

is made and which terms are seen as specifically religious and which aren't? And how that would be applied? Because I think there are a number of people that identify fundamentally on a religious basis.

Roberto Ramirez: Right. Well I could tell you right now - that our current policy right now at the Census Bureau, is that we don't collect religion. Okay? So, if someone says

a religious faith, for example, we don't code it.

Now, if they say something like, "I'm Syrian this" then we collect the ethnicity or nationality
27:34

part. So that's what we do in the ACS and that's what we traditionally have done in the Census. Okay?

Now we - going into developing the Middle Eastern North African category, I can tell you, unlike most other groups, this one has the most - more ethnic religious categories, if you will. As you just mentioned, like the Chaldeans, the Syrians. Where the, you know, the ethnicity and the religion go hand-in-hand, right?

Well this is the feedback we need from you. Because, we're not those experts here. You're,
28:03

hopefully - many of you here are here because you have expertise in that. And so I need that feedback from you that say, "Well, you know, you're - can you go back to the ethnicity?" You know, I need to hear from you, "Well you have a religious group there and you shouldn't have that." or, you know, in your case perhaps if I'm not misunderstanding you, you're saying, "Well, you know, you need to have those there." So we need that kind of feedback in there.
(unintelligible)

Steven: Following up from that, you said you collected the data if it included, like, a
28:32

nationality and a religious category. Would it be able - would it be possible to put in categories like that to mark off. So then it would encourage people to check things that would be counted or acceptable?

Roberto Ramirez: You mean like a religious example?

Steven: Well, a nationality slash religious.

(Crosstalk)

Steven: You mentioned those would be counted. If they weren't just religious. But in...

Roberto Ramirez: Right if they gave us...

(Crosstalk)

Roberto Ramirez: ...a nationality or an origin or - we can clearly code, then we do.

29:01

Steven: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: We just then not code the specific religious term.

Steven: But to, kind of, encourage or make a pathway for people to respond that way could you put in some of those categories ahead of time?

Roberto Ramirez: As an example you mean right?

Man 2: Okay you give...

Roberto Ramirez: Go ahead and not...

Man 2: ...me an example...

Roberto Ramirez: ...you know...

Man 2: ...give me a specific example?

Roberto Ramirez: ...Lebanese Catholics for example that in other words you would recommend that we put that on the (unintelligible)...

Man 2: Well if it would be permissible.

Roberto Ramirez: ...no.

Man 3: No but...

29:30

Roberto Ramirez: Not the current way right now unless...

Man 3: ...(unintelligible) your (unintelligible) description.

Woman 1: (Unintelligible).

Roberto Ramirez: ...use the mic.

Woman 1: Yes so (unintelligible).

Roberto Ramirez: So, you know, one of the things I mentioned earlier is that we're going back and looking at our code list right and so we've looked at our answers for code list we looked at our race code list and we were finding codes that we have for certain groups

and, you know, we have this ethnical religious kind of some we have a coach for some groups
30:05

and some for others. And this is part of the process that we're doing right now we've been consulting with experts to, you know, revise the code list and improve the code list.

And so these are some of the issues that we're dealing with right now to be quite frank with you about who should be in and out and that's kind of the expertise that we need the feedback on. Because in fact when Rita joined the Bureau years ago and we met with some of the other unfortunately, you know, (Acrom) couldn't be here he's one of our experts too that reviewed the code list. He had mentioned that hey, you know, you have some groups in here that you need to remove or add et cetera.

So I want to assure you that this is a process that we've been doing for years but as right now the policy is that we're, you know, we don't have any explicit examples of any religion collection or examples on the form.

Rita: Add to this 1940 was the last census where religion was collected and today if
30:59

you say you're (Asumi) or (Ashia) this will not be coded as Middle Eastern will be given uncodable. But there are ethnical sectarian groups and this is a term the linguistic term that is used in this color the community that these are ethnic groups that took on the religion that maintained it even after the Islamic and expansion into the region and like the Assyrians like the Coptic community and others. So that's the approach.

Roberto Ramirez: So, you know, it is a difficult topic, you know, and I knew that, you know,
31:35

that there's overlap on some of this stuff and that we have to go there. We have to talk about these issues and that's why we have this expert forum. And by the way I think I mentioned this earlier there's nine other experts that are consulting with us that couldn't be here unfortunately. I believe they're on the list and they're also giving us feedback as well. So just to let everybody know.

Okay so let me go back - I'm going to make my way over here so I'm going to go back to
32:00

Fareed.

Fareed: Okay first I wanted to say that thanks for - to Morad for mentioning Nubians. We certainly believe that we should be on that list right so that's part of my feedback in the forum. Nubians are identified ethnic community across Sudan and Egypt. So going back to your questions and nationalities and ethnicities clearly we want Sudanese to need to be added

32:33

to that list. We believe their - but having said that we understand that we don't live in a perfect world. I think somebody already said that.

And so the split of Sudan has created two different groups and so now we already know that South Sudanese for instance will not identify with Armenia category but that's okay it's better for us to count and be inclusive of Northern Sudanese and we will educate our

33:00

community to check the other category for Africa and African Americans and specify South Sudanese. But there are some that would also self-identify as Sudanese. So just we want to try to be - the messages to be as inclusive as possible.

And so I support having the Armenia category and having Sudanese as a category added to that list.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you very much for your comments. Glad that you're here with us. Dr.
33:30

Cohen. Oh the mic.

Cohen: Regarding the work of countries Turkey seems to be missing and, you know, any time I speak about the Middle East I've never seen Turkey removed from the Middle East so but again I'm not an expert in Turkey it's just yes everywhere they talk about Turkey. I wonder

34:01

how they were not mentioned by many groups perhaps because...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes we...

Cohen: ...they tried to get into the European...

Roberto Ramirez: ...yes.

Cohen: ...union or something I don't know. But this is I mean they should be there. As for the...

Roberto Ramirez: When the - I'm actually happy that you mentioned that actually now that everyone's here do me a favor and send it to me. If you've - if there's other organizations out there that have Armenia classification send it to us. Send it to me because you're going to find - yes - it - I'm just saying that this is part of the research and we're

34:33

continuing the research and we're finding more we can look at...

Sally: There are Title 9 research centers across the country that have Middle East in their title at universities across the country and there's not a one that wouldn't include Turkey for sure. But you should look at their definition of...

Roberto Ramirez: ...okay.

Sally: ...the Armenia region because it's broader than here.

Roberto Ramirez: And we have and we have.

Sally: You had University of California was the only one on there but if you looked at all the other ones you would see that there is...

Roberto Ramirez: And they had a classification?

Sally: ...yes...

Cohen: And they do include (unintelligible) or not...

((Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: (Unintelligible) the counter...

Cohen: ...they do.

Roberto Ramirez: ...that seems to counter...

Woman 1: ...they do they absolutely...

Cohen: Of course...

Woman 1: ...they absolutely...

35:00

Roberto Ramirez: ...that seems to counter our research we have contacted the...

Woman 1: ...with who?

Roberto Ramirez: ...universities. We've talked to them and they're like I don't what the difference...

Cohen: Well I'll (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so but that's okay but that's okay that's why we're continuing to do the research...

Cohen: ...yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...and the outreach right?

Cohen: Oh.

Roberto Ramirez: If not we're going to continue to do this okay...

Nicholas: Okay if you have those definitions those are important to send to us again...

Cohen: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...not just the category but the definitions...

Cohen: Right the definitions not just the (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes I think I just want to make sure I'm not splitting hairs here. It's like who's in and who's out that's what...

Cohen: ...right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...I want. A list of those nationalities or countries that they define

35:31

as North Africa...

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...or Middle East that's what I want. What we've been finding that that's not clear or it's not defined that's what...

Sally: We...

Roberto Ramirez: ...we're finding ourselves...

Cohen: Yes (unintelligible)...

Sally: ...would you like us to help - would you like us to encourage people to send you a definition?

Cohen: Absolutely okay...

Roberto Ramirez: ...(unintelligible) oh our...

Sally: Through our local...

Roberto Ramirez: ...we got a lot of those comments as far as what they working - I'm talking about any established reputable...

35:51

Sally: ...yes that's what I'm saying...

Roberto Ramirez: ...organizations where...

Sally: ...I mean from like the University of Michigan's Middle East or North Africa...

Roberto Ramirez: ...okay absolutely.

Sally: ...I can have you - I can have the Director..

Cohen: Okay...

Sally: ...send you this...

((Crosstalk))

Cohen: ...you want the...

Sally: ...yes.

Cohen: ...Columbia Middle East definitions (unintelligible).

36:01

Roberto Ramirez: (Nicholas) went to Michigan you didn't tell me they had Armenia category.

Nicholas: That was many moons ago.

Roberto Ramirez: Oh I'm just giving him...

Cohen: Okay.

Roberto Ramirez: ...a hard time now yes please...

Cohen: Okay. I want to say something about religious...

Roberto Ramirez: ...okay.

Cohen: Before coming here I ran the data on Israeli born in the most recent ASC. So you have 20% uncodable entry.

36:31

Roberto Ramirez: ...uncodable.

Cohen: And the vast majority are Jews.

Roberto Ramirez: Right so here...

Cohen: Because I can split I mean I can classify them as Jews and Palestinians by a language spoken at home and other variables. So among Jews it's a major issue. I mean and some Jews don't know any other identity but their Jewishness. Now I understand the US Constitution and the US Census what I'm saying is if we can - if you can keep the uncodable entry I think it's

37:00

999 or 998 keep it only for religion that will be very helpful for researchers okay.

Roberto Ramirez: Hm. Okay so what is...

Cohen: Don't maybe because I heard before I mean I think it's only that Sephardic is also uncodable except...

Roberto Ramirez: ...yes.

Cohen: ...I don't know why it's uncodable...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so way...

Cohen: ...it had nothing to do with...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so what he saw...

Cohen: ...but I would keep the uncodable only for religions (Shi-A) Muslim Jewish Catholic et cetera. So if Copts is also ethnic group keep it. The more group you can keep the better.

Now another comment we have - there is no cost in including as many ethnic group over there as possible right. Armenia...

Roberto Ramirez: ...oh yes no.

Cohen: ...some people spoke it and said that Bedouins are not an ethnic perhaps it's not but as far as I know Bedouins wins come from the Middle East. Are there Bedouins coming from other places than the Middle East? Oh okay I didn't know. Where in Asia? Central
38:06

Asia and what proportion I see.

Woman 3: (Unintelligible).

Cohen: Yes okay I thought the vast majority come from the Middle East but apparently I'm wrong. So that's the...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so I - let me go back to your - let me go to your first question. So what - let me understand what you said. So basically what you did is that you went
38:32

- he went to the American Community Survey Data probably the POMS file right the data that's probably...

Cohen: ...yes (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...publicly available right....

Cohen: ...publicly available.

Roberto Ramirez: ...and you've got - and you looked at people who were born in Israel.

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: And then you crossed it by ancestries?

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay and then what you did was look at the proportion of those Israelis that were born in Israel said...

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...said they had an uncodable code?

