consistent responses of whites, African Americans, and Asians) reflects the influence of context. Who asks the question, who answers it, and how and where it is asked—that is, whether the interviewer is Anglo and a Hispanic category is a possible choice—the presence of other cultural groups as categories, and the question's phrasing, structure, placement, format, and purpose all affect Latinos' responses.

But what also is evident from this review is that many Latinos who chose the "other race" category saw their "race" as equivalent to their nationality, culture, familial socialization, birthplace, skin color, ethnicity, or a combination of these. The respondents who answered "other race" to the race item were not necessarily "mixed" or mixed up, nor were they forced into the "other" response solely by context. Rather, they interpreted the question according to their own frame of reference, which differed from that generally used in the United States. Whether the tendency to choose "other race" represents (or incorporates) a denial of blackness or an alternative view of race needs further research. We also must ask whether this question itself reflects the hegemonic nature and pull of the United States' bipolar racial structure. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget stated that it changed its data collection standards and policy because it needed to collect information reflecting "the increasing diversity of our Nation's population stemming from growth in interracial marriages and immigration" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1999:3). Our review of Latinos' "other race" responses sheds light on the complex dynamics underlying these changes; we will examine in the next chapter the political sources accompanying these changes.

8

Redefining Race in 2000

IN NOVEMBER 1993, Congressman Tom Sawyer, chair of the House Subcommittee on Census, Statistics, and Postal Personnel, completed a series of hearings on federal measurements of race and ethnicity. There was nothing particularly remarkable about a series of hearings conducted by a fairly junior congressman, especially when they received relatively little press attention. What made them extraordinary were their proposals.

THE PROPOSALS

The hearings focused on four proposals to amend the race item on the U.S. Census: (1) the addition of a multiracial category, (2) the addition of a special category for Middle Easterners/Arab Americans, (3) the shift of Native Hawaiians from the "Asian and Pacific Islander" category to the "Native American Indian" category, and (4) the inclusion of "Hispanic" as a race category.[1] Except for the proposal on Hispanics, each had been advanced by representatives of the affected constituencies, and government officials and community representatives commented on the proposals (U.S. House of Representatives 1994).

Surprisingly, all four proposals challenged the status quo and the assumptions inherent in the government's current racial and ethnic classification. The proposals also implicitly reinforced the social constructedness of race categories and their malleability and susceptibility to political, intellectual, and social redefinition. But no groups formed alliances to support any of the proposals.[2] Rather, the one area in which there was agreement was on the need for more research.

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) also agreed at the hearings to undertake a comprehensive review of the race and ethnic categories used by government agencies, as it was responsible for

Directive 15, which specified and defined the categories (U.S. House Committee 1994n). Directive 15 had been issued on May 12, 1977, to meet the needs created by legislation passed to protect civil rights monitoring and enforcement, as well as the requirements of Public Law 94-311, passed one year earlier, which called for the collection, analysis, and publication of economic and social statistics on persons of Spanish origin and descent.

Multiracial Americans

The multiracial proposal challenged the long-held assumption that racial categories were (or had to be) mutually exclusive.[3] Whereas all the current racial categories assume one (predominant?) racial identity, that is, white, black, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Native American Indian, a multiracial category would acknowledge that a person could be more than one race. Even the "other" race category in the current census race question is mutually exclusive, for it is the choice to be checked when one is "none of the above."[4] As noted earlier, this mutually exclusive way of viewing race has enabled North Americans in the United States to think of racial categories as representing "pure" races (Lee 1993). The extent of mixing (miscegenation) between, for example, whites and blacks that has produced "mixed" children has thus been overlooked and the myth of "pure" races sustained.

Consequently, the possibility that a person might have more than one racial identity (particularly at the same time) defied the conventional approach to race in the United States. This new approach questioned the rule of hypodescent—in which one drop of black blood makes a person racially black (see Davis 1941; Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992; and Williamson 1984 for excellent analyses of the evolution of this racial construction). Despite the traditional, exclusivist way of viewing race, the concept of multiple identities, which was inherent in the multiracial proposal, is increasingly viewed as appropriate for people with various heritages. This concept is particularly relevant to Hispanics and to other groups as well, for example, the children of interethnic or interracial marriages, ethnically identified Jews, and second-generation immigrants from many European, Caribbean, and Asian countries.

Middle Easterners/Arab Americans

Although the multiracial proposal garnered the greatest media attention, it was the proposal for a "Middle Eastern" category that most challenged traditional and idealized assumptions about race and ethnicity in the United States by pointing to precedents already in place. The proposal was for a Middle Eastern category, and the Arab American representative who argued in its favor did so on behalf of the population of the entire Middle East. She argued for "an ethnic non-racial classification for persons from the Middle East"—whether or not Arab (U.S. House Committee 1994g:183).[5] The Arab American representative contended that Middle Easterners/Arab Americans deserved their own category for many of the same reasons that Hispanics and other groups have their own categories. The arguments presented raised basic questions about the nature of race and ethnicity, and the way they are determined in the United States.

One argument was about self-classification versus classification by others. Middle Easterners and Arab Americans have most recently been classified by the census as white, although a number of scholars have noted that the media regard Arabs as nonwhite (Naber 1998; Shaheen 1984; Shohat and Stam 1994). The Arab American representative also pointed out at the hearings that in their personal lives, many Arabs and Middle Easterners identified themselves as "people of color" and that this classification was increasingly influenced by current political and ideological disputes and representations (U.S. House Committee 1994g).[6] According to one Arab American researcher, some Arab Americans identify as white, and others as nonwhite, with a broad range of phenotypical diversity—some Arab Americans have very dark skin and kinky hair, and others have blonde hair and blue eyes (Naber 1998). Moreover, some identify as nonwhite because they feel discriminated against because of their political views or their Muslim identity, which in mainstream American discourse is seen as different from and inferior to a white identity (Naber 1998). Thus, some were embracing a not-white-American position at the same time that they were being classified by the census as white.

Furthermore, because the census classifies Arab Americans as white, it is difficult to get a separate count for the group. The representative argued that such counts were necessary because of current

trends, such as discrimination against Arab Americans in the United States. This discrimination is seen as related to the politicization of ethnicity, in which Arab Americans are often viewed negatively because of the United States' changing political relations with some Arab nations. Another trend noted is the change in rates of immigration, with a more (physically and socially) diverse stream of Middle Easterners currently coming to the United States than in the past.

Also mentioned was the current context of pluralism, which encouraged immigrant children to respect and be proud of their diversity, to view their native language as an asset, and to preserve their religious and cultural practices. The representative noted that the current context favoring diversity conflicted with the speed with which Middle Easterners/Arab Americans were becoming Americanized. Consequently, they would continue as unassimilated (or visible) and persecuted minorities and therefore should be counted separately. In addition, the Arab American representative pointed to "perhaps a demonstration of certain cultural disadvantages" that Arab Americans might experience and to the possibly greater affirmative-action benefits and protections to be gained as a result of identifying as a minority. These protections were seen as necessary because of the discrimination against them, which has been documented by the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (Ekin and Gorchev 1992).

The Arab American Institute contended as well that both the Hispanic and the Asian and Pacific Islander categories contained models relevant to the reclassification of Middle Easterners. "The rationale for the Hispanic classification was to measure a population sharing common geographic and linguistic roots that could distinguish them from the rest of the white population" (U.S. House Committee 1994g:188). The institute pointed out that the Asian and Pacific Islander race category was similar in that it transcended precise racial characteristics and covered a geographical region that represented many nationalities, languages, and even racial groups.[7] The proposed Arab American category would include Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Afghans, and others, who, it was argued, had similar religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds; faced similar discrimination and exclusion; and were distinguishable from the European-based white majority.

Arab Americans noted a number of fluid and contextually dependent race constructs in the classification of Hispanics and Asians. For example, the focus on the increase in politically related discrimination, the

cultural context celebrating diversity, the greater retention of cultural differences, the greater diversity of the immigrating population, and the establishment of affirmative-action benefits all are context-dependent factors that influence how those affected view themselves and others. Moreover, the representative pointed out, "Just as self-definitions internal to racial minorities evolve and emerge, the lines between and around race and ethnicity as identifiers continue to blur, shift and intersect over time" (U.S. House Committee 1994g:188).[8]

What was perhaps most interesting in the representative's presentation is that her request did not represent "a racial redefinition, but rather a recognition of new realities." In other words, Arab Americans were not changing their "race"; rather, their position in American society had changed. In essence, they explained that in order to keep up with the changing realities, Arab Americans should be counted as a separate group, a new pan-ethnic group (Edmonston, Goldstein, and Tamayo Lott 1996:33).

Some readers might view the Middle Eastern proposal as an attempt to capitalize on the benefits associated with the shift from an exclusionary to an inclusionary categorization. As a result of the civil rights movement, categories formerly used to exclude individuals now have been used to include individuals in affirmative-action programs, set-asides, and so forth (Fienberg 1994). This shift has introduced, however, a new tension into the issue of classification, with some groups wanting to be classified as protected minorities so that they can benefit from these programs or because they need the programs' protection. But it is also possible that—regardless of the benefits to be gained—Middle Easterners/Arab Americans, like Hispanics and other groups or individuals, may simply want to be viewed in accordance with their own self-conceptions of race and identity. Their position reflects a different view of "race," in which one's (white or nonwhite) racial status is seen to bear no relationship to a group's identity as a group. Indeed, at a later workshop, the Arab American Institute's spokesperson insisted that Arab racial identity is ethnic and not racial (Samhan 1994).

A Middle Eastern category was not established. In its final recommendations, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget noted that establishing a new category would require a "consensus building effort to arrive at appropriate terminology and a definition" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1997b:36934). Some of the issues in this group still requiring resolution were whether the term *Arab American* or *Middle*

Eastern should be used. Should the category be defined as pertaining to persons whose "mother tongue" or culture was Arabic, or should the definition be more restrictive, and if so, which countries should be included?

Native Hawaiians

The request by Native Hawaiians to be counted in the "Native American" category, instead of in the "Asian and Pacific Islanders" category, also challenged another tradition: the use of geographic origin (with its implied biological characteristics) to determine race. Instead, Native Hawaiians insisted that their history as a conquered and indigenous people be acknowledged, and not just their geographic location on the Asian and Pacific side of the globe.

As Hawaii's Senator Daniel Akaka explained, "Native Hawaiians have a unique historical and political relationship with the United States" (quoted in Omandam 1997), which differs from that of Native Americans, who claim certain federal benefits based on earlier treaty agreements in which they exchanged land for perpetual educational and health provisions. Before 1893, Hawaii's treaties with the United States concerned friendship, commerce, and permission for U.S. ships to enter Hawaiian waters and dock in its ports. Between 1826 and 1893, the United States recognized Hawaii as a sovereign nation and extended it full diplomatic recognition. But in 1893, a U.S.-backed military coup overthrew the constitutional monarchy headed by Queen Liliuokalani and in 1898 ceded Hawaiian lands to the United States (U.S. House Committee 1994o:199). It was in 1920 with the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act that Native Hawaiians were first classified according to a blood quantum definition of 50 percent.

The Hawaiian proposal displayed the U.S. government's colonial and imperialist past. In so doing, Native Hawaiians placed themselves alongside groups like Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Spanish Americans in the Southwest who do not consider themselves immigrants to the United States but see themselves as part of the United States because the United States came to them and took over their land. Although the Hawaiians' proposal was not supported, there has been some change. In the 2000 census, Native Hawaiians are not listed under the Asian and Pacific Islander category but have their own "Native Hawaiian" category along with other Pacific Islanders.

Hispanics

Finally, the Hispanic proposal also reflected a radical departure from current policy. An important difference, however, was that it was not advanced by the constituent group. The proposal called for the elimination of the "Hispanic" identifier and the addition of a "Hispanic" race category to the race question. The proposal challenged the Census Bureau's official position that race and ethnicity were separate concepts, and it would reclassify what had been an "ethnic group"—in which Hispanics could be of any race—to a "race" group, in which all Hispanics were one race.

The lack of constituent support for the proposal to include Hispanics as a race category was not noted during the hearings. Nor is it clear who first advanced this proposal. This lack of Hispanic involvement contrasted sharply with the Hispanics' earlier involvement with the census. In 1970, "in response to demands by community groups for a comprehensive self-identification measure of Hispanic ethnicity," such a question was included in the 1970 census long forms, which were sent to 5 percent of households. This question relied on self-identification and was not tied to parental birthplace or Spanish surname, as earlier questions had been (McKenney and Cresce 1993:175–176).

According to Choldin, the census had resisted the demand for a question in which respondents would identify themselves as "Hispanic," arguing that it was too late to test such an item and that "existing procedures for identifying Hispanic individuals were more valid" (1986:407). But the White House intervened and instructed the secretary of commerce to add a "Hispanic" self-identifier. Since millions of questionnaires had already been printed, the compromise reached was that the question would appear on the long form sent to 5 percent of households. (Only ten thousand copies of the long form had been printed.) The question was also tested in the 1969 Current Population Survey.

The results of the 1970 mail-out, mail-back questionnaire were disputed and protested by Mexican American organizations who decided on a class-action suit. It called for a new category on all the questionnaires and for Mexican-American or Chicano face-to-face, Spanish-speaking enumerators, using Spanish-language questionnaires. Although the case never went to trial, the House subcommittee did hold a series of hearings on statistics for "Spanish-speaking Americans."[9] It

was these political forces that contributed to the emergence of the Hispanic identifier on the 1980 census form.

This sometimes contentious and antagonistic history was not repeated during the Sawyer hearings. Indeed, the Hispanic community's silence and lack of involvement on the issue of reclassification generally and on the Hispanic proposal specifically were surprising. It is difficult to tell whether this resulted from the exclusion and obfuscation of the issues, a lack of awareness, a lack of Latino interest in the issue or in the complexity and perhaps perceived irrelevance of the discussions, an inherent aversion to discussions of race, a sense that it did not matter how Hispanics would be classified as long as they were counted, or a combination of all these and other factors.

Although the major, requisite Hispanic organizations were present at the hearings, few representatives of the Hispanic community testified. Likewise, there was little coverage of the issue in the Spanish- or English-language media and few public discussions elsewhere.

When the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) testified at these hearings, MALDEF indicated that a recommendation on "whether or how to change the Census's Hispanic origin and race questions would be premature" (U.S. House Committee 1994b:179). Both groups felt that the current Hispanic item should be retained; neither endorsed the proposal as presented. Moreover, both recommended additional research before any change was made, and MALDEF added that any change contemplated should be targeted to reducing the differential undercount (U.S. House Committee 1994k:178–182).[10]

Only the National Council of La Raza made a statement at the hearings that was later cited as supporting this proposal (del Pinal 1994; Wright 1994). Yet a closer reading of the statement shows that by proposing that "Hispanic" be included as a category in the race item, the council was also requesting that the item be relabeled Race/Ethnicity. (Its suggested question has this label; see U.S. House Committee 1994p:178.) Moreover, the statement advocated retaining the current separate "Hispanic" identifier, whereas the proposal being considered would eliminate it. Perhaps because their position was misinterpreted by some, the National Council of La Raza decided to clarify its position to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB): The NCLR "would be inclined to support the combination of the race and Hispanic origin questions into a question re-labeled 'Race/Ethnicity,' *if* testing indicates

that such a question solicits a greater and more accurate response rate" (1995:8, italics in original).

The Census Bureau's history concerning this issue also received scant attention in the hearings and other discussions of the proposal. Earlier, in 1984, the census formed and chaired interagency working groups (IWGs) to discuss the 1990 federal census data requirements. These groups were composed mainly of program specialists familiar with census data and their applications. The IWG on race and ethnicity supported retaining a separate question on Spanish/Hispanic origin and concluded that a combined race/Spanish origin question (i.e., to include "Hispanic" as a race group) "would not meet program needs and could result in an undercount of the Spanish origin population" (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990:5).

In addition, a proposal to count Hispanics as a race was introduced before the 1990 census but was so strongly opposed "through the most aggressive campaign ever seen by the bureau" that agency officials decided to abandon it, fearing it would lose needed community support (*Hispanic Link Weekly Report*, May 26, 1986, p. 3). Subsequent attempts by the census to institute such a proposal also were met with similar resistance (McKenney 1994).

A study (done after the proposal was made) did find that a majority of Hispanics preferred the combined question (U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 1995:table 3),[11] but this may reflect a different understanding of the question. The study's participants may have understood it as "Do you want to be included?" rather than "Do you want to be a 'race'?" The preference for a combined question probably does not mean that Hispanics acknowledge or agree that they are a "race" in the same way that the census conceptualizes this term. Moreover, as Ruth McKay, a researcher at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, observed, "The respondents did not understand the consequences of combining the questions" (Torres 1996:4).

Given the history of the proposal in the Hispanic community and its lack of apparent support or even involvement, we might ask why the proposal was presented, and continued to be presented, as a serious and legitimate proposal. A number of suppositions are possible. Making "Hispanics" a race would make life easier for the data gatherers because there would be one item on the census instead of two and all social races could be counted directly instead of subtracting Hispanics from the various race categories. Having a combined question would

also be cheaper for the Census Bureau, as there would be one less item to tabulate. Indeed, one researcher at the hearings described getting detailed data on various race and ethnic groups as a "cumbersome and fallible process" (U.S. House Committee 1994m:54).

The proposal would also make the counting of Hispanics consistent across government agencies. At present, the government counts Hispanics in two ways, the census's and that specified in Directive 15—the executive order resulting from a federal interagency agreement in 1977. Directive 15 places all people into five major racial/ethnic groups: "white," "black," "Asian and Pacific Islander," "Native American Indian," and "Hispanic." (The "other race" category is not included.)[12] Those supporting the "Hispanic" race proposal may therefore have tried to adopt the Directive 15 model. But whereas the directive makes clear that it refers to both race and ethnicity, the census proposal referred just to race.

In support of the Hispanic proposal, it could also be argued that the proposal was more like the Latino view of race in that it presented all the "social races" together. Apparently, some persons subsequently expressed support for a combined race/Hispanic-origin question because "many Hispanics do not identify as a race" and this would end the practice "of using the term race which they see as a social rather than a scientific construct" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44678). The term used in the proposal, however, was "race," not "social race" and not ethnicity; and the proposal did not refer to ethnic or cultural differences among groups, which are central to Hispanic views of race. In essence, Hispanics were included in the model, but at the cost of making them a race within a framework that privileged the white social race.

Some people may have supported the proposal because they felt it was simply time to acknowledge a new nonwhite or "other" race in the census categories. According to their perspective, this new Hispanic race would span a color continuum from "almost white" to "black." Still others (both Hispanic and non-Hispanic) argued that Hispanics were, for all intents and purposes, a race in the United States and should therefore be counted as such. The NCLR, for example, noted that despite the "technical" differences that might be found between "race" and "ethnicity," the two terms were really used interchangeably by society and were synonymous for "Hispanics." Furthermore, because Hispanics were treated as a "race," it was important to be represented in the race item (see chap. 1; Bendick 1992; de la Garza et al. 1992:94–95; Del Valle 1993; U.S. General Accounting Office 1990). Moreover, the lack of a Hispanic "race" category perpetuated the black/white paradigm, which consistently excluded Hispanics. (However, as noted earlier, what the NCLR envisioned as a "race" was somewhat different from what was spelled out in the Hispanic proposal.[13]) Such approaches appeared to argue that Hispanics be called a "race" in return for recognition, as this might make the counts more accurate, resolve the problem of Hispanic invisibility, alter the prevailing black/white axis and paradigm, and be more in keeping with changing demographics.[14]

Although the proposal to make "Hispanics" a race received some attention by others testifying at the hearings, it was not enthusiastically endorsed by anyone. Indeed, some participants were explicitly against it. For example, Arthur Fletcher, chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, stated that the commission recommended "against reclassifying Hispanics as a racial group" because they were "a complex community of races bound by common cultural, linguistic and geographic origins" (U.S. House Committee 1994b:253, 260). Tony Gallegos, chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, believed that the census's successful experience with five racial/ethnic groups precluded the need for such changes (U.S. House Committee 1994c:285–286).[15] But the general consensus was that the proposal needed to be tested and its impact evaluated before it was put into operation (Morris 1994).

In addition, it was clear in the hearings that a multiracial category would cause more problems than it would solve. Some groups felt such a category would jeopardize the numbers in their categories. It was not clear at the time, though, what a "Hispanic race" category would do to the counts of other minorities. The lack of support continued, and the Office of Management and Budget concluded that "most Federal agencies did not comment on whether race and Hispanic origin should be collected in one question or two questions. . . . Those few that commented were split on the issue" (1995:44678).

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE HISPANIC PROPOSAL

Despite the lukewarm reception and earlier resistance, the proposal continued to be considered seriously. When the Office of Management

and Budget requested comments on the proposals being reviewed for the "Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity" in 1994, it mentioned having "Hispanic as a racial designation, rather than as a separate ethnic category," adding that combining race and Hispanic origin has become one of "the more significant issues that have been identified for research and testing" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44690). Hispanic input into the proposal continued to be minimal. Indeed, by the time the Hispanic Advisory Committee to the Census was established in 1994, the proposal had already been discussed and researched. Instead, the meetings of the committee in 1995/96 were to discuss the findings from the National Content Survey that had tested this combined question (U.S. General Accounting Office 1997:8). At subsequent hearings on this proposal, Hispanic involvement did not greatly increase.

Nonetheless, the proposal persisted and became part of a massive research effort. Of the four proposals presented at the House hearings, only two were pursued, the "Hispanic" proposal and the multiracial proposal. The Office of Management and Budget created the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards and, as part of this, an interagency research initiative. This research was to evaluate the proposals for revising racial and ethnic reporting categories and to determine the potential effect of any changes.

The Studies

The first study in this research agenda was a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) that collected information on several key issues, one of which was "the effect of adding 'Hispanic' to the list of racial categories" (U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 1995:1). The Bureau of Labor Statistics designed the special supplement to the usual May 1995 Current Population Survey (CPS), so that it could evaluate how the "inclusion of an Hispanic category in the list of races" would affect racial and ethnic data (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44690).[16] This special supplement surveyed by phone more than sixty thousand randomly selected households. The census also conducted cognitive research on this proposal, and by 1995, additional research plans were made to examine larger samples (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44691).

Other agencies were to carry out similar research. For example, the National Center for Health Statistics, using an approach similar to that of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (i.e., comparing combined and separate race and Hispanic-origin questions), was to examine the effects of racial classification changes on birth certificates. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were to evaluate the recording of racial classifications on death certificates. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was to conduct a literature search and make an inventory of DHHS minority health databases. Finally, the National Center for Education Statistics was to examine current issues, state legislation, and how schools currently collect, maintain, and report racial and ethnic data (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44690–44691).

In 1996, the Bureau of the Census conducted two other major studies. Both sent self-administered, mail-back questionnaires to 90,000 households for the National Content Survey (NCS) and 112,000 households for the Race and Ethnic Targeted Test (RAETT). The National Center for Education Statistics and the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education conducted surveys in public schools to determine how they collect data. Finally, the National Center for Health Statistics, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studied the methods used to gather data in this area.

The CPS, NCS, and RAETT tested a number of innovations, including the introduction of a multiracial category, a proposal to make Hispanics a race (subsequently called the *combined format*), and the reversal of the sequence of the race and Hispanic questions. Although several interesting and detailed results were produced, the net result of the CPS, NCS, and RAETT studies was that the combined format resulted in fewer Hispanics and whites being counted (U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 1995:table 1).[17] Consequently, the proposal to make "Hispanic" a race was abandoned.

The Purpose of the Hearings

Why did the proposal to make "Hispanic" a race persist despite its lukewarm support? To answer this, we should ask, Why did these hearings take place at all? Why were they examining previously unexamined questions? What was their purpose?

A later analysis of the revision process maintained that the OMB began to consider revising the federal standards for racial and ethnic classification because of the demographic and social changes taking place in the United States and because of the increasing dissatisfaction with the current standard among data users, data providers, and the public (Edmonston, Goldstein, and Tamayo Lott 1996:35).[18] Thus the purpose of the hearings was to ascertain whether the way the federal government measured race and ethnicity was satisfactory. The fact that this question was being asked at all signaled a major adjustment in the way that racial and ethnic concepts—until now taken at face value—might be viewed in the future. The "concerns" expressed at the hearings hinted at some of the underlying issues that led to this reexamination.

The Concerns Leading to the Hearings

Congressman Thomas Sawyer opened the hearings by citing three concerns: (1) the identification of multiracial persons, (2) Hispanics and Middle Easterners who do not identify with any of the four major racial categories, and (3) self-identification by foreign-born persons whose understanding of race is often shaped by different definitions and understandings in their countries or cultures of origin. Although only the second concern refers specifically to Hispanics, all three pertain to them because many are foreign born, many are seen to be multiracial, and many have different views of race.

These concerns raise a number of questions, not the least of which is why these issues were being addressed in 1993. For example, "the identification of multiracial persons" implies that there is currently some interest in, or need to identify, multiracial persons. The last time that the census counted in a separate category those people whom it viewed as multiracial was in 1920, when it classified "mulattoes" as a race category.

The third concern suggests an awareness of alternative views of race among the foreign born when it acknowledged that the understanding of race and "self-identification by foreign-born persons" is "often shaped by different definitions and understandings in their countries or cultures of origin." The second concern, however, "Hispanics and Middle Easterners who do not identify with any of the four major racial categories," raises the question of why it is acceptable for the foreign born, but not the groups called "Hispanics" and "Middle Easterners," to have different understandings of race. Was the assumption that these groups were born in the United States and not abroad? If so, then the real concern was that different understandings of "race" were *persisting* among Hispanics and Middle Easterners born in the United States

Preceding these hearings was a more general questioning and heightened awareness of the resurgence of racial and ethnic tensions on an international scale, for example, the Islamic fundamentalists' conflicts. In addition, in the U.S. scientific community there was a major reexamination of race and ethnicity. The fact that this was receiving special attention in the major media added to the need to reconsider the meaning of race and ethnicity (see, e.g., Barringer 1993; Bernal 1987; *Discover* November 1994; Marks 1994; *Newsweek* February 13, 1995; Rosin 1994; Wood 1994; Wright 1994).

Congressman Sawyer noted that the stated "concerns" had been voiced by "many people . . . during the 1990 census" (U.S. House Committee 1994a). These "many people" may have been those gathering the data or those constituencies interested in specific census issues. At the governmental level, the concern began to surface largely because of the results of the 1980 and 1990 censuses. With the shift in the 1980 decennial census from interviewer-identified race to self-identified race, unexpected issues and questions emerged. According to a former census official, the idea of "race and ethnicity" as a state of mind had not been accepted by the census earlier, but with the shift to self-identified race, the census recognized that this type of reporting raised other issues (Estrada 1994).

Data-Quality Problems

Four key problems were discussed in a report submitted to Congressman Sawyer by the General Accounting Office (GAO) earlier that year:[19]

1. The growth of the "other race" category.
2. Problems in the consistency with which some groups reported their race and Hispanic origin.
3. A high allocation rate for the Hispanic item.
4. Some misreporting problems in both the race and the ethnicity items.

Table 8.1
Percentage of Hispanics Choosing "Other Race" in Different Question Formats

Race Question	Hispanic Question	Multiracial Category	Percentage Choosing "Other Race"
First		Included	33.0
First		Not included	42.9
	First	Included	25.1
	First	Not included	24.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, National Content Survey 1996a:tables 11 and 12.

These were referred to as the "data-quality" issues that led to the hearings.

Although these issues affected many groups, they particularly concerned the large and growing Latino population. Indeed, a close examination of the GAO report reveals that Hispanics were at the center of many of these issues, although this was not noted. For example, Hispanics make up the overwhelming majority (97.5%) of the "other race" category. Thus, its dramatic growth is due to the fact that Hispanics continue to choose it, and it is difficult to recode their national-origin responses into other race categories.

With regard to the second problem, the extent to which individuals consistently give the same response to questions of race and Hispanic origin, many Hispanics changed their answers in reinterview studies and in response to a series of contextual factors, whereas other groups did not. The GAO's report noted that only 36 percent of those who said on the census form that they were "other race" said that again when reinterviewed. The report did not specify whether most of these respondents were Hispanic, but they likely were because they made up 95 percent of this category (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993).[20]

Curiously, although "consistency" was a problem when answering "race" questions, responses to the "Hispanic" question were highly consistent, with 90 percent of Mexicans, 92 percent of Puerto Ricans, 86 percent of Cubans, and 100 percent of "those who said they were *non*-Hispanic" responding the same way on both occasions. The exceptions here were those who said they were "other Hispanic," with only 64 percent answering similarly in the reinterview study.

On the third problem, it was also the "Hispanic" item that had the highest allocation rate.[21] The Census Bureau allocates a particular response for questions left unanswered on the census questionnaire. This allocation procedure is based on a complicated series of steps for each item that best approximates the missing information.

The allocation rate for the Hispanic-origin question was not only the highest of all the questions, but it also increased from 4.2 percent in 1980 to 10 percent.[22] This was seen as particularly problematic: "The results from the 1990 census showed that the Hispanic-origin item continues to pose one of the more significant data quality challenges for the Bureau in terms of allocation rate" (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993:24).

Why was the allocation rate so high for the Hispanic question in 1990? Why did 10 percent not answer the question about whether they were Hispanic? The GAO report saw two underlying problems: One was that many persons who were not Hispanic skipped the question altogether because they did not see it as relevant.[23] Another problem was that some Hispanics "equate their 'Hispanicity' with race by responding 'other race' in the race item, indicating they are Hispanic in the space the race item provides, and then skipping over the Hispanic origin item because they see this item as superfluous" (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993:25). That is, "confusion" about the race item might have spilled over to problems with the Hispanic-origin item. The GAO report does not explain what it means by "confusion" with the race item, the implication is that it refers to Hispanics' responding they are "other race." Two years later, the OMB stated that most of those who did not respond to the "Hispanic" item were non-Hispanics (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44689). Consequently, the reason for the high nonresponse rate for the "Hispanic" item was more that *non*-Hispanics saw the question as irrelevant to them than that Hispanics were "confused."

The last problem, misreporting, refers to several problems but is seen to be principally the result of mistakes or misinformation. An example is those who responded they were "other Hispanic" and later said in the reinterview studies that they were not Hispanic at all but wanted to indicate they were "other than Span/Hisp."[24] Examples of misreporting in the race question are those who checked the "other race" category and wrote in a response that the census reclassified as

one of the other four race categories, so "German" in "other race" was reclassified as "white." The report does not make clear to what extent Hispanics were involved in this problem. Indeed, it is these early reports' lack of reference to Hispanics' specific reporting behavior that is most puzzling, particularly because Hispanics were so central to many of the concerns raised at the hearing.[25]

These problems notwithstanding, the GAO report concluded that the 1990 data on race and Hispanic origin were "generally of high quality" (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993:28). The report did note a growing awareness of the population's increasing diversity, but it was not Hispanics to whom it was alluding; rather, the report cited the more than 200,000 codes that had to be developed to accommodate all the write-ins in the "Asian and Pacific Islander," "Native American Indian," and "other race" categories (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993:28). The responses that produced the greatest number of codes because of write-in responses were the Ancestry and the Native American Indian items (Edmonston, Goldstein, and Tamayo Lott 1996:23).

FINDINGS FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S STUDIES

- Regardless of the format used, a substantial proportion of the answers remain in the "other race" category.

An important part of the "data-quality" issues addressed was the respondents' tendency to choose the "other race" category. As we now know, almost all those (97%) in this category were Hispanic. The purpose of the proposal to make "Hispanic" a race was to reduce the number of persons choosing the "other race" category. I suspect that the reasoning was that if Hispanics saw their group represented with the others, they would choose "Hispanic" and not "other race." In all three studies, when Hispanics were made a race; that is, when the combined question was used, the number of persons who chose the "other race" option dropped. But what the studies showed was that regardless of the context of the question, for example, whether or not a multiracial category was included or whether multiple responses were allowed, many people still chose the "other race" category.

Sequencing was also thought to affect whether Hispanics chose the "other race" option; that is, if Hispanics were asked about their Hispanic origin first, they would not choose "other race." In all three studies, placing the "Hispanic" question before the "race" question did reduce—but did not eliminate—the number of persons choosing the "other race" option.

An example of this adherence to the "other race" response can be seen in the NCS study in which respondents were asked to choose their race under what might be considered—from a statistician's perspective—fitting conditions for discouraging an "other race" response (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996a). Ideal conditions meant including a "multiracial" category (so that those of mixed race could choose it) and placing the "Hispanic" question before the race question (so that those who saw "race" as "culture" and "national origin" would have already identified themselves as such and could now choose their race). Under these conditions, the proportion choosing "other race" did decline, but 25.17 percent of Hispanics still chose this option (see table 8.1). (Although this was a substantial proportion, it was not statistically significant.)[26]

- Hispanics choose more than one category even when instructed not to.

Two other findings from these studies are relevant. One is that when the combined question was used in the RAETT test, a high percentage of respondents (18% to 19%) checked that they were Hispanic and also checked one of the other race categories. Indeed, the Hispanic respondents checked more than one category even when they were instructed not to do so (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1997:4, chart I). Although the results of the RAETT test can be generalized only to areas with relatively high concentrations of Hispanics and other targeted populations, it is interesting that the census's Hispanic Advisory Committee recommended that respondents be allowed to choose "more than one" category on the "Hispanic" item as well. In other words, the committee thought it important that respondents be able to say they were both "Hispanic" and "not Hispanic" (those who might want to acknowledge a Hispanic component as well as a white, black, etc. component in their response). This recommendation was considered but not accepted because it had not been tested.

- The responses of Hispanic-origin groups differed.

Finally, some of the studies showed that the various Hispanic-origin groups responded differently to the questions. For example, in the CPS study, when having to choose the "Hispanic" or another category in the combined question, a minority of Cubans (39.92%) chose the "Hispanic" category, compared with a majority of Mexicans (85.15%), Puerto Ricans (71.51%), and Central or South Americans (77.67%). The introduction of a multiracial category increased the percentage of Cubans who chose the "Hispanic" category, but it was still only 46.40 percent. In the other Hispanic groups, the percentage choosing the "Hispanic" category also increased slightly or stayed about the same (U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 1997a:36916, table 4.4). These results are consistent with those cited in chapter 7 regarding who chooses the "other race" option.

- Why Did Hispanics Choose "Other Race"?

As noted earlier, the reasons that some Hispanics continued to choose the "other race" category are complex and require further research. To some degree, the context and format of the question influence the choice. But the choice also reflects different conceptions of "race" and perhaps a resistance to the racial structure as articulated in the United States. This resistance may be traced to Hispanics' objections to being classified as a uniform, subordinate, not-white race. Or it may irritate Hispanics who see themselves as physically diverse and defined by national origin or culture. In either case, making "Hispanic" a race may have been seen as a perpetuation and extension of the racialist thinking of the past.

The OMB's final recommendations cite findings that both supported and did not support separate race and Hispanic-origin questions. Those findings that did not support a combined question were that the concepts of race and ethnicity were difficult to separate; that Hispanics want to identify their race in addition to their Hispanic origin; that some Hispanics, including the Census Hispanic Advisory Committee and most Hispanic organizations, opposed a single, combined question; that "Hispanic" was not considered a race by some respondents and users; and, finally, that a combined question would increase the need for additional tabulations because people would choose more than one category. Those findings that did support a single, combined question indicated that it would eliminate redundancy, thereby acknowledging that for many Hispanics, race, culture, and national origin are the same.

Race in Formation

The OMB finally decided to retain the two-question format, but it also decided to allow individuals to choose more than one category.[27] Moreover, it recommended that when self-identification was not feasible or appropriate, a combined question could be used (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1997a:36930, 36939). The recommendation that a combined question be used when self-identification was not possible suggested that attempts be made "to obtain proxy responses (from family or friends) as opposed to using observer identification" in order to ensure accurate data.

Unresolved Issues

According to the Office of Management and Budget, government research shows that less than 2 percent of persons are expected to choose more than one race category (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1999:4; Tucker et al. 1996). The preliminary Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal Results, although not representative of the country as a whole, also do not show many persons choosing more than one category (del Pinal 1999). Therefore, the OMB does not anticipate any significant impact on redistricting decisions or on total population counts used for apportionment or for compliance with one-person, one-vote requirements because of the "choose more than one" option (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1999:33 ff). But other researchers estimate that the impact will be larger, that this shift may be greater than the net size of the undercount (Goldstein and Morning 1999). Moreover, they estimate that this shift will have different effects on the single-race groups, with whites declining between 3 and 6 percent, blacks between 3 and 7 percent, Native Americans between 15 and 25 percent, and Asian and Pacific Islanders between 4 and 9 percent.

This change in practice and policy has been put into effect. But at this writing, there still are a number of unknowns. Unknown (and not included in the preceding estimates) is the role of the media in

influencing individuals to "choose more than one." Also unknown are the implications for race-based public policies. As Goldstein and Morning (1999) asked, Will people who in the past said they were white and now claim Native American Indian ancestors in the race question be eligible for minority small business loans? Will those who previously said they were only black and now say they are white and black no longer be eligible? Should some individuals (or groups) of more than one race be protected classes and others not? For example, if those of Japanese-white ancestry are economically more advantaged than those of Vietnamese-black ancestry, should the latter be protected but not the former? Last, it is not known how the data should be tabulated. A number of possibilities are under discussion, but no firm decision has been made (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1999).

Issues Raised

The "Hispanic" proposal, as well as the other proposals discussed at the initial hearings, raise a number of issues. They—and the events that followed these hearings—also revealed the dynamics of racial formation as we approach the next millennium. All the proposals made clear the extent to which race and the construction of racial categories are influenced by nonbiological factors, although this was seldom recognized or expressed.

On a theoretical level, the proposal to make "Hispanic" a race raised the issue of how Hispanics should be counted. Should they be treated as a European ethnic group (albeit multiracial) or as a separate race? The first approach was (and is now) the one in effect in the census: Hispanics could be of any race. The second approach implied that Hispanics were seen (and saw themselves?) as a distinct social group—a race—regardless of phenotype.

Hispanics, as well as many other groups, challenge the U.S. system of racial classification because they do not fit neatly into the given categories. They are neither a race nor a racially homogenous ethnic group. Rather, they are a diverse array of multiracial ethnic groups, bound together by language, cultural ancestry, and discrimination in the United States. They can best be understood in a paradigm acknowledging that the social constructions popularly called "race" are really all social groupings that convey political, social, and cultural differentials. Within such a paradigm, Latinos and other "races" are clustered ethnicities in a hierarchy of power growing out of the history of whites and other social races in the United States.

Hispanics contributed significantly, albeit silently, to the concerns voiced and to the "data-quality" issues raised that prompted the hearings and subsequent research. Indeed, it might be said that Hispanics have come to redefine everyone else, as in the use of terms such as "non-Hispanic whites" and "non-Hispanic blacks." An interesting irony here is that at the same time that the influx of Hispanics led to the redefinition of all other groups, the government attempted to redefine Hispanics as a race. Just as in 1930 when the government introduced a "Mexican" race category, as we end the twentieth century, the government is proposing to create a race category for all Hispanics. The increase in numbers at both times contributed strongly to these racial classification projects.

The "Hispanic" proposal also highlighted the role played by "race" or color in the United States. Making "Hispanic" a race and eliminating a separate "Hispanic" identifier would not allow individuals to respond that they were, for example, both Hispanic and black (U.S. House Committee 1994k:179). As noted previously, research has shown that Hispanics who classify themselves as white or who are classified as white by others fare better economically than those classified in other racial categories (Arce, Murguía, and Frisbie 1987; Rodríguez 1990, 1991a, 1992; U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44678; Telles and Murguía 1990). Using one combined question might make it more difficult to determine which Hispanics are more likely to be victims of discrimination. In addition, making "Hispanic" a race would make it difficult to compare the data with past censuses. Finally, a combined question might also dilute the counts of other race groups; for example, Hispanics who in the past might have reported that they were "black" or "white" might indicate instead that they were "Hispanic" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995:44678). As Rachel A. Joseph argued, the counts and comparability of counts over time of Native Americans would be affected adversely by making "Hispanic" a race (U.S. House Committee 1994l). In 1990, 165,000 (or 8.5%) of the 2 million who said they were "Native American Indian" also reported that they were of Hispanic origin.[28]

The hearings and the subsequent process showed "race" in formation. They showed, and sometimes acknowledged, the difficulties and contradictions of the current racial classification structure. While in the

past and in public discourse, racial and ethnic concepts had often been projected as fairly immutable and not subject to diverse interpretations, it was now being publicly acknowledged on a national level that these concepts were not mutually exclusive but were fluid and "dynamic" (U.S. House Committee 1994f).[29] Thus, on the one (conceptual) hand, the intermingling of the concepts was recognized, but on the other (practical or applied) hand, the concepts were treated as separate.

In stating the "lessons" from the hearings, Congressman Sawyer stated that "the categories had to be relevant to those responding if cooperation was to be secured." This revealed the growing official concern that current categories might not be relevant to some respondents.[30] This lesson also raises questions about the government's ability to identify individuals correctly and clearly. In addition, it suggests an emerging awareness of procrustean census tactics on the part of government officials. Last, it poses the question of whether there is a conflict between providing recognizable categories that are relevant to respondents and needing to gather uniform, comparative data.

Although the stated concerns and the final formulations raised a number of questions, taken in concert they suggest the extent to which "race" and "ethnicity" are being reassessed in the public sphere. They also reveal a changing demographic picture as well as a serious reexamination of race by academics and policymakers that may be having a significant influence on public discourse. The hearings also demonstrated that the government is beginning to question its former views on race and ethnicity and to explore alternative views.

The final determination of how race and ethnicity will be measured or viewed in the next century will depend on several factors. Demographic diversity will continue. Individuals and groups will continue to have their own particular and changing views on race. The incidence of intermarriage and the number of interracial individuals will also continue to grow. Consequently, if we are to understand the growing diversity of this country, we must improve our understanding of how people view themselves.

Appendix A

Data Limitations and the Undercount

When we examine data on the racial self-classification of individuals, we assume that the data reflect individual choice. But we do not know who fills out the census form and how the "race" of each person in a household is determined. Generally, one person in the household fills out the census forms, but which person that is, the mother, father, eldest son, or whoever, may affect the racial classifications recorded.

The data on Hispanics do not include Brazilians, but they do include persons from Spain. Although Brazilians are not considered Hispanic because they do not speak Spanish, many Brazilians consider themselves Latinos, though not usually Hispanics.

THE UNDOCUMENTED AND THE UNDERCOUNT

We do not know how many undocumented persons are included in contemporary census data, but we know that Latinos make up a large proportion of the growing numbers of both undocumented and documented immigrants. Different methods yield different estimates of the undocumented, with the total number ranging from 2 million to 5 million (Passel and Woodrow 1984; Woodrow-Lafield 1992, 1993). But because we do not have estimates of how many undocumented are counted in the census data, we must assume that they underestimate the numbers of Latinos, though we do not know by how much. Despite this underestimation, the numbers of Latinos have increased dramatically. As we have noted, in 1997 the U.S. population "officially" contained 29.7 million Latinos, or 11 percent of the total (Reed and Ramirez 1998:table 1). In 1999, the official figure was 31.365 million. The Latino population is also expected to continue to grow substantially. It ac-