FINAL

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

REPORT #14

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE VARIATIONS AMONG BLACK FAMILIES ON THE UNDERENUMERATION OF BLACK MALES

PART TWO: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

Final Report for Joint Statistical Agreement 89-06

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This project has certainly become a much more extensive endeavor than had been initially envisioned. This growth has resulted in an abundance of insight and information pertinent to an understanding of the probable impact of Black family variations on the U.S. Census underenumeration of Black males.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Part one of the Joint Statistical Agreement between the U.S. Census Bureau and the Hampton University Black Family Institute extensively explored the literature related to family structure variations among Black Americans (Hudgins, Holmes, and Locke, 1990). This literature review and discussion pointed to many facets of Black family structure and functioning that may impact the enumeration of Black Americans, especially Black males.

The literature analysis identified features of Black families that encourage further research and discussion. The extended family was recognized as considerably related to the West African origins of most Black Americans. This family form and its related networks were also identified as major coping mechanisms through economic and social hardships. It is especially important to the functioning and survival of female-headed households.

Black male economic marginality was suggested as a major factor determining the roles and levels of participation that Black males are likely to assume in Black families or households. An extensive array of "boyfriend" relationships were discussed as a variant of the "nuclear family" image. Much of this discussion addressed the actual nature of Black male-female relations in households and in the larger society.

Additional attention was given to the political economy of Black male marginality. Issues are raised in the literature regarding racism as it relates to comparisons of the functioning and well-being of Black families and White families. The high levels of economic marginality experienced by Black males contrasts sharply with the relatively low levels of economic marginality experienced by their counterparts. This can be analyzed as a major

factor in the household variations among Black American families.

The objective of part two of the Joint Statistical Agreement between the Hampton University Black Family Institute and the U.S. Census Bureau is to use focus group analysis to further explicate Black family structure variations and their implications. Consequently, this research explores Black male marginality, extended family arrangements, Black male-female relations and perceptions, and impressions of the larger socio-political arrangements including the impact of race. The final intention of this research is to directly explore the ideas and attitudes of Black males and Black females that are related to participation in the U.S. Census enumerations.

Part two of the Joint Statistical Agreement research employs focus group analysis. The fundamental basis for using focus group research is to identify patterns of responses among Black males and Black females that are associated with variations in family structure that may affect enumeration. These variations may not have been revealed by other more frequently used methods in behavioral research. Focus group analysis is conducive to in-depth process oriented discovery. It allows the researcher to explore fully attitudes and attitude development within a group of similar respondents. Subjects who shared certain common characteristics were invited to describe patterns in household structures and family behavior. This exploration of Black male experiences and influences on household formation and family relationships was instructive for the development of underenumeration hypotheses.

Focus group research provides a more ethnographic, open-ended, exploratory approach to discovering and identifying attitudes and perspectives, as well as understanding behavior associated with family structure and functioning. The general approach of focus group research involves the use of small groups that have been carefully selected to represent specific cultural and/or demographic characteristics. From these extensive group interview-discussions, observations and perspectives that have not been identified previously may be suggested as a basis for hypothesis development. Using these hypotheses it will become possible to employ more quantitatively-oriented methods (i.e., survey research) to ascertain or document the actual incidence of these household variations, and the more general perspectives from which they are viewed and organized in this specific population. This will ultimately provide the kind of statistical rigor from which more nationally definitive statements may be made.

II. METHODOLOGY

Focus group research is widely used in the private sector to explore consumer attitude development and product impressions. It is often used to develop test marketing strategies or to fine-tune existing marketing approaches to a given product or service. This is not unlike some of the concerns surrounding how well the Census Bureau reaches certain populations, specifically young Black males. The improved "marketing" of census participation may be a practical outcome of this research. The major assumption embodied in focus group research is that certain facets of attitude development or attitude origination are not revealed in standard survey research. With focus group analysis the linkages that individuals make to

reach certain conclusions can be more clearly and thoroughly specified (Krueger, 1988; Greenbaum, 1988).