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: Right and so what's in that uncodable code right? Presumably we give a 998 for those who for religious terms.

Cohen: Right so you would have...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Cohen: ...most of...

Roberto Ramirez: And so but we don't know what those religion, you know, what those
39:01

codes were. I mean you're saying that you're making an assumption that they wrote in Jewish right?

Cohen: ...most of them Jewish and...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Cohen: ...a few of them probably...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Cohen: ...(unintelligible) and, you know, perhaps...

Roberto Ramirez: Right...

Cohen: ...(unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so what I want to and you probably you may be right I don't certainly don't know that but one other thing I do want to make clear is that we're not to collecting - we're not tabulating religion right we'll just give it a generic code to a lot, you know, if someone in the ancestry question says I'm Catholic for example we just give it a generic code you're not able to know how many people said Catholic for example...

39:32

Cohen: ...I completely understand...

Roberto Ramirez: ...yes.

Cohen: ...or what I'm saying is keep it that way.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Cohen: And keep it only for religions so.

Woman 4: (Wow).

Cohen: So that...

Roberto Ramirez: So you can indirectly...

Cohen: ...so I can indirectly (unintelligible)...

((Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: ...because then you're going...

Cohen: ...(unintelligible).

Roberto Ramirez: ...because then you're using other variables in ASC. For example you're looking at language.

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: You're looking in other...

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...words to...

Cohen: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...develop...

Cohen: Right unintelligible...

Roberto Ramirez: ...an algorithm I mean to come up - okay.

Cohen: ...I think I basically, you know, I succeeded in taking the Israeli born and figure out who is Jewish who is Palestinian just by the, you know, just by the language spoken

40:02

at home and the ancestry.

Roberto Ramirez: That's why we invited you here we saw a lot of your great work that you've done. Thank you for your coming. Thank you for your comments. Okay so now moving - I'm not sure - oh back there...

Medhi: Nicholas think of and Nicholas there's an issue that has to be addressed here and that is that the National Resource Centers, you know, the Middle East studies near these centers and these centers that are abruptly about 19 18 19 or so major universities across

40:31

the country like Michigan like UCLA Berkeley and Harvard Chicago Columbia. By sort of law they are restricted from looking at the US. There are supposed to be there are international study centers do you see?

So when you go to them and ask questions about the census they might be lip tied about this because that's not their prevue. And this is what has been part of the problem all along dealing with these populations because ethnic studies leave them out because they're not

41:02

legal minorities.

Middle East centers leave them out because they cannot deal with the US population so they fall in the same cracks and I think that's why you have but if you ask mutually every center, you know, they'll say of course Turkey Armenians all of these is under, you know, Israelis and sort of much more of a touchy issue but increasingly that's also included.

So I think that is something that's really should be...

Roberto Ramirez: ...to be considered?

Medhi: ...sort of be considered, you know.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you. Okay so now we're moving this way. Okay Louise.

41:33

Louise: You know, I'm one of these people that reads the technical appendices for every census since 1890 I think I did and I noticed how Arabs have been recoded. If they say non-White they recode it as White. If they're identified as an Arab by language or Palestinians who wrote Jerusalem we recode it as Israeli. And anyhow there's a hundred years of history.

How are you going to recode the loads of people that are going to answer Muslims? That's my

42:04

first question because it's going to happen.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so you mean...

Louise: And they're going to - are they going to -they're going to get recorded right?

Roberto Ramirez: ...no I mean well hold on let me - well let me - you have how many questions

do you have?

Louise: The second one is simpler but it's about sampling but it's not - you'll be able to answer it. You don't need your ...

Roberto Ramirez: So okay so the first if they only - if it only and I'm going to have everybody to help me out here.

Nicholas: If that's the response...

Roberto Ramirez: So the only thing...

Nicholas: ...responses missing.

Roberto Ramirez: ...they've respond is just say Muslims...

Louise: Yes enough...

42:30

Roberto Ramirez: ...if they check Armenia and Muslim...

Nicholas: Right but that's different...

Roberto Ramirez: ...they're going to be Armenia. If they check Armenia...

Louise: Right but...

Roberto Ramirez: ...and right and Muslim and then...

Louise: ...and then they called other or unclassified...

Roberto Ramirez: ...no...

Nicholas: ...just Armenia...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so that's why we wanted to clarify what your scenario was.

Nicholas: ...right.

Roberto Ramirez: If someone checks the box.

Nicholas: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: We don't erase that box.

Louise: ...no I understand...

Roberto Ramirez: But if they give us something that's uncodable like human being.

Louise: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: We don't code that and they do but that other response is valid stays right.

Louise: ...right I understand but when you go to like the POMS data you do get this minute detail of what other things people in that category...

43:03

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Louise: ...said they were and you might get Syrian Assyrian Lebanese but you might have this big empty category which he was just referring to.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Louise: This big empty category.

Roberto Ramirez: Well so - right so you have to understand before you get the data that's publicly available from the census or from the ACS. Remember and we don't have time to go through all of this we do a lot of data processing a lot of data editing if you will to prepare the data for confidentiality purposes right and also just like he said if someone

43:30

says I'm from Mars well we don't have a code for that and usually we just blank it. And now in the case of - go back to your question because I don't to avoid it right.

So if someone only writes in Muslim only we're not coding that. Now if they said I'm Assyrian Muslim then we'll code...

Louise: Yes...

Roberto Ramirez: ...the Assyrian part okay.

Louise: ...but they wouldn't do that as a (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: Or, you know, Assyrian or whatever, you know, whatever they have there or Lebanese...

Louise: ...it's kind of a global (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so we'll code the specific nationality or ethnic groups so. If they...

Louise: ...so...

Roberto Ramirez: ...check a box we'll keep the box.

Louise: ...if people are encouraged to say Muslim we lose the data?

44:00

Woman 5: (Unintelligible).

Louise: Okay...

Woman 5: And you don't code Muslims.

Louise: ...my second...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes we don't code it.

Louise: ...question...

Woman 5: We code (unintelligible).

Louise: ...right okay this is about over sampling you talked about. But if the like the Sudanese and the Somalis are not included in your Armenia category how would you over sample them? Like is that going to become a problem if you, you know, and the group and the definition of Armenia you have now Somalis and Sudanese for example are not part of that definition. So it hasn't expanded yet we're at that point so you're going to over sample.

44:34

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Louise: You're not going to over - that says to me that technically you're not going to over sample Sudanese and Somalis which means we're going to get the same result we had before the Armenia category...

Roberto Ramirez: Right...

Louise: ...you're going to produce...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so there may be in another...

Louise: ...the (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...over sample remember we talked about how we have strata? So the strata...

Louise: ...yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...is inclusive of different groups where everyone has an opportunity to come into the sample right regardless of what you are but we have over samples from the

45:00

black population for the Asian population for the Armenia population...

Nicholas: Hispanic population. So and then for the general population that's not part of the specific over sampling strata. So all of households have a chance to be in the survey it's just that we're trying to get more households of different specific key population groups into the sample. And again as Roberto said we can have the technical experts as they're developing the sampling framework prepared to talk about more of that information but that work is unintelligible...

Roberto Ramirez: I'll send that information to you.

Louise: ...yes I just want them to be alert to this.

Roberto Ramirez: ...right.

Louise: Categorical problem.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Louise: Thanks.

Roberto Ramirez: Maya.

Maya: In terms of the countries included Armenia.

Roberto Ramirez: Let's go back (to that).

Maya: We - yes so I guess I would love to hear sort of the next steps for fixing as you know what I think has been a mistake. I think Sam articulated it sort of perfectly that there is an existing definition of what is the Arab country's part of the Arab league

46:02

and then we've got the plus three scenario and then the separate conversation that you have and that including the ethnicity.

So on the first one what's the next step to getting to the point of at least understanding that because while I appreciate other academic institutions can offer some of that I also appreciate the comment made at the other table that that's in some ways uncharted waters

for some of these institutions. So how do we get to the point of accepting what we all kind of walk through the door pretty much...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Maya: ...understanding what is Armenia.

46:30

Roberto Ramirez: Well it starts out...

Maya: And (Unintelligible) made the same point earlier.

Roberto Ramirez: ...so yes to answer your first question this starts with this forum right now. So it's the feedback that you get. So when I get those forms in that'll be in the results of everyone in here will help feed recommendations into that classification so that's why...

Maya: So there's an agreement that we're talking Arab league plus three is there anyone in the room that would secure - I understand the Arab league subs for some and I heard that but and I'm not being glib about it but yes Arab league isn't everything it wants to be so is there Arab League plus three?

47:01

Roberto Ramirez: ...well I think probably best that you, you know, fill out the form...

Maya: Individual forms.

Roberto Ramirez: ...and give it back, you know...

Maya: Okay so we're clearly...

Roberto Ramirez: ...I don't put anybody on the spot here but...

Maya: ...relying on everybody to provide their...

Roberto Ramirez: ...that's...

Maya: ...individual forms so you don't...

Roberto Ramirez: ...you know.

Maya: ...continue that piece of that okay.

Roberto Ramirez: Right and so and, you know, and back to your question Maya too is that and recall too that we did well this is the thing we're going to do. We also have an additional nine experts that we identified that are going to be giving a feedback and guess what there's going to be more because we're going to ask you and now I'm stealing my talking points at the end but I'll do it now. Is that we want to continue this conversation with you.

47:36

So we want you to tell us hey Roberto, Nicholas, Merarys there's a couple of other experts you need to talk to as well. And then we want to send them the binder and send them and get the feedback from them. So there's going to be a continuous process, you know. So this is looking what process we plan to do.

Maya: So just to clarify that in terms of the timeline that just Louise's point will this part of the clarification take place before your testing?

Roberto Ramirez: For this fall test?

48:03

Maya: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: No not for - right now we have the...

Maya: How did we answer...

Roberto Ramirez: ...well the...

Maya: ...(what was the) questions then?

Roberto Ramirez: ...so the thing of it is for the classification part when we get the results in from this test we're going to look at different, you know, Version A Version B Version C a different - that you can classify easily because the data is there. So whether you include - so people, you know, wrote in Turkish for example right what does it look like when you include Armenia or not as far as that is concerned? But the questions right now the Middle East turned off African category that's going to be that's what we're testing

48:31

itself and the examples that we have listed right now.

Maya: So and thinking about over sampling we'll include Sudanese we'll include Turks

we'll include Somalians...

Roberto Ramirez: They will be included in the other populations...

Nicholas: To clarify the over sample is not detailed group specific.

Roberto Ramirez: ...right.

Nicholas: We're not doing an over sample for...

Maya: ...general.

Nicholas: ...Sudanese and over sample for Lebanese and over sample for Turkish Japanese Chinese...

Maya: The over sampling you mean...

Nicholas: ...et cetera Armenia.

Maya: ...but if (unintelligible)...

Nicholas: And also Black and also...

Maya: ...Turks and Sudanese.

Nicholas: ...right but they may fall into another groups over sample. So there's an

49:00

over sample for Asian. There's an over sample for Pacific Islander et cetera.

Maya: But it's not tracking our data. It's not tracking Armenia.

Roberto Ramirez: Well we never have. We never over sample for Armenia period at all until...

Maya: Right we...

Roberto Ramirez: ...for this test coming up. So...

Maya: ...slightly curious. I understand it but I'm saying if you're - if you catch your Sudanese in another part of your over sample because they're average Black that's great but that doesn't capture right and from in terms of these questions or does it? I'm just trying to see...

49:35

Roberto Ramirez: ...well it does because...

Maya: ...a (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...if the idea is just saying hey you're Sudanese right you get an experimental form how is it that you respond to another Sudanese who got a different experimental form that's the idea behind it. So it's, you know, it's clear to me that we're going to have to follow up with you on some of the technical aspects in here. We just felt that today we were going to spend all day on the classification part. These are very good technical questions unfortunately we just don't have the experts here to tell us about build specific

50:01

aspects.

And I don't want to go more into, you know, speculating how it's going to be sampled over sampled we just don't have those experts here...

Merarys: We don't...

Maya: ...(unintelligible).

Roberto Ramirez: ...but we'll follow up with you on that.

Merarys Rios: So I do want to make a note so regarding the over sampling like Nicholas mentioned so we are over sampling for the overall groups right Black Asian Hispanic Armenia. In the case of the Somalian Sudanese although right now they're not in the working classification they're still going to get a form. So if they go ahead and fill out the form and say I'm Middle Eastern or is African that's where I'm going to get the data from.

50:33

So it doesn't mean that we're going to necessarily move them into Black even if they fall into the definition of the Black category when they tabulate the data I say you know what we have them under Black but when they look at the data I know that they're identifying as Middle Eastern or as African. So along with your feedback and the data driven that we're going to - the data that we're going to be getting from the NCT is how we then can move forward and say you know what we're seeing that these groups identify within that.

51:00

So regardless of where we have them in the classification it's all about self-ID. If

51:06

they do not identify as Armenia then, you know, it's beyond us really it's about the population self-identifying with that category so then we can say we have your feedback we saw the data and this is what we should recommend.

Maya: Can I make one final point Margaret please? So...

Roberto Ramirez: Sure absolutely.

Maya: Sorry I just want to point out that like yes with the self-identification I understand that but when you put a form in front of them where I've noticed one in all of your sample

51:32

forms you include Somali in the Black or African American category that's going to skew your results as to whether they should be ...

Merarys Rios: And that's a great point. But then again we have this second component where we do the re-interview which we did in the 2010. And then we go back and we're going to ask okay so you said you were this and this is where we get a lot of the people saying well I did Somalis because I was on the Black category but really I'm Middle Eastern and North African.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Merarys Rios: So we will have that additional data. So it all feeds into that. And I will

52:02

say that we have seen cognate of tests. We do do cognate of testing before all this national cognate tests or ACS tests that we're doing and we are seeing how respondents would still see sometimes examples and to certain lines and say, you know, that's not where I go I go here and it would still attract that. So we have data from cognitive testing that also supports this but we have, you know, we have to do the national cognitive test as it is and then of course we have that re-interview component that will give us even more data.

52:32

Woman (off camera): (Unintelligible) Somalis (unintelligible)?

Roberto Ramirez: Well that is the feedback...

Nicholas: Those are the things we're trying...

Roberto Ramirez: ...providing (unintelligible)...

Nicholas: ...to learn. So I want to bring it back to how this is all rooted and the definitions that are out there.

Roberto Ramirez: ...right.

Nicholas: For OMB which defines all of the groups in terms of they're part of this region.

We don't take Filipino which is listed specifically as an example for Asian and say well it really belongs as Pacific Islander because it's an island in the Pacific that's currently how

53:01

it's defined. We may find that Filipinos are writing and something else that's what we're trying to learn through the test. Even if the examples are there and that's currently the way the definition places it we're expecting to find complexities and we want to drill down to find out more about why that's happening.

So you have to have a starting point rather than expecting...

Fatma: Can we just take this the way that this from...

Nicholas: ...to make (unintelligible) make it...

Roberto Ramirez: And that's part of the feedback we want so...

Fatma: ...yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...you know, you're not happy with the Somali example right? Well that's what we want to hear.

Fatma: Well what do you do about the cases where the it's the White category where it

53:32

bleeds into the White category because most of the examples given talk about the non-White category basically you can capture it as you say if it bleeds into the other non-White categories. But what if you're asking Iranians or Israelis or Turks and they say why. Since you're not over sampling the White's population or, you know, then that would provide the

problem won't it if you think about it?

Nicholas: Like I said we have...

54:05

((Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: (Unintelligible) maybe talking to...

Fatma: Can I bring this back...

(Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: ...our technical experts?

Fatma: Well you see this is...

Roberto Ramirez: And so we don't want to - so, you know, - go ahead...

Fatma: ...if you say the problem is when you say Turkish right and then you know, if Turks identify where is Turk usually it's in the Middle East centers yes but it is also in the European centers. I mean so Turks can be at either place.

Roberto Ramirez: ...right.

Fatma: Usually so if that's the case where do we belong if you think about it. So what

54:33

does half of the Turk say that they found the Middle East to capture those Turks what about have the other half says that they're Europeans or they're White.

Roberto Ramirez: We can't...

Fatma: (Unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...speculate we don't know. We don't know how they're going to report that's part of the test right. Remember that that's why we have all these different experimental forms to look exactly how these populations will report. And so one of the limitations we have is that we don't know. We have not tested this category before in this...

Fatma: ...yes okay.

Roberto Ramirez: ...in these forums so we don't - we can't speculate how the population

55:02

will report or not.

Fatma: Exactly.

Roberto Ramirez: One things we are testing as I mentioned is that we're testing new instructions we're testing new terms and new categories. And so by the way it's not just how the Armenia population reports one many other groups for example that we're examining is the Latinos that we're wondering how they're going to respond to a combined to a combined thought question. We're also looking at the White population. We have examples...

Fatma: Okay.

Roberto Ramirez: ...for the White population that we've never had before. How are they going to respond?

Fatma: Okay.

Roberto Ramirez: Oh and by the way let's go back to the Black population now we have examples

55:32

underneath there. Unfortunately, you know, we don't - I wish I could show you all the other designs. You know, let's go back to Armenia because, you know, this is why we're here right. Let's talk about this okay. So the - what you're seeing here is just a small snapshot of what we have available for the testing strategies that we have for this fall so no the Web design.

So for example this is just one example of a Web design for the Middle Eastern North African population but guess what we have one for Whites just like this. We have one

56:02

for Black we have this for Asian and so those are things that you're not seeing. So for example go to the previous slide please. So if someone checks White or Black they're going to get these X, you know, these subsequent screens where they can check a box and write it in okay.

So and another thing too I want to mention that I think and hopefully I won't steal the Director's talking points is that, you know, we're really moving away from paper for 2020

folks not that paper is not going to be around it's going to around but we're really emphasizing
56:32

electronics now Web and as Nicholas mentioned earlier, you know, the iPad and maybe even the what is it the Google Phone. So we're looking at, you know, Web designs for example. We believe that a larger proportion of the population we're using the Web.

In fact right now ACS I believe if I'm not mistaken half the folks enumerated and contacted by the ACS are coming in through the Web design (unintelligible), you know, so.

Woman 9: (Unintelligible).

Nicholas: Some people are more - so it's not just Internet based in the sense of a computer
57:04

it's Web enabled meaning some groups...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Nicholas: ...may have Smartphones that's their only access to the net.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Nicholas: But that's how they can fill out the form.

Roberto Ramirez: Right yes. Okay so in interest of time I know there's, you know, this is good debate good lightly debate. I just want to make sure I get through all of the other - so let me get to GiGi and then we'll keep going. So I'll get back to you.

GiGi: I just want to say again we really appreciate this forum and ways to give feedback. One
57:34

of my concerns maybe as a research methodologist is that is there someone on the inside at the Census that understands the Middle Eastern North African community enough to help with sampling and these type of issues. I guess what my question is are you getting feedback on these test forms from people that are trained in methods stats sampling come, you know,
58:04

these areas other than this forum?

I mean...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh here at the Bureau you mean?

GiGi: ...yes I mean I guess I'm asking, you know, do you have both the methodology and the content experts here? I mean you do you're the Census...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh my goodness.

GiGi: ...you're amazing absolutely...

Roberto Ramirez: You're at the United States Census Bureau we are the premier...

((Crosstalk))

Roberto Ramirez: ...Census and oh and Middle East experts. Okay well that's why many of you are here. Well besides ourselves, you know, we have some others but we don't have
58:35

experts for example like a sample expert that's on Middle East or Black...

GiGi: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...or anything like that. You know, these are all highly trained statisticians and mathematicians that come here and, you know, remember we've been collecting...

GiGi: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: ...ethnicity data for a very long time so we've been targeting these populations for decades.

GiGi: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: So.

GiGi: No and I understand that and I'm not saying that, you know, you don't - you all are amazing and I mean that...

59:00

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you.

GiGi: ...when I say that...

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you and...

GiGi: ...and it's a hard job. What I'm asking is when you're going and you're sort of figuring out and you're testing all these different forms and the kind of permutations.

Roberto Ramirez: ...right.

GiGi: Are there times along that process in which individuals are giving feedback...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

GiGi: ...on specific Armenia?

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

GiGi: Group okay that's...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes absolutely...

GiGi: ...the question okay.

Roberto Ramirez: ...thank you I - yes absolutely...

GiGi: yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...in fact population division the division that is represented here is working
59:31

very closely with these other divisions that are doing the sample experts and the mathematician so we worked in hand very well . In fact we have several of our colleagues here that are from other divisions that we work closely. So we have a lot of inter-agency - intra agency working groups that come together yes absolutely. Okay so...

Woman 2: Just another thing that do you get (unintelligible) feedback on the actual (unintelligible) the Turkish because the translation here is...

Roberto Ramirez: ...oh man.

60:00

Woman 2: ...a lot of problems in it.

Roberto Ramirez: We'll talk to you after the...

Woman 2: Okay.

Roberto Ramirez: ...forum. So it's really bad already? Okay no that's the (unintelligible)...
((Crosstalk))

Nicholas: ...we need to make a note about that...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Nicholas: ...is part of the research that's happening for the future whereas we're trying to determine the content in the future for other research there's a language working group for example that the National Advisory Committee is forming they will be talking about the translation of all these materials and outreach materials into multiple different languages. So the first part is to set the content so work after that is then to figure out how to enable that content to reach all communities.

60:34

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so Rita yes.

Rita: I just wanted to bring this together what Maya was saying and what Louise along with your response. In the spirit of being more inclusive I think the idea of Arab league plus plus plus plus three plus all the ethnicities was proposed. But in a sense it was to include
61:01

all the countries and the sub national ethnicities that you have on this list. And I want to explain to the group that it's not the Census Bureau is resisting including these nationalities they just don't have a framework to include them.

For instance other than saying that Somalia and Sudan are within the Arab League there's no other classification out there that includes Somalia and Sudan and I believe that's why
61:34

we are here at this forum to provide you with this expertise although you will never find the institutional support for this because they are different kinds of programs and we really cannot create a category based on development programs or trait.

So and instead of being inclusive Rachel if we can go the list of countries that are already
62:01

in your working definition plus those that have been suggested the next slide. No the other - yes this one is there resistance in the room to including these countries in the working definition and asking the Census Bureau to test them? Would that give you the framework to say the panel of experts that we invited...

Roberto Ramirez: That would be a...

Rita: ...highly recommended...

Roberto Ramirez: ...start. That would be a start...

Rita: ...100% and I think that's why you keep asking for the forms because if you have forms
62:33

then you have data that you can lend your Congress or OMB and say based on all the experts that were in the room they all gave us this form said you must include all the above no exclusion...

Roberto Ramirez: ...that...

Rita: ...am I understanding you right...

Roberto Ramirez: ...yes that would be very helpful let's just...

Rita: ...and so that would help you...

Roberto Ramirez: ...do that.

Rita: ...help...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Rita: ...you help us.

Roberto Ramirez: Absolutely.

Rita: It sounds like Jerry McGuire here...

Roberto Ramirez: That's a great start right.

Rita: ...but would that do...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Rita: ...would that answer...

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Rita: ...your question Maya?

Roberto Ramirez: That's precisely why we're here exactly right...

Rita: Would that...

Roberto Ramirez: ...we need the feedback we need the forms. But this is why it's very
63:02

critical before you leave today to make sure you give us your forms today so we can collect that feedback. So yes to answer your question that'll be part of one of many steps into the recommendations we make. The expert forum results the National Content test results and et cetera so yes that is part of the stakeholder engagement that we plan do...

Rita: Will you still need the institutional backing or is this enough?

Roberto Ramirez: ...well we're going to continue doing research and contacting others but (unintelligible)...

Rita: But knowing that you are not going to have any organization on the face of the earth
63:31

that's going to include all of these.

Roberto Ramirez: Well that...

Rita: Right?

Roberto Ramirez: ...that would be part of the research and we find out that there's not - no such thing which we've been finding you're right.

Rita: Right.

Roberto Ramirez: So that'd be part of the decision process.

Man 2: (Unintelligible) the implementation (unintelligible)?

Roberto Ramirez: No that's what we're planning to do for the company...

Man 2: (Unintelligible).

Roberto Ramirez: Right so the National Content test this 15th is not including these right now right okay. I think it's time for a break. What do you all think? We're almost there.

Let's see you got a couple - we have another - one more question and then we're going to
64:03

take a 10 minute break.

Soumia: It's not a question just clarification she keeps talking about Arab League Arab League and we all know that all those countries are in the Arab League since the war that happened

in the 60's and 50's. So why are we including all those in Arab League? She keeps saying Arab League plus three we shouldn't include any of these countries in the Arab League
64:34

because it's political and race and ethnicity is different from what's happening in the Arab League and we all know that. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your comment that's why we need the feedback, you know, and so please make sure that you write that in in your feedback form okay? Okay so one last - all right well you talked me into it. One last one and then we're going to take a ten minute break.

Sahar: Sorry just quick. I just had a question why is Copt being treated as an ethnic group?
65:05

It's a religion and I'm Egyptian and one of the conversations I've had with fellow Egyptians who are - I'm not Coptic is they're actually very particular. This is an Egyptian context not necessarily an American context and if someone could enlighten me I'd appreciate it. And they're actually particular in saying we're not a minority we're Egyptian just like any other Egyptian we're just of a different religion and then there's obviously history. But I can just say that from my experience is we don't consider Copts as a different ethnicity. They're - actually that's one of the things that's kept in my opinion...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

65:37

Sahar: ...Egypt together. So I'd be interested in knowing if that is something that the Coptic community self identifies as being a different ethnic group as opposed to a different religion? The second is I don't understand why we are including Somalia or Djibouti or (Martanya) or Chad. To me they're not North African they're - anything that Sub-Saharan and African is
66:00

Africa. This isn't based on culture it's not based on language it's - nobody looks at Somalia or (unintelligible) or Ethiopia or Kenya that has huge Muslim populations and some of which may speak Arabic in addition to other languages.

And even I don't know how Sudan because it's anyway Sudan might also qualify. I realize those are controversial statements but it just isn't consistent.

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Sahar: I mean I look at North African and I see there's the line and it pretty much the Western Sahar (unintelligible) and it's very clear and it's not that those other roots
66:34

won't be tracked they absolutely will be and they can...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Sahar: ...put African Sudanese African Somalian. But I'm just not seeing the consistency in that inclusion...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Sahar: ...of that.

Roberto Ramirez: So what I'm seeing - this will be the last question before we break.

So what I'm seeing is exactly what we wanted. This is some great feedback that you're giving us. We came up with a working classification. We told you the rationale and how we came up to it and now we're getting some good reaction about who to include and not include and that's
67:01

the kind of feedback we want. Now I don't know if there's anyone in here that can talk about the Copt expertise...

Sahar: I can...

Woman 14: (Unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...(unintelligible).

Woman 13: ...I am a Copt who's non-religious.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay.

Woman 13: And know lots of Copts and they distinguish themselves from the Muslim Egyptians but Coptic as descendants of Ancient Egyptians as an ethnic group that has a language that

is partially used. So it is it's a little...

Woman 14: ...okay.

Woman 13: ...bit different. I think it would be similar to other to call the ends and other groups. So we can talk about it after.

67:31

Woman 14: Just to add to that I did some research on this when I was here and this is the pre-Arab civilization that existed in Egypt even before Christianity and having the language even the Coptic language and most importantly there are people who do report that and their response.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so we have - if you can please come back in exactly 10 minutes at 2:45 then we'll resume with Session D.

Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), 5/29/15, Part 4

Okay so one thing I do - I do have an announcement. One of the things I want to mention that many

of you first of all I want to thank you for your comments that you did for the Federal Register Notice that we did a couple of months ago where (Nicholas) talked about all the thousands of comments that we received. And so we're very excited about that.

And so one thing I failed to mentioned is that, you know, now the National Content has packaged if you will approval is with OMB right now and they're reviewing it. And of course they're very excited like us about this test. And so one thing I do want to mention

0:33

is that we are in another public comment period another 30 day public comment period. And so we, you know, we're going to be sending out to you and other stakeholders the link to where you can provide additional comments, you know, all the comments great comments that we've been hearing here.

And so we want to consider your comments and your feedback okay. So I just want to mention that and so we'll be sending that out soon and so you'll have another opportunity to bring, you know, to give us more feedback on the content test. And of course everything

1:01

that we've talked about today okay all right.

So now we're ready to begin for Session D. I'd like to introduce Merarys Rios Vargas who will lead us into the discussion for Session D regarding potential data products featuring Middle Eastern and North African Data. Merarys has recently - was recently appointed as the Chief of the Ethnicity and Ancestry Branch in population division. She leads important

1:30

research focusing on the important patterns and demographic characteristics of the Latino population in the United States and in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Islands.

She's also an expert on the race ethnicity and she has conducted extensive outreach presentations and workshops with various stakeholder groups. Please help me joining and welcoming Merarys.

Merarys Rios: I get an applause and nobody else did. So thank you. So thank you Roberto.

2:02

And good afternoon everyone I hope you're enjoying your snacks. And I'm excited that you're here and I greatly appreciate all the insights that you have been sharing with us we really appreciate your feedback and we look forward for more.

During this session I will discuss potential data tabulations with you between the detailed Middle Eastern and North African population data for the 2020 Census. But before that let's start by reviewing the US Office of Management and Budget Race and Ethnicity Standards.

2:34

There's a copy of the standards in our binder and it is critical that you understand these standards as I mentioned last week in our conference call. And beyond these standards govern the categories used to collect and to present thorough data on race and ethnicity.

The OMB required side minimum categories on race which are White Black for African American American Indian or Alaskan native Asian Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and two

3:02

categories on ethnicity which are Hispanic or Latino or not Hispanic or Latino. The Census Bureau along with other federal agencies follow these standards. To start I would like to draw your attention to the federal government's definition of White which Nicholas mentioned earlier today.

And this is the definition that pertains to the current racial classification of Middle Eastern or North African groups. White is defined as a person having origins in any

3:31

of the original people of Europe the Middle East and North Africa and know the importance

of the original people's concept and the White race definition which is the philosophy behind our current classification coding and tabulation procedures of responses to their race question. This is why detailed responses such as German Lebanese or Egyptians are coded as part of the White category.

And I would explain this further on the next slide. On this slide we provided conceptual

4:01

illustration of how the Census Bureau codes writings responses to the race question into the White racial category. So for example a response of Irish is classified as White French is also classified as White and similarly Lebanese is classified as White. This is because they all represent European or Middle Eastern national origins.

These data are all aggregated together under White however we can maintain the detailed

4:30

responses such as Irish French and Lebanese so we can tabulate the detailed data. The OMB race standards are the basis or classifications of classification of ethnicity responses to the question on race. When OMB standards are not clear about how an ethnicity or a nationality response should be assigned a race then those responses are usually coded or tabulated under some other race category.

This is why in the 2010 census all Middle Eastern and North African responses were coded

5:04

as White. In order to classify Middle Eastern and North African responses as something other than White modifications to the current OMB standards would be needed. We are working with OMB and their inner agency committee as we conducted this research and collectively contemplating potential considerations for new implementation guidelines that may be needed for the 2020 Census and other federal data to address these classification issues.

5:35

Please be aware however that all questions designs that we're exploring in our research permit the reporting of race and/or ethnicity and the reporting of multiple responses. For example this slide shows how a person may identify with multiple categories in our combined question approach on both they defined without a Middle Eastern or African category

6:00

on the left and the design which includes the Middle Eastern and North African category which is on the right side of the slide.

The image on the left illustrates where the respondents reported they are White by checking the box and wrote in Lebanese in the area underneath and they also checked the Black or African American box and wrote in Somalia underneath. The image on the right provides another example where the respondent reported they are Black or African American by checking the box and they wrote in Somalia underneath. And they also checked the box for Middle Eastern

6:35

or North African and wrote in underneath that they're Lebanese.

As Nicholas discussed earlier one of the main objectives of the 2015 National Content Test is to examine how people of the Middle Eastern or North African descent respond to these experimental questions designs and compared those results with follow-up re-interviews in order for us to analyze and understand the complexities of what people are reporting

7:02

given the different options. This research will enable us to assess and determine which question design produces the best quality data that most accurately represents how people feels identified.

This will be measured by overall response rates detailed reporting of race and ethnic groups and the reliability and validity measures of their re-interview. This next slide shows an example of one of our standard race and ethnicity tabulations common seen in our (unintelligible)

7:34

Census or the American Community Survey which many of you are familiar with. Currently Middle Eastern and North African responses are tabulated as part of the White along category. And remember how we explained a few minutes ago that the OMB Standards Guide how responses are classified

and tabulated.

This is how all of that comes together when we produce standard tabulations. The category is defined by OMB or how we produce the tabulations and this will be the Census Bureau's practice
8:05

until further guidance is given by OMB. The results from the 2015 NCT of Research will help inform recommendations to OMB about what we learned from the reporting of Middle Eastern and North African responses and the ways in which respondents self-identify.

Then we will learn that Middle Eastern and North African respondents self-identify as White regardless of whether or not there's a Middle Eastern or North African category
8:34

present or perhaps the research will show the opposite. We do not know and please be clear that we cannot speculate which we've been saying along, you know, all morning the data and how - what we're going to be finding for the NCT. But we do know that this research will be critical for informing us how respondents of Middle Eastern and North African origin in the United States self-identify.

And you will gain a better understanding of the context for those responses where there
9:06

are question designs on their re-interview.

Next I will talk about with you about another perspective regarding our detailed tabulation which I know many of us are interested in learning a little bit more about your groups.

Because we plan to collect detail of responses for all race and origin groups in the 2020 Census origin that reflects identities of people from around the world we're also planning
9:31

to tabulate a richer more diverse portrait of our country that has ever been produced.

In 2020 we'll be able to produce new detail desegregated data table for all major groups Black Asians Hispanic et cetera including new details desegregated data for the Middle Eastern and North African groups. So for example this slide shows a potential tabulation of detailed desegregated Middle Eastern groups and North African groups. This is similar
10:01

of how we currently tabulate detailed data for the Hispanic groups or for the Asian groups.

The proposed table would have a total population column at the top followed by a line of those who are not Middle Eastern or North African. Then the data line for a total Middle Eastern or North African population is provided followed then by a less of detailed groups which are classified under this category such as Iranian or Syrian. What I have just described are
10:33

just examples of types of tabulations that will possible - could be possible from the 2020 Census when we collect data for detailed Middle Eastern or North African groups.

Now once again we want to hear from you and we have a few questions to help you guide the discussion. And these are how much and what kind of detailed data do you want to see in the new data products? What type of data do you currently look but cannot find?
11:02

And what types of Copt tabulations do you want to see with the Middle Eastern and North African data? And what do you like about the current ECS industry data products? So once again we'll just place your plaque cards and we'll start our discussion.

This side.

Roberto: (Unintelligible)?

Merarys Rios: I don't remember.

Roberto: (Unintelligible).

Soumia Aitlelhaj: So this also connects to just before the break I think it would be
11:35

helpful for instance to have in terms of yes like how that statistic was created - was compacted in terms of, you know, we're talking about Morocco, you know, why - what makes people identify as Arabs? For instance ethnic genetically they're not, you know, the majority and the (unintelligible) but it's the language. So that's very problematic so in terms of

12:01

how much detail. So I would - it would be helpful to have in terms of those language. And just because I think I'm looking at the list I'm not even seeing just - I'm not even seeing that kind of group that we're representing it's not even on the list there.

Merarys Rios: Right now the - and that's a great point the groups that are on the current
12:21

proposed tabulation and again and remind you it's a proposed or potential it's based on our current working definition and that's why we're missing some of the groups that
12:31

we've been discussing today here. So that's exactly what we need. We need your feedback saying you know what we think you should add this group this other grouping to your tabulation. So once again feel the feedback sheet and we would really appreciate that.

Soumia Aitlelhaj: Okay and then just in terms of the last category so there is our - there is Middle Eastern and there's North African. So just going back again it's reiterate I think the reason why I bring this up again and again is that because I feel like there's not really to inclusion in that, you know, having Arab there's also, you know, when you
13:05

get (unintelligible) there are, you know, (unintelligible), you know, (unintelligible) Israeli's how many Turkish and (unintelligible) and Indians and Arab as a category. So I think it's very problematic that we go - like I know that we're trying not to discuss politics but it's very important to have, you know, to have that clear definition Arab is just (unintelligible)...

Merarys Rios: And I understand...

Soumia Aitlelhaj: (unintelligible)...

Merarys Rios: ...so the groups that we have as I mentioned are from the working definition and then the ones we have under the other Middle Eastern or North African categories
13:33

it's what we were discussing earlier today these are the generic or general terms that people are reporting and that's why they're included in this table and similarly is following the pattern that we use for the Hispanics. So for Hispanic we have Puerto Rican Mexican Cuban we have all the groups and then we have other Hispanic which are the people who would say Hispanic or just some general terms regarding that.

So again these are just potential tabulations but it's not necessarily how we have it. But
14:01

then we do have respondents that say I'm just Arab I'm Middle Eastern I'm North African. So we still capture that information and that's why a lot of these times these groups have such large numbers but because we're getting people that are identifying in that forum. Next.

Man off camera: (Unintelligible).

Merarys Rios: In the right item just for and as for a Hispanic when you look at the race data the largest race that they identify with is Mexican Hispanic or Latinos are along the
14:32

top three.

Sonia: But I saw that we have Algerian and they were listed in this and I just wanted to make sure that everybody knows that Algerian is a nationality and Berber is the race. So it's different. I wanted to know how are you choosing those terms and how are you making
15:02

this list? Whoever puts this do they know what Algerian means and what Berber means and what other things mean? Because we are mixing up things here.

Roberto Ramirez: So as we described - do you remember my session? So when we talked about - remember how we identified all the nation's states, you know, those nationalities so looking at the research of the 15 organizations that we identified and then we also said that we
15:30

also are including, you know, trans national groups, you know, ethnic religious groups

right.

Sonia: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: And so then that is our proposed working classifications. So that's the feedback we want so we've already heard a lot from many individuals here.

Sonia: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: Hey some up some down and so the idea with this table that you're seeing right here. So keep in mind this is a potential tabulation we just want your reaction and it seems like we're getting some good reaction here. So, you know, so if you're - so you're right it is a mix of, you know, nationalities ethnicities...

16:00

Sonia: Ethnicities...

Roberto Ramirez: ...or exactly. And so we just want to hear from you. Hey now back to the very bottom of the table here what we have and believe it or not we do have a very large proportion of the Middle Eastern and North African population at least based on the focus groups identify with these higher pan ethnicity terms they just I'm Arab or I'm just Middle Eastern. So that's what we've seen preliMENArY. It would be interesting to see right can't speculate what happens in the National Content Test when we actually have this question.

Did we still see the same patterns or not? We'll be more than happy to report that to

16:32

you when the results come back.

Fatma: ...one and sure again with identity and identification and maybe that's stuff before reporting is important in this context because when people self-report in the American context they do it in a very different form than they would if it was going to happen in the Middle East if they came to me and said who are you in Turkey the way I would respond there and the way I would respond in the United States are very different from

17:00

one another. So that's one thing we have to take into account that these are two different context.

Having said that however the way you define things in the United States has very significant political implications I therefore would recommend that you have a joint session with the State Department. Why do I say that? If for example you said Western Armenians mostly come from Asia (unintelligible).

If you said there are Western Armenians and they come from Turkey and if that is how the

17:35

U.S. Census Bureau defines and categorizes the Armenians that would be indirectly recognizing the Armenian genocides because Turks say that there are no Armenians and of course The State Department hasn't yet acknowledged the genocide as such.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so...

Fatma: So that would be a major political issue...

Roberto Ramirez: ...thank you for your comments, you know, remember again, you know, I just want to re-emphasize here we're talking about collection and enumerating ethnicity and race

18:03

in the country okay. As I mentioned earlier I know there's a lot of sensitivities about what happened back in the Middle East and et cetera and not to ignore these issues right but it's just again you're held here to help us come up with a way and better enumerate this population and census environment okay.

So thank you again for your comments.

Fatma: But I would recognize...

Roberto Ramirez: And so...

Fatma: ...maybe including an Armenian expert next time.

Roberto Ramirez: ...okay that's a great feedback and...

Fatma: Yes.

18:30

Roberto Ramirez: ...you know, you're definitely right I mean that's...

Fatma: (I would) yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...and then we kind of definitely will work with that community and contact with them...

Fatma: Yes...

Roberto Ramirez: ...absolutely...

((Crosstalk))

Woman 2: ...yes.

Roberto Ramirez: We - oh you did yes that - we did have actually thank you for reminding me we did have - we did invite a number of other experts that couldn't make it all or couldn't participate for, you know, for a variety of reasons. But again as I want to re-emphasize this is a continuous process between now and 2020 and we'll definitely will be in touch with many of those folks thank you. Okay.

Merarys Rios: So we're going to move over to - is there any other questions in that

19:02

table? No okay so we'll go to you Randa.

Randa: Thank you. To answer your questions that you've posed here because this isn't a forum for all types of comments in terms of what types of cross tabulations are important with this - with a possible creation of Armenia category or Armenia category I would be very interested in the cross tabulations of other races that were put down so White Black some

19:32

other race. And that would really interest me and the other thing that would really interest me is the combination Armenia.

So for example how many people put down Palestinian Jordanian and does that become one identity?

That's another question for down the line because there's a lot of Palestinians who are also Jordanian. And then I also had a comment about the current ACS ancestry data products. One of my concerns is the margin of error is sometimes quite substantial, you

20:04

know, 9,000, 10,000 people for, you know, not such a substantial population so that would be what I guess I don't like about the ACS data products.

And what I'm hoping to get from 100% count in the decennial census.

Merarys Rios: Thank you so much for your comments and please make sure to write those down because we do want to know. And again these are just potential tables and that's the kind of feedback that we want. Currently for example for the Hispanic data we do have - that's - those

20:35

are some kind of cross tabulations that we can do so again kind of simulating what we have right now it's definitely...

Roberto Ramirez: And...

Merarys Rios: ...something we can look into.

Roberto Ramirez: ...to answer your question about what happens if someone identifies with multiple let's say, you know, Armenia identities well we're trying to capture that. So if they say I'm Syrian or Jordanian or Palestinian and Jordanian that is the idea. In fact correct me if I'm wrong Nicholas we're planning to collect more than two right now we currently collect two - we code two right ends for example in the right end line. One of the proposals

21:05

that we're entertaining is to collect more than two maybe three or four.

So that's something that we're planning to do as we move forward okay.

Maya: Now actually my question is how many you expected it to code and then the other point Roberto if I can take you back to the point where you were talking about the Web form. What percentage for this testing do you sort of expect to be the Web online which has a drop down that's different right? It kind of allows you to do it differently than

21:31

the way we're sort of conceptualizing it as a paper form?

Roberto Ramirez: Well I don't know the answer as far as what percentage as the - for this

particular for the content test Web center that the population will use...

Maya: Well...

Roberto Ramirez: ...the Internet. I could tell you that right now in the ACS about half the housing units coming in to use the Web mode if you will. But I do not know what part what happened...

Nicholas: Roberto part of the other research that's being done for the NCT is context strategies so that you enable individuals to go online. The goal is to have them go online first but

22:05

we're trying to see different contact strategies...

Roberto Ramirez: Right.

Nicholas: ...how they help people to go online immediately or before they get a form that's mailed out to them. That's also part of this research to see what are the best ways to encourage people to go online and fill out the census. Paper will still be part of the census but again the goal is really to move into more of a Web based presence.

Merarys Rios: And we are looking at potentially sub coding more than ten...

Nicholas: And yes yes looking at (unintelligible).

Merarys Rios: Louise.

22:31

Louise: I just have slides the potential tabulation I just - that category Arab like I've done a lot of work on that and I could just explain a little bit how that happens. Like I looked at the block by block POMS data I use this data a lot and I love it and thank you. And so I found out by knowing where people live that Palestinians tend to say Arab like, you know, and so that's - it's a write in response that you're not creating that people are writing...

Nicholas: Right Arab right.

Louise: ...that. And when you go to the...

23:01

Merarys Rios: Correct.

Louise: ...detailed data you can actually kind of figure out whose writing then if you know the neighborhood patterns. Anyhow two things I think would be great cross tabs of course Armenia and the ethnic groups by country of birth and a lot of second generation detail. So country of birth US.

Merarys Rios: Okay.

Louise: We need...

Roberto Ramirez: So...

Merarys Rios: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...that would be great and in a sense, you know, so that's great we can get from the American Community Survey as we know...

Merarys Rios: Right yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...we have those additional questions. And so what we're planning to do

23:30

in the census will translate into the ACS so if the Armenia category is proposed for example then we'll, you know, we'll have it there and you can definitely have those cross tabulations. In fact we have another content test actually in 2016 another The American Community Survey Content test which is more of an operational test a smaller in this test that we're having in this fall but we're looking at our coding for example.

We're looking at different data mode collection paper Internet face to face et cetera so we're going to see how these questions perform there too. And it gives us an opportunity to look

24:02

at different characteristics as well as you just mentioned.

Louise: And one set of data I've always wanted and had difficulty getting because I wanted to monitor discrimination occupational discrimination is occupation by industry and occupation by class of worker. Because for example my research shows me that people who answer managers are actually small business owners. And they're showing up as highly skilled professionals

24:31

when in fact and I think partly because of discrimination they're ending up in small - the small business sector.

But without that cross tab you can't make - so that would be - I wrote it on my form here.

Merarys Rios: So basically all the social economic characteristics then we would still get from the American Community Survey. So once we know what we're moving forward with the 2020 then that will be the question that we will move forward for the ACS so you will be able to capture all that information through the American Community Survey. Thank you.

25:01

Rita.

Rita: I seem to have a comment for every question. In answering your question how much and what kind of details should new data product provide? Here again as an insider who's now out I can tell you the size of your binder exists for a coding of Hispanic origins so there's no reason why a similar size binder could not exist for Middle Eastern and those African origins and the details can go so much. So many of you mentioned the word Armenian, you

25:33

know, the ethnicity that it outside Armenia.

That you can and if the Census Bureau - you work with the Census Bureau and you can have Lebanese Armenian right. So it would be a category under Lebanese that can be given a code or any other code or, you know, from the specific cities. If I remember Mexico City has its own code and...

Merarys Rios: Well we have a Mexican state that includes loads of geographies that people would report during the Hispanic. So yes but basically going back to the feedback again

26:02

we included the code list and your binders so we really really would appreciate all the feedback that you can give us in terms of just like that we're seeing even something along those lines. We just want to get your feedback and say okay we should add a code for that.

Nicholas: Right.

Merarys Rios: And it's even see the data are people reporting this? Are they writing it in the Middle Eastern or North African line or any other line for that matter?

Nicholas: And so also thank you Rita for bringing that up and when I mentioned is that it's true you're right the, you know, the Hispanic origin list is very extensive just like the

26:32

American Indian and Alaskan Native list, you know, we literally have hundreds of thousands of co - hundreds and, you know, thousands of codes right. Well we never had Armenia and Middle Eastern North African category before so we hope to build that code list right? So as the American people respond and they give us writings and then that will help expand our code list.

This is like we've done for Hispanic origin we've had over 30 years of collecting data for that population. And so that's how we got our ideas and like oh wow they're really

27:00

identifying with these terms. We should be sensitive to that. We plan to do the same thing with the Middle Eastern and North African community as well. Okay.

Merarys Rios: Sally.

Sally: So I have a question I have a couple of questions that are - might seem strange.

So one is a suggestion or it's a question and a suggestion. So I noticed in the online form the write in spaces are like little cubes so you're supposed to put them by a letter and a space. And I just wonder whereas the online write in spaces are just clean opened

27:31

spaces. And I'm just wondering if you get more responses in the online version than you do in the written format? And it seems to me that the written form is like really sort of prescribing the amount of information you can put in the blank.

So if you have sort of if you're Palestinian and Armenian you might not - that might not

sit and it might discourage you from doing both.

Nicholas: So the online actually has the ability to collect even more information that paper does. You can continue typing.

Sally: As much as you want yes...

Nicholas: And I think the numbers like up to 200 characters. So also with the instructions
28:00

we're trying to encourage people to report as many identities as they identify with.

And the point of this slide is to show that you can check boxes you can write in multiple terms. We just listed two but again depending on the identity that you had it might be a very very long term. It might be several terms but we just wanted to raise the point you can do any and all of the above.

Sally: ...on the online.

Nicholas: We we're looking to capture that information.

Sally: But do you also - do you find that people put less on their written form?

Nicholas: Well this is the first comparison...

Sally: Oh okay...

Nicholas: We have.

Sally: ...okay.

Nicholas: ...online versus so that's part of what we're trying to analyze.

28:31

Merarys Rios: Right.

Nicholas: Do we get...

Man 5: (Unintelligible)...

Nicholas: ...again versus the re-interview more reliable more accurate data given the different modes.

Merarys Rios: And overall what we've seen in the past is that most people give one or two write ins at the most regardless of the space.

Sally: Well so my next question illustrates that I'm not a quantitative scholar. So very often I look at the tables and I get confused by the tabulations the long tabulation list you had. So if I'm looking at Chaldeans for example and I want to know how, you know,

29:02

I want to - if I'm trying to count up all the Arab Americans in the Detroit area I have a hard time when I get to the Chaldeans being listed.

So if you've got all the national origins right and then you have a few of the identities listed there as well then how many of those Chaldeans are count, you know, if I add Chaldean and Iraqi am I double counting people or not. So just making - finding a way for someone like me who's not use to is not as proficient of using the data as Louise is to be able

29:31

to come up with really well rounded counts and...

Roberto Ramirez: Okay (unintelligible)...

Sally: ...to - and then I'm also curious, you know, how many Iraqi's are checking Chaldean and how many Chaldeans are also checking Iraqis. So just to make sure that that - I know that that data is already available. But...

Nicholas: ...right.

Sally: ...you know, you can see my...

Nicholas: So that...

Sally: ...problem.

Nicholas: ...conceptually is not new for us that's already happening with other groups where we tabulate data and we have at least two decades now of history of looking at multiple responses. And so that's multiple across major groups like White and Asian and Black but

30:01

also multiple within groups like Puerto Rican and Cuban or Jamaican and Nigerian. We look to see how we can accomplish that same premise as we're looking at the data from Middle East and North African groups.

Merarys Rios: Linda.

Linda: You already made this point but I really want to reiterate it because it could really get messy. It's already messy. We got to take the politics out of the conversation and that doesn't mean that we as communities need to not talk about does it have these difficult
30:31

dialogues. I mean we go through this all the time within our own communities every day and we talk about anti-Black racism within Arab communities. I mean these are discussions that happen all the time.

We talk about what's happening on the other side of the world it's just not helpful for what we're trying to do right here. And I also wanted to make sure we're making recommendations that you guys are verifying some of the recommendations that are coming to you because I'm from New York City and I work with a very large North African community and Berber is not a race. For example they are very racially very racially diversified.

31:02

There are Black Berbers there are light skinned Berbers right Berber is more of an ethnicity or a shared common language for example that's different than Arabic right. So we need to make sure that is we're getting recommendations that we're also not giving incorrect information that then is implemented in a way that doesn't actually align with the actual communities that are out in the community that we're going to try to have this happen.

And the other thing I want to say and it's not because I'm Arab but I want to also make
31:30

the point that when we're talking about Armenia there are 23 Arab countries right? There's a big vast group of people that we're talking and we're not to say that they are the most important group but making sure that we're also engaging the minorities within those 23 Arab countries which are part of what we're talking about.

So I'm trying to figure out how we get to a common place or a place of common ground where we're looking at Armenia not as what people identify but if I see if I'm, you know, Assyrian or as an Assyrian not Syrian (unintelligible) anyway or Chaldean for example...

32:03

...that people see that that's reflected and not to be blinded by this, you know, this thing called Armenia that they don't like connect to. But then there's another category that you do connect to. So I'm just worried about this all or nothing kind of situation that we get into. We have something that I think is very robust. There's been a lot of work and I just want to give homage where it's due. I mean people like Helen has been doing this for 30 years. I mean we can't just break down a building that someone has built over the past 30 years.

I think just having a more thoughtful conversation thinking about the work that has gone from
32:34

the government side but also from the community side and trying to come to a place of common ground. I don't - I'm not hearing that much common ground happening and I'm worried that this conversation went in different directions. I'm sorry you knew it was going to be messy and you probably have these other communities. But can we not do what's happening the mess that's happening on the others side of the world?

Can we be the example where we actually figure out a way to work together and make sure people are represented? Minorities feel like that we're upholding them but we're moving forward.

33:02

So I'm worried that we're not going in that direction based on the observations here.

Merarys Rios: I want to say thank you for your comment and I think you state a great point. I think if we were to all to discuss here what race, ethnicity or etho-religious or any term if we were to discuss right now all these terms and say what is race for you?

What is ethnicity for you we would never agree. And even in our meetings and we're trying to say okay and this is an ethnic group a race group or what are we calling this, you

33:31

know, we don't even agree with ourselves sometimes or with other areas.

And I want to go back to what we were discussing in terms of the panels and remind you we're also testing that. You know, we're asking what is your race or origin? What is your race or ethnicity? Which category describes you without even asking a term within the questions done because we know that each person sees this term in different ways, you know. So I appreciate that comment because it is true it's very important.

In terms of the Arab it's a great point and I think it goes along the lines of the previous

34:04

session that we were discussing what other classifications would you possibly add? So then are you saying maybe we should also have an Arab classification for example or possibly an Arab tabulation? So these are things that we need your feedback on and if you think that it is something that we should include then fill those forms and give us that feedback because this is what we need from you in order for us to know what are we going to move forward with.

I'm going to go to this table. Khaled.

34:33

Khaled: Yes you just got to be forward thinking. I mean ideally speaking we adopt this classification it doesn't necessarily mean that this classification qualifies as a disadvantaged minority group right. So disadvantage I think is something that needs to be contemplated and highlighted specifically because there is this broadness that Armenia folk if I can use the acronym Armenia folk are at least economically upward mobile upwardly mobile and, you know, quote

35:03

unquote "model minorities" and so forth which is in some respects just an adoption of the Lebanese or Syrian American experience.

So I'm really concerned with the question that you have highlighted and cross tabulations that kind of feature or closely highlight the specific socio economic circumstances of a specific nationality groups which suffer disadvantage and suffer animas and marginalization of higher rates. So for instance Yemini Americans who are highly unrepresented in college and

35:35

universities have an experience that veers away from Lebanese or Syrian Americans.

So disadvantage I think is something I'm really interested as part of my research and with regard to anti-racism and civil rights advocacy work.

Merarys Rios: Thank you. Sahar.

Sahar: Yes.

Merarys Rios: Okay.

Sahar: I just wanted to give a little clarification about the quote unquote "Arab identity." The

36:03

implicit assumption in our conversation is that the people answering these questions are first and second generation immigrants who still have very strong conscious identifications with either a national origin or an ethnic origin. And we need to think about third fourth fifth sixth generation from now. For example and so I identify an Egyptian American but I was born in Cairo. But I have met second or third generation people from the Middle

36:37

Eastern and North America identifies Arab American.

They don't speak Arabic their parents their grandparents have immigrated here and the way they socialize is with other Arab with other Arab Americans. And so the national identity the National Origin Identity or the Ethnic Origin Identity starts to become diluted in terms of how they self-identify. Some of them completely pass into being White in terms

37:02

of their social experience depending on their morphology and phenol type and skin color and hair texture and some don't.

And so we need to be also thinking about the future because although some of us in the room know exactly where - how we identify and it's very specific and particularized that might not be the case in three or four generations. And so we do need to have these kind of broader groups where people may say no I'm not really connected to being a Lebanese

37:33

per say or an Egyptian per se or my parents are mixed or my grandparents are mixed. So I just wanted to kind of put a plug in for these broader categories to keep them there or people are going to probably write them in if particularly in the future.

In terms of identifying the ethnic groups that are not just national that are trans-national you have already done this and I'm sure and you've talked to the experts but one way that might determine whether these categories will have some longevity into future

38:02

generation is whether you're seeing communities completely defined around it. So if you're seeing churches that are defined around a certain ethnic identity more than likely that's going to stick.

That's going to stay for multiple generations because people are going to be going to this church or to this, you know, whatever it is that mobilizes them that will preserve that identify over generations as opposed to becoming kind of I hate to use melting pot but that will melt away over time for better or worse. But that's one thing again you get the experts

38:34

for that but that might be a way to start looking at those groups. And I just want to echo kind of comments that for the purposes of the anti-discrimination of benefit of tracking. Is the more that you can have data on in (unintelligible) of subordination that's not unique to Middle East North Africans whether it's education socio economics income I think that would be very helpful because we can extrapolate from that or we can reduce from that the risk

39:04

and the vulnerabilities in terms of potentials from an existing discrimination.

Merarys Rios: Thank you so much for that and I do want to note though that exactly what you're saying about how generations would change is something that we also see with the Hispanic community. I think it's a great example. When we do a lot of the re-interviews or a lot of the cognitive testing what we find is that we say well, you know, I'm Salvadoran but my child was born here so he's American. So we already lose that.

39:32

So a lot of what we've been doing in our cognitive testing is trying to get families where the parents are foreign born to kind of see how they identify themselves and how they identify them with their children. So it's something that we've been looking at in our cognitive testing and not only for Hispanics but for all of the groups that we try to interview.

So thank you so much for your comments.

Okay I'm going to - I have two more minutes so I'm going to go Dr. Cohen.

40:00

Cohen: I'll try to answer the questions. How much and what kind of details shouldn't you do a data (unintelligible) provide? I understand that you can't I mean, you know, in order to provide socio economic data you have to use the ACS so that's only 1%. And so one thing that I'm not clear about is that 100% available for researchers or only the census

40:32

can produce tables?

Roberto Ramirez: Are you referring to this actual census data?

Cohen: Yes.

Roberto Ramirez: We have census data centers where you can go and, you know, you'd submit a proposal and you can...

Cohen: And then you go to the data center...

Roberto Ramirez: ...go to the data center and look at that seal.

Cohen: ...I mean the questions are limited it's age it's age sex...

Roberto Ramirez: Right there's no - right and the census...

Cohen: ...yes.

Roberto Ramirez: ...form right so...

Cohen: And why would these data be different than the data I can get from the ACS with

41:00

the ancestry question? Let's assume I'm interested in the Ammonites. So I go to the ACS I...

Roberto Ramirez: ...well...

Cohen: ...look at all the (unintelligible) education et cetera...

Roberto Ramirez: ...well we've heard from many of the experts here...

Cohen: ...what (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...here is that it - that the ethnicity groups racial groups from the Armenia region is undercounted right under estimated this is what I've been hearing...

Cohen: So with the new...

Roberto Ramirez: ...so...

Cohen: ...Armenia category we believe we'll have...

Roberto Ramirez: ...we don't - can't speculate what will happen. So many of us here probably

41:31

(unintelligible)...

Cohen: ...so (unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...actually it will be interesting to see what the population...

Cohen: ...(unintelligible)...

Roberto Ramirez: ...size is on this test I don't know. I can't...

Cohen: ...okay.

Merarys Rios: Aside from the fact that we'll have a better base. Right now we're working off the...

Cohen: Yes.

Merarys Rios: ...ancestry question so for example...

Cohen: Okay.

Merarys Rios: ...for Hispanics we work off the estimates during intercensal years but then decennial will adjust that. So we will possibly have a better base or a better count and we're to use for the...

Cohen: Yes (unintelligible)...

Merarys Rios: ...American Community Survey as well.

Cohen: ...I see okay and what kind of state are your currently look? Okay I'm interested

42:00

and many of us are interested in a second generation but, you know, would drop the parental country first so we can't do that. I don't know about I mean obviously socio economic issues are important. What do you like about the current ACS ancestry data product? I don't know if you're aware of it but what I really like about it is that it's accessible. And the U.S. is the only country in the world that I know that anybody can go to any computer

42:30

go to the PUMS, you know, and take the ACS and analyze them.

I've been working with data in Germany in Canada and Israel I need to be there physically.

I need to have a call author who is a citizen of the country and then people ask well why all research is done on America what is this ethno centurism? No because the data are available. So keep the data available. Now why am I saying all of this? Because I'm afraid that Congress is going to cut the budgets for the ACS.

43:02

So in my comments I'm going to write this point and hopefully it will go all the way up to Congress because well the next ACS and the next census under new administration. And the ACS is always in danger and we should all be aware of it.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you for your comments...

Merarys Rios: Thank you so much for your comment. So I believe we have Fareed and...

Fareed: Yes so echoing Dr. Cohen's comments I actually use ACS data while we did a study

43:34

in 2013 trying to understand Sudanese Americans who are recent immigrants recent immigrants to the US with the help of Dr. Samuel Budry and Helen. And so we've already used the data and of course we found out that there's very little data about Sudanese Americans so we want more data about Sudanese Americans and we want to understand how they're fairing.

We have evidence that they're not doing very well as recent immigrants in America and so
44:03

we want to study why what are the barriers to their success in America. And so we need a lot more data and we want more detail about our community. So but keep doing what you're doing and more details and accessibility is what we need.

Merarys Rios: Thank you so much for that and I appreciate all of your comments. So now we're going to move on I'm going to let Roberto introduce the Director.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so it looks like we caught up on time so far so good. Okay so
44:35

before we begin our final session of the day I'm honored to introduce to you Mr. John Thompson the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. Prior to his appointment as Director the Census Bureau in 2013 Director Thompson served as President and Executive Officer of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. As Census Director Mr. Thompson will oversee preparations for the 2020 Census and preside over more than 100 other surveys
45:04

that measure America's people places and economies.

Before joining the National Opinion Research Center Director Thompson had a distinguished career working at the Census Bureau from 1975 to 2002. So yes he did come back to join us and help us with the 2020 Census. As Associate Director he was the Senior Career Executive responsible for all aspects of the 2000 census. Please join me in welcoming Director John
45:30

Thompson.

John Thompson: Thanks Roberto. I'm delighted to be here and I think in my remarks you'll probably hear a repeat of many of the things you've heard today but I think that's a good
46:00

thing because it will affirm that I'm as committed to this issue as my colleagues that are working hard on it.

So I appreciate you coming out to Suitland to provide us with your insights and perspectives and even though I wasn't here for much of the meeting I can see for the period of time that I was here that were getting some great feedback. As you've heard one emphasis for all of this was that 2010 alternative questionnaire experiment with many focus group participants
46:34

had a hard time responding to the race question within the existing race categories.

The Census Bureau's mission is to produce accurate and relevant statistics about the nation's people including those of Middle Eastern and North African heritage. So this was a serious concern to us. As we work to address this issue we received a lot of help good help I might add. A relationship with the Middle Eastern and North African community
47:01

has been characterized by cooperation and mutual interest going back to educational partnerships during the census in 2000 and 2010.

Your participation today is very much appreciated and very valued. We recognize that it's your information we collect to produce our statistics and we depend on your cooperation and trust to improve these statistics. Last year we received a lot of support for adding a Middle Eastern and North African category to the census both from a National Advisory Committee
47:33

as well as the OMB inner agency working group on race and ethnicity.

And response and as you heard today we've been exploring how to collect data for respondents of Middle Eastern and North African heritage and our mid-decade testing. As part of that process we consulted with OMB other federal agencies demographic and sociological associations academics race and ethnicity experts and others. We're now turning our attention to the 2015
48:01

National Content Test which will take place this September.

As part of the National Content Test we'll test the Middle Eastern and North African category as you've been hearing about today in both the combined Hispanic origin or race

questions and in the two separate questions approach. In preparation for that we've developed a testing plan and a working depth of classification Middle Eastern or a North African based on our research and outreach. And we've gotten a lot of comments on that already.

In 2016 we'll analyze the results of the test. We will look at how each approach the combined
48:34

question in two separate questions faired we will also assess the usage of the Middle Eastern and North African category how people responded to it and their classification of groups that fall into that category. Then we will discuss our findings with stakeholders and advisors. At the end of the day we'll use this process or research and feedback to make recommendations to OMB on whether or not a Middle Eastern or North African category should be included in the 2020 Census.

49:01

A deadline to submit the 2020 topics to Congress is in early 2017 and the final question wording is due to the Congress in April of 2018. Throughout this whole process we have consulted with a host of stakeholders and academics and interest groups community members and everyone here today your input today on the terms that we are using and on our working definitions and tabulation issues is a critical part of our planned process and I thank you.

As we move forward we'll continue to receive feedback from you and others on our research

49:34

particularly on the results of the 2015 Content test. And I'm confident that working together we can make progress in a way that meets the community's needs and helps the Census Bureau capture the best possible information. Again many thanks for your participation today.

I appreciate your ongoing interest and support of the Bureau's work and your perspective on this issue is very valuable to us. So thank you again. And I'd love to answer some questions out of dialogue if there's any interest in that.

Roberto Ramirez: Do you have any questions for the Director, please put your name up...

Oren: This is my first time in the Census Bureau.

50:06

Roberto Ramirez: Yes speak in the microphone.

Oren: This is my first time in the Census Bureau probably my first time in such a major federal institution. I know you guys are probably some of you treat this as a job some treat this as a career. This is clearly for me for my community probably for many of the communities here a real calling. This is real work that will I see 30 years from now Linda and I calling us a MENA Palestinian and MENA Israeli. This can really change how people define themselves as human beings and I'm very very impressed.

John Thompson: Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you very much Oren. Another question for the Director? Raise your hand yes.

Louise: I don't have a question I just want to say something I think it has to be said

51:05

before we leave here. It's so great that this is happening now we've wanted it for a long time but I want you all to keep in mind there's also intensive fear in this community and I don't want any potential negative impact of that like non-response to change the forward momentum we're gathering now. You know, surveillance it's such - it's very strong in these government

51:35

surveillance.

So maybe, you know, your next test won't turn out as robust as we want it but that shouldn't shut the door. That's what I wanted.

Roberto Ramirez: So that's part of that research (unintelligible). Yes (unintelligible).

Randa: I just wanted to say that I am personally very thankful that we are becoming more visible

52:08

to this Census Bureau as a community or communities as the case is and perhaps to the government in general as a group and I think it's very important that we're acknowledged because often, you know, when you check or when I check and I'm sure other people in the room

of some other race and you - I put in Arab American and then I was reclassified as White,
52:36

you know, I think that it has a negative impact on pride on pride in my origins and pride in general.

And I think that as researchers and sometimes researchers who are studying the group that we write about it's a dual calling. So it's scholarly and activist and I think it's a

very important thing that we're being heard and I wanted to thank the Census Bureau for

53:04

that.

Roberto Ramirez: And we are just going to take three more questions okay. So (unintelligible).

Fatma: Yes thank you very much again this is wonderful. I'm sure you have heard that enough but to me what was most interesting is to see the thought process not from our

point of view with respect to our identity meaning and knowledge and rather have the Census Bureau sees the whole process. From that point of view I'm very interested to

53:31

see what you think is going to be the most significant challenge you'll be facing in carrying on with this process?

John Thompson: So putting this in the context of the lot of the challenges we face at the Census Bureau I think this one doesn't have those same kind of challenges. I'm confident when I do a test we're going to get the results. We'll look at the results and study those.

There are a lot of other issues which we don't have as much time enough time to probably

54:05

talk about that cause me to lose a lot of sleep at night but this isn't one of them.

Roberto Ramirez: All right we're going to take one last question in the interest of time.

Man: Yes thank you very much. And thank you for being here. I'm sort of somewhat new to the game. I just took over a non-profit civil rights organization and I've been here for about a year and a half and I've been getting really delving into the census issue has been

54:32

a very big issue among our community. The one thing that kind of took me aback was this sort of sense of people outside of our community who are thrusting upon us their definition of what we are and how we should identify ourselves.

To me I'll be honest it's all off putting to me that somehow somebody in Washington, DC has decided that I am White or that a Sudanese it not a Middle Easterner or a Somali does

55:04

not belong within the Middle Eastern category. To me I think it's border line offensive.

I think when you really - and I think this gathering goes a long way of diffusing that because here you're seeing - you're hearing what - how we identify ourselves.

I think that's extremely important and I wish you would really follow through on that and talk to some of these other communities because you're asking us who should be in and who

55:30

should be out. Well you should also be asking those specific communities whether they want to be in or whether they want to be out. And I think that should sort of not being 100% deciding factor but I think that needs to be one of the biggest components. Thank you.

John Thompson: I agree. Okay well thank you very much and we're going to continue to dialogue and hopefully in about a year from now we'll have some pretty interesting test data to discuss with you. So thank you.

56:03

Roberto Ramirez: Okay thank you Director Thompson. Okay so I am getting a single add. Before everyone leaves we're going to take a picture so make sure no one leaves okay. So we'll do this after this last session. I believe we only have a few slides left Session E.

Okay so before we adjourn I want to ensure that everyone understands that the results from this expert forum and the 2015 National Content Test with each recommendations for

56:34

the 2020 Census as I've been mentioning all day.

So this graphic provides a high level timeline for making decisions on content okay. So last October we announced our plans for content research that will be conducted in the National Content Test and in December the Federal Registered Notice was posted. And so to elicit public comment on this mid decade and research and as Nicholas mentioned earlier, you know, we received thousands of comments.

57:01

And so and this is still under review as I just spoke and it's right now with OMB and we'll be sending an email off for additional comments for the next 30 days and we want to hear from you and your comments will be reviewed. So we can continue with the preparations that conduct a 15 test later this year. Work is also underway to prepare for a 2016 national for our Content Test in American Community Surveys that I mentioned next spring. So it's a smaller survey or should I say it's a smaller sample but we're looking at a lot of our operations

57:33

coding for example and for different data mode collections.

So it's a very important test also for question. In 2016 we also we will analyze the results of the 2015 National Content Test and discuss the findings with stakeholders and external advisors. This will feed into our work as we prepare for the recommendations to OMB recall there right now we're working very closely with OMB and its inter agency committee. And so through this agency inter agency committee we plan to make recommendations.

58:02

By early 2017 the 2020 Census topics must be submitted to Congress with a final question wording due to Congress in April of 2018. So that we can finalize the conference for the 2020 Census as you can image which is just around the corner believe it or even though it's about five years away. In 2018 we'll conduct an operational readiness test for all systems and in 2019 we might finalize and test the operational and processing plans

58:31

to actually collect edit and tabulate the 2020 Census data.

All along the way as you can see as we're doing now at the bottom of the timeline we'll continue outreach dialogues with stakeholders communities and such with and continue to do this all the way up to the 2020 Census and even actually afterwards because then of course we got to go in our, you know, on our tour to go and announce the results from the 2020 Census which took us about a year after the 2010 census to do. So this, you

59:06

know, these interactions are very important to us and, you know, we'll continue to, you know, provide feedback and engage in these conversations.

So what is next? Well first I want to thank you all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to travel to the Census Bureau and discuss important topic with us. I didn't mention this earlier because I know many of you are very busy and you got to run but for those of you who are interested in a very quick tour it'll be my honor to give

59:33

you a quick tour of the Census Bureau if you'd like wait here at, you know, 4:30 I'd be more than happy to walk you through here and see some of the sights if you're interested okay. If you're ready to go I understand. Second please remember to return your feedback worksheets for each session to us today if you can I really would like to have those. Now if you need a little more time to fill those out please do and make sure that you send it back to us. I believe you have electronically and you just send that back to us to the emails

60:04

that staff have been contacting you with okay. Because it's really - please it's very very critical that you give us your feedback okay.

So...

Merarys Rios: Okay...Angie and Rachel.

Roberto Ramirez: Angie and Rachel will be getting okay? So we'll be compiling all of these results so obviously we're planning to produce the proceedings report sometime

in the fall and we plan to send that to all of you here okay. So let's see so as I mentioned
60:36

before the results of this forum and the National Content Test will help us make recommendations for 2020 and we hope that the final report coming from the National Content as a results will be sometime in the fall of 2016.

So third let's see so we haven't really discussed it today but in your binder you also have the code list I think it's really critical that you also provide us, you know, comments on the code list that we have right now that'll be really critical to expanding the code list
61:03

as we mentioned before. And then finally what I'd like to do is, you know, actually just take the last few minutes we have ten minutes before 4 o'clock. If, you know, if there are any other additional questions or comments that you would like to make before we adjourn officially at 4 o'clock?

Great Oh we do have one over here GiGi.

GiGi: Sorry.

Roberto Ramirez: No no of course not.

GiGi: It'll be quick. First again to reiterate what others have said thank you so much for
61:36

having this...

Roberto Ramirez: Oh...

GiGi: ...I can't tell you how much this just helps our spirits and the feelings about our group and we've been waiting so long for this but this is really a fantastic experience and thank you so much. Also I was wondering if you had any plans for future meetings such as this after the data comes in? Is this going to be an ongoing...

62:01

Roberto Ramirez: ...well we - well I do know we have - we've been invited to a couple of conferences and we'll be at a conference in November with MESA and a couple of other organizations have asked us hey what are the results? And so we'll continue to do that with the internal and external stakeholders. And so we'll continue to do that. So if you have a conference in Austin and I'm from San Antonio so, you know, you can certainly invite me to come talk to you about what's happening but we'll continue to continue this process of this dialogue

62:32

and communications.

GiGi: Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Yes.

Fatma: One thing I want to mention is that I'm here to represent the Turks but I talked about the complexity of that in general I hope especially with respect to Armenians and Turks and all the others who are not included. There's another complexity that comes from my own life experience here. I actually have children who are half Turkish and half German Jewish which is fascinating in many ways but putting that aside what's very important there

63:06

is that the states of Israel is established in 1948 it's quite recent.

What do you do with the category of people who have been here who are Jewish before then? Because when you say the religion is other part of it you do not include obviously them in any way. They are not fully American either because they do not see themselves as Americans in the European sense. So that I think is going to be a very important issue. I would

63:34

recommend maybe having in addition to the Israeli, you know, groups to also bring in American Jewish groups so of course pre-dated in my case the (unintelligible) came here in the 1820's.

Now how do they then...

Roberto Ramirez: Well I can tell you this this feedback that you've given us today has been tremendous. And so, you know, we're going to go back and regroup and you know what I think there's going to be some more engagement perhaps some more forums down the road so,

64:04

you know, that will engage other stakeholders that you mentioned today that you feel are absent here that need to be here. And so we want to hear from those, you know, you can recommend other groups that we should talk to. And so we'll continue that dialogue absolutely. So.

Okay any final last comments yes? Speak to the mic please.

Peter: Well thank you very much for the forum. I would like to ask the expert here not to

64:37

categorize us in their papers or whatever research as sub ethnic groups we are an ethnic group so not as in minority or sub ethnic groups you're a group in the Middle East and a large group in the Middle East so it would be it's in a way very offensive. Thank you.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay thank you.

Peter: I talk about the Turks.

Roberto Ramirez: Okay so then we'll end with the last two questions over there and...

65:03

Soumia: No I just wanted to actually really thank you and as much as the conversation was tense I think it's helpful especially to just show what that the communities the tension between that I think it's very helpful to actually see that and to hear the different conversations. So my apologies for any, you know, unintended...

Roberto Ramirez: No...

Soumia: ...offense but I think it's really...

Roberto Ramirez: ...this is...

Soumia: ...important how deeply it matters to each one of, you know, whether it's Arab or (unintelligible) or Kurdish how this is really a huge deep issue in that it's important

65:35

to have these types of conversations as heated as they were.

Roberto Ramirez: ...no that's fine in fact that was the purpose remember that's what we asked the feedback and which is why we started out by saying look, you know, we're not seeking 100% consensus we want your feedback and that's what we had today. In fact honestly I thought it went really really well today. So well no worries. I can tell everyone in

66:01

here is just as passionate as I am. So yes we'll end with one last comment or question.

Sonia: Okay I just wanted to thank you for having us today and for this very structural debate and forum. And I wish and hope that North Africa will be separated and kept away from Middle East please, please, please it's very important to our community and for the (unintelligible) relations. Thank you so much.

66:31

Roberto Ramirez: We certainly will review and consider all feedback that comes in. Thank you very much. Okay...

Woman 20: I want to thank Helen for her 30 year dedication to this cause.

Roberto Ramirez: Thank you Helen.