Focus groups are conceptually related to "focussed group" interviews developed by sociologist Robert Merton in the 1940s. He cautions that the qualitative detail provided by the focussed group interview can lead only to new hypotheses about the sources and character of the response. These hypotheses will ultimately demand the more empirically-based testing of quantitative research. Focus group interviews must be used as sources of new ideas and hypotheses, not as demonstrated findings with regard to the extent and distribution of provisionally identified qualitative patterns of responses. The study of medicine has demonstrated that clinical observations (case studies) are no substitute for epidemiological (survey) investigations (Merton, 1987).

Krueger (1988) defines focus group research as unique from other methods in that it allows for group interaction and greater insight into why certain opinions are held. He proposes a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non threatening environment. Too often quantitative approaches are based on assumptions about people, about things, or about reality in general that are not actually warranted (Krueger, 1988).

A focus group session typically consists of six to nine participants. Under the guidance of a moderator (research associate) the group discusses topics of importance to the particular research study. The informal group situation tends to encourage participants to elaborate on behavior and opinions to a greater extent than might be forthcoming from more formalized individual interviews. It is this group dynamic that distinguishes focus group

sessions from the more conventional in-depth interviews typical of much ethnographic research. This free flow of discussion is enhanced when each group is fairly homogeneous, wherein respondents share similar statuses and common general perspectives on the topic under investigation (Pramualratana, Havanon, Knodel,1985).

Within each session the full discussion was tape-recorded. Each session also included a research associate who took notes and later assisted in the transcription of the tapes. These transcripts served as the basic data sets for analysis. The intention of focus group sessions is not to provide statistically, generalizable, quantitative data, but valid information exposing underlying attitudes, opinions, and behavior patterns. The focus group and survey approaches can best be seen as complementary rather than as alternatives to each other. Focus group sessions can serve to generate new hypotheses to be tested by surveys on a broader population base, to probe findings from surveys that seem ambiguous or puzzling, or to investigate topics that do not readily lend themselves to a survey format (Pramualratana, et al, 1985).

The moderator used predetermined, open-ended questions. These questions should appear spontaneous although they are carefully developed through considerable reflection. The questions, called the questioning route, are arranged in a natural, logical sequence and are often memorized by the moderator. There is no pressure on the moderator to have the group reach a consensus, instead attention is placed on identifying and understanding variations in the thoughts of participants as they consider the issues of discussion. Focus groups have high face validity, which is due in large part to the believability of comments from participants. Factors such as geographic location, age, gender, income, family size, and employ-

ment status are useful ways of determining who should participate in each focus group (Krueger, 1988).

The focus groups used in this research were organized using categories of age, socioeconomic status (SES) and gender. All respondents were Black. Six primary study focus groups and two control focus groups were conducted in the Norfolk-Virginia Beach-Newport-News Metropolitan-Stastistical Area (MSA). This MSA ranked twenty-eighth among the largest MSAs in the country in 1985 with an estimated population of 1,289,000 persons. Blacks made up 28.1% of this population. The specific characteristics of the groups were:

Primary Study Groups Characteristics:

Three low SES groups of Black males ages 18 - 40

Three low SES groups of Black females ages 18 - 40

Specifically the following characteristics were sought:

Males	Females
Black	Black
18-25	18-25
Single/separated	Single/separated
Had girlfriend(s)	Had boyfriend(s)
Unemployed/low income	Unemployed/low income
Extended family	Extended family
Moved 2-3 times/year	Moved 2-3 times/year

Emphasis was placed on recruiting individuals from marginal statuses who were hard to access and presumed hard to enumerate. This included, ideally, individuals who had not been included in the 1980 enumerations. The individuals in these groups were pri-

marily unemployed, received public assistance, and/or resided in or near public housing. Many of the men did day work and did not have a residence that they could independently call their own. While the women also tended to be unemployed, many had their own households although some lived in extended households.

Control Groups Characteristics:

One group of moderate SES, Black Males, ages 18 - 30

One group of moderate SES, Black females, ages 18 - 30

The control groups differed from the primary study groups on many characteristics including income, employment status, family structure and residential stability. Members of the control groups tended to be employed or attending school full-time. Interestingly the men were more likely to live with parents while the women in the control group tended to live in nuclear households. None of the control group participants received public assistance or resided in public housing.

The focus groups consisted of six to nine carefully selected respondents who met for approximately two (2) hours with the research associates to discuss a variety of issues related to family, household composition and family functioning. A second set of questions focused more directly on the census. Focus group members were identified by community resource persons including community organizers and public housing district staff. Often these persons identified other grassroots persons who assisted in the direct recruiting. Flyers were posted in key areas and word of mouth was used to interest focus group participants. The community people alone knew participant names or other personal information. The research associates did not have access to this information and

participants were instructed not to identify themselves personally in the group. This yielded the anonymous participation that is critical to the effectiveness of focus group study, especially involving the potentially sensitive research focus of this project.

Each participant received ten (10) dollars cash. Group sessions were conducted in community settings (community centers or church meeting rooms). With the exception of the female control group, the research associates shared the same race and gender characteristics of the participants. The female control group was moderated by a Black male research associate. This variation resulted from an unexpected scheduling conflict involving both female research associates. Careful examination of the female control group responses revealed no significant differences or observations that could be related to the moderator's gender.

Table 1
Summary of Focus Group Participants

Primary Group	Date	Place	Gender	Ages	SES	Size
1	11/89	Portsmouth	Male	17-40	Low	11
2	11/89	Portsmouth	Female	17-25	Low	5
3	11/89	Newport News	Female	18-30	Low	6
4	02/90	Norfolk	Female	18-32	Low	6
5	02/90	Norfolk	Male	18-31	Low	10
6	03/90	Newport News	Male	18-30	Low	11
Control						
CF*	07/90	Portsmouth	Female	18-30	Moderate	10
CM*	08/90	Portsmouth	Male	17-30	Moderate	9

*(CF and CM refer to "control female" and "control male.")

Focus Group Questioning Route

The focus group questioning route consisted of major questions and issues discussed in each group. The route was brief although general enough to evoke discussion on the desired dimensions of the topic. In this research the following questioning route was used:

1. How do you (or others) decide who lives with you?
2. How do you decide whom you will live with?
3. Have you lived with relatives other than your parents?
4. Have you ever lived with a girlfriend (boyfriend)?
5. Do you think there are problems or risks involved in living with a girlfriend (boyfriend)?
6. How often do you change residences?
7. How often have you moved in the past year?
8. Do you think Black men move more often than Black women?
9. Where or how do you get your mail or messages?
10. Could you just disappear for a period of time? How?
11. Can you think of reasons why you would not want to be found?
12. Can you think of reasons why you would not want your address known?
13. Do you think Black families are different from other families? How?
14. What do you know about the U.S. Census?
15. Did you participate in the 1980 Census?
16. What do you know about the 1990 Census?
17. What do you think can be done to increase the Census count?
18. Is there anything else anybody would like to add?
19. Is there anything you would like to ask the moderators?

Respondents were encouraged to volunteer any additional information or opinion that they cared to. The questioning route was completed in each group although the sequencing of questions was not rigidly adhered to.

Data Analysis

Data analysis actually began with immediate debriefing by the moderator/research associates at the close of each session. This included a spot check of the tape recording to be certain that the complete session was taped. This was followed by a comparison of notes to arrive at a short summary of the session. Notes were examined for the following information: changes in the questioning route, participant characteristics, descriptive themes, phrases or words used by participants as they discussed the key question(s), subthemes indicating a point of view held by participants with common characteristics, descriptions of participant enthusiasm, consistency between participant comments and their reported behaviors, body language, and the mood of the discussion (Krueger, 1988).

The formal analysis of focus group data proceeded as follows:

1. Each researcher read all of the summaries at one sitting and made notes of potential patterns and trends.
2. Each researcher read each transcript.
3. Each researcher listened to the tapes and read the transcripts concentrating on one issue or question at a time.
4. After a series of group discussion each researcher assumed responsibility for writing up specific topics.

The analysis included a consideration of five (5) factors:

1. words used by participants and meanings;
2. context in which words were used, the stimulant or trigger;

3. internal consistency or shifting of positions during session;
4. specificity of responses, first person versus third person; responses, emphasis placed on the former; and
5. identification of the big ideas, major trends that permeate the discussions (Krueger, 1988).

The following sections include discussions of primary focus group findings. Results from the control groups are also identified and compared or contrasted with primary group results.

III. STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS IN FAMILIES

Formal-Informal Living Arrangements (Primary Groups)

Although the male respondents in the primary groups did not express a clear fear of violating public housing policy, they were sensitive to the living arrangement of their girlfriends, mothers, and sisters. They reported that the women in their lives were willing to help them during difficult times, but they did not want to be a financial burden and jeopardize the women's living arrangements. There was a consensus that men could and should take care of themselves and have a responsibility to participate financially in the household. Moreover, they reported that a man on his own could "survive" living and working from place to place, but they all agreed that this was unacceptable for women and children. Thus, there was a realization that their living arrangements were precarious at best and those informal patterns of family structures were the expected norms. Examples of respondents' perceptions of their informal living arrangements are reflected in the following quoted passages:

> **"That's right, your name ain't on the lease...so when they go back to the housing authorities, the head man, then your mother got to pay for her rent and your rent for staying there. You might not got no job. And some Black don't fit**

> nowhere to stay so, that's why they stay with a relative or friends" (Group 5, p.5).
>
> "Mom's gon' put you in regardless of what the situation is. That's right. Name ain't on the lease or not, she gon' pull in. You gotta go where you can go" (Group 5, p. 5).

Formal-Informal Living Arrangements (Control Groups)

In contrast the members of the male control focus group were residentially quite stable, and felt very little pressure regarding their living arrangements:

> "In my case I went to the Army. After I graduated the cost of living was a little high, you know like $500 a month for an apartment, plus I have a car and loans to pay back from school. Couldn't afford it, so I stayed home. After that my father was like well, you stay home, all you have to do is make sure you do something productive. That's one reason why I try to go back to school so I can get a better job making money so I can move out"(Group CM, p.1).

Household Composition (Primary Groups)

Few Black males participating in the primary focus group interviews reported living alone. An even smaller number were heads of households that included their families. Most of the men who reported living alone, lived in rooming houses. One respondent reported living in an abandoned bus. Much of the men's living status was transitional, varying from living alone or sheltered, to homelessness often associated with migration from one area to another including interstate movements.

Many of those who indicated they were living alone were essentially homeless during the summer. They depended upon friends, sleeping in parks and other isolated places. As the weather became cold these individuals tended to find more stable arrangements with parents, girlfriends, shelters, etc.

> "See, when the winter hits you got to be more, you got to kiss a lot of butt, man, because it's twenty below zero and they know then that you ain't gonna do too much to upset them. For the simple fact they put you out in that cold. Now the summer time you ain't got no problem..." (Group 1, p.5).

Most of the men could be considered marginal or borderline homeless. Many depended upon relatives and friends for housing without which they would have been actually homeless. This status was associated with their unemployment, or sporadic employment.

The largest number of men (age 18-25) in this study lived in their parents' households, often with their mothers, a few with their fathers, and a very small number with other relatives (aunts, uncles, cousins). In most cases, their mother's house was considered their permanent residence. Many stated that they could live with their "mom" when they could not live with anyone else. This pattern also was frequent among female respondents. The major factor related to household composition was stated as lack of sufficient and stable income to maintain an independent household.

The status of the mother's housing (public versus private) became very important for these living arrangements. This was the case especially for low-income mothers. Public housing regulations require that an 18-year-old be treated differently in terms of rent inclusions. Simply put, rents increased as children became 18. Male respondents reported that when they turned 18 and if they were unemployed, their mothers were in no position to pay the additional rent required. Most often the mothers simply reported the young male as having left the household for rent purposes. This practice is very important for undercount purposes inasmuch as the young man was not very likely to be listed on any "official" forms as "officially" he was no longer a member of the household.

In privately leased or mortgaged households the status of the young male was less unstable. Often there were expectations regarding employment or actually attending school. Some actually complained about household rules. A number reported that this situation often became very comfortable requiring very little from them. They suggested that they had left home on their own in order to be a "man"; that is to eliminate the dependency associated with being at home.

> "If you don't go out there and get it, you ain't got nowhere to go...see when I'm out there, I'm doin' good. But the minute I come home I feel too comfortable. I can kick back like I'm one of the thirds. You know like one of the thirds. I'm the third. It's too easy at home. But when I'm out there in the world I got to do it. Being at home. That make you lazy man. It make you, when you get out there, when you like somewhere where don't nobody know you, and you know that if you don't get out there and put nothin' in your stomach, that ain't nobody gonna do nothin to put nothin in your stomach, you're gonna get out there and you're gonna struggle" (Group 1, p.8).

Age was a factor in both public and private housing situations. As a general rule boys were expected to leave home around ages 16-18. They were expected to become independent much earlier than girls. Many of the men, some away from home since age 15, saw this as a statement of their freedom. Others stated that they voluntarily left because they saw themselves becoming a burden on what was an already strained family budget. Some also stated their own knowledge of the public housing rules and left not to get their mothers in trouble.

A major factor in living arrangements was relationships. A few of the men were married and living with their spouses. At least two of them reported heading a multiple family household with

parents or other relatives living with them because of economic or other hardships. The remainder reported "girlfriend" relationships. All were involved in at least one relationship, some reported multiple relationships.

Most saw living with their girlfriends as a secondary residence (mother's house being primary). Most had shared housing with their girlfriends at one time or another. Several reported alternating between the girlfriend's apartment and mother's house (2-3 days per week each place). Many found their girlfriends' place as a critical form of shelter during winter months. All agreed that none of these situations would have included them as official members of the households.

Critical to living with girlfriends was economic participation. Most men stated that they were expected to help out with living costs (i.e. rent, bills, food, etc). Most stated that their "welcome" was predicated upon this contribution or at least a serious effort to find employment. Most males also stated they felt an obligation to participate economically in the household in order to maintain some balance in the relationship. Most men felt that they could contribute through day work and other "hustles" that allowed them to make small amounts of money from time to time. None reported a situation where they had actually been "put out." Some noted that they had seen trouble coming (from housing authorities) and voluntarily left to keep the girlfriend from getting into any trouble.

> **"...Yeah. I have left because of that. I had been with (this girl) and she had got scared that she would lose her crib because I was living with her and she was in public housing, and I left because of that. But I have never been hurt. ...I have never been put out of none of my females' houses" (Group 1, p.19).**

The financial participation was critical; as in all of the cases the girlfriend was a single parent heading a household with limited financial resources. The women also stated a willingness to allow the men to stay in the household with their financial participation being a welcomed factor.

Very few of the men mentioned friends as a source of housing. Some mentioned sharing a room with a buddy, or feeling that if things really got rough they could turn to one of their "buddies" for help. They also stated that where they had housing they would not mind putting up a buddy for a few days. This was especially the case among a few respondents who felt very hostile toward their siblings and their parents.

Household Composition (Control Group)

Living with a girlfriend seemed to be less problematic for control group members.

> "Well living with my girlfriend depends on well its like this, she loves me and I kinda' love her so we got that understanding right here and there and how we equal things out; I pay half and she pay half. And so things work out like that" (Group CM, p.3).

IV. RELATIONSHIPS

Male-Female Relationships

At the root of many discussions on the Black family is the relationship between men and women. The female respondents in the primary focus groups were either single mothers living with their children or other family members, or single living at home with parents or other relatives. Some of the women were involved in relationships. They were either engaged or had a steady boyfriend. Others indicated that they only had "friends." Some of the women

felt that there were risks involved in living with boyfriends.

> "It's always a risk living with a man" (Group 3, p.6).

Still others felt it necessary to wait before jumping into marriage.

> "...I wouldn't jump into marriage with him now. I'd have to wait...cause I see, I learned him now. If we move into an apartment, anything could happen. He could just move an' then he could just go on about his business. Do what he wanna do. You know. If we do that now, we got married, that's fine because that'll be my apartment and I could put him out, or do what I want; however I feel. No joking. I'll tell him to go" (Group 3, p.6).

It was important to the female respondents that the residence be theirs, not the man's. They felt the woman should be in control. As one respondent stated:

> "He can pay stuff, but as far as I'm saying, this is mine and that's mine. He gon' take it when he leave? No! It's gon' be mine when he come in that house and it's mine. If he bring it in, he bringing it in to stay. He get put out, he going with his clothes and that's it. And he knows that" (Group 3, p.7).

The male respondents also indicated relationships with a girlfriend, or in some instances, girlfriends. Some were living with wives. Where men had been unemployed, they have had to rely on the assistance of female friends. Many found it difficult to do so and did not like the idea of having to move in with a woman who had her own place.

> "I think it's pretty bad for a male to just move in with a female because she's already established. Yeah. Because she feels more that this is hers. You know at the same time she's telling you we're sharing this and we're sharing that, but it's more or less you try that, you know,...you get in an argument, she

gonna be like, 'you get out, I was here first because it's already established that lease,...in her name...So I just feel just to move with the female you are going to get your name on the lease...'cause just to move in with her and more or less, ya'll buy everything on an equal basis, 'cause if not, there's going to be a big problem" (Group 6, pp. 12-13) .

Another male respondent stated:

"To women, it feel like if you move in with them they're more in demand anyway because they feel like you're relying on them. Yeah. To me, if you let any woman do anything more than what they should be doing for you, they'll always be throwing it up in your face, always" (Group 6, p.13).

Sometimes men felt the need to have their own space.

"...See, I like being by myself, man. I mean I love being with women, but as far as my living quarters, I like being by myself. I was living with my lady and I just felt like I needed my own room. Sometimes you can do the things you wanna do, you know like just sit back, see. Sometimes, if you with a lady, and you wanna be quiet and she wanna talk, the first thing she figure you not paying her no attention. Of if she wanna go somewhere you don't wanna go, you got an argument there" (Group 1, pp 19-20).

Some men felt that women have been supportive of them and have been very caring. These men recognized that there were many "good women" out there and they needed support as well. As one male respondent put it:

"...A female, they got kids and they get stressful, too. They need a piece of time by theyself sometimes. And if she can understand that I need the time, then I can only give the same understanding. You bringing up kids, you got to get up in the morning, get them dressed, send them to school. They come back and all day long you telling them, don't do this, don't do that, put that down, put that back, leave that alone. That's enough to drive you up that wall. That's why a lot of times I used to babysit. Here. I'll keep the

> kids. Why don't you go out with your friend or something, you know, hang out a little while. 'Cause men, we ain't the only ones to get stressed. We get stressed on the job basically. But whether you know it or not, a female home with two or three kids catching holy hell man, especially when they young. They really get tensed too. So you know, they need to peel away too. They just like us. It ain't no ball of grace for them either. They catch hell too, man" (Group 1, p.20).

Overall, many of the male and female respondents experienced difficult, unstable relationships. There were situations of monogamous relationships and instances, primarily with the men, of multiple relationships. A major factor in many of the relationships was economics. Females expressed a need for their children to be taken care of. If a man could not financially support the woman and her children, then he had to go. Men, too, understood that their women friend(s) expected financial support and if it were not forthcoming, then they would have problems in the relationship. As suggested above perceptions of male-female relationships among the control groups respondents were less antagonistic.

Respondents' Family Relationships (Primary Group)

Extended family networks were given as the most frequent Black family structural arrangement. This support, emotional and financial, was reported to be critical for the survival of female-headed households. Parents and other siblings assisted in rearing children by providing guidance, discipline, and baby-sitting services. The economic status of the Black family was identified as a major determinant of variant family structures. The family served as a social buffer against a hostile environment and economic hardships.

The respondents cited numerous examples of the importance of a "close knit" family.

> "I think Black families are more family-oriented. They are (Whites) closer with their friends family than they are with their own family. Of course, then too like I said, it's more of a parent-children relationship with White families to me just seem buddy-buddy. I think they value things more because it was harder to come along than it was for the Whites. They take more pride in the things they do" (Group 3, p.6).
>
> Love, discipline, friends. Caring for each other. And you know, if you have a family you care about each other and you respect one another and it's like a group of people that you can always trust and that's there for you. That's what I think is a family 'cause--or you could be a group of friends and you've just gotten so close you just call them your family" (Group 3, p.7).
>
> "It can also be like a mother, and when your children get older then when they get unemployed and they all come back crying and they bring their children have children..." (Group 3, p.10).

The female primary group respondents, except for those in one focus group, all had at least one child (some as many as five). They either lived alone with their children or with parents and/or siblings. In some instances, if they lived at home, they helped their mothers with the younger siblings. These respondents also pointed out that their families played a supportive role in their lives. That support was both emotional and financial. Sometimes mothers or other relatives babysat with the children or provided material things. Male relatives acted as father figures for the children, particularly in those cases where the children's fathers had little or no contact with them.

Some of the male primary group respondents saw relationships with their families as positive. They felt that their families

pooled resources when necessary and were sensitive and caring when another family member fell on hard times. In some instances, relationships with families were not good, but in most cases respondents had contact with family members.

Respondents' Family Relationships (Control Group)

Members of the control groups were also familiar with extended family situations although they were not directly involved in one. They were quite aware of the advantages involved in such arrangements. From the male control group:

> Moderator: "Know of any situations where there might be a daughter and her children, or son and his wife or girlfriend, say living with the parents?"
>
> "Ah, my girlfriend lives with her mother."
>
> Moderator:" OK. why does that happen?"
>
> "Her mother got a divorce so she moved in with her grandmother."
>
> "That happened to my sister. when she got separated she moved back home." (Group CM, p.9)

A similar sentiment was expressed in the female control group:

> "But to me, like my friend, sister move and her husband moved in with us in September so they could get on their feet. And we wouldn't let them give us no money so they can get on their feet. And then, let somebody move in with you and they don't be tryin to get on their feet and he was like well you know you really can't stay with nobody for free so just take your money and put it aside and save until you can get on your feet" (Group CF, p.4).

Male Relationships with Children (Primary Groups)

The female primary group respondents all felt that it was important that their children have contact with their fathers.

They expected the fathers to make financial contributions to the households (where the women lived with the fathers of their children) and to the welfare of their children. In some instances, the women did not have to tell the fathers to contribute financially. In other cases, men had to be forced to care for their offspring:

> "It was a recent case where after the guy found out the girl was pregnant, he said it wasn't his; but she had it and the only reason he claimed it was his was because she took it to court. And now he's there. But not because he wanted to but because he had to" (Group 2, p.4).

There are many cases where fathers are not involved in their children's lives at all, emotionally or financially. There was also an element of defeatism among the women when asked how they felt about the lack of support coming from fathers. The female respondents felt that men tended to run away from responsibilities and wanted to claim their children but not do anything for them. The respondents stated that the men would rather dress themselves than their children. The women all felt that the men must do something for them and their children or leave (Group 4, pp 17-18).

The relationship of the male respondents to children varied. Most of them were fathers and saw their children daily. Others saw their children once in a while and still others seldom saw their children. There were those who also had children by more than one woman. The respondents indicated that they gave child support and did the best they could. They called their children and gave them something sometimes with the help of their own parents. There was concern shown for their offspring, but lack of money limited the amount of financial support they could provide.

Male Relationships with Children (Control Groups)

None of the members of the male control group had children. Most of the respondents in the female control group did have children. Some of their statements regarding male responsibility and children were similar to those of primary group female respondents. Concerning males, one control group respondent stated:

> "And they feel like they got other things that they can be doin' with they money and that you should take care of that baby. A lot of men feel like it's your responsibility to take care of that baby. Only thing they supposed to do is make sure the rent is paid but you supposed to clothe the baby, and they don't want to accept the responsibility. And a lot of us women let them get by with it and that's why they don't report them and sayin' yes I got a baby by them. They rather get the income with ADC instead of makin him responsible" (Group CF, p.15).

In contrast, the following statement, also from a female control group respondent, presents a completely different approach to the issue of male responsibility:

> "I agree with everthing everybody said but at the same time it's that same little five percent. I got this person but I ain't sayin' he's an angel but I got this little five percent man that he's different 'cause he takes care of his little girls. He got two little girls outside of ours and one of them ain't even his. She took him down there for child support. The lady called our house and was so nasty. She said come down here and talk about your real family. So he went down there and said let me tell you about my real family, all the clothes he make for those girls. All the tennis shoes they wear. Everything. He don't put no money in her hands 'cause he feel like she'll take the money and spend it on her boyfriend and she do. When she got her house, she pay her rent, her boyfriend come in there and stay" (Group CF, p.15).

Female Relationships with Children (Primary Groups)

In all cases, the female primary group respondents indicated that their children came first in their lives. They felt this behavior was basically true of Black families. When asked if they felt that giving something to a male friend meant that they were taking something away from their children, one respondent replied:

> "No, 'cause my kids gonna always be taken care of, regardless of when and what. I will stop for them first...But I know to look out for myself and my kids" (Group 4, p 19).

Another respondent indicated that if she spent time with a man he should be giving something back.

> "I make it point blank. When I meet somebody, I got four children and they need. Anybody I meet I tell them how many kids I got. If you don't like them, you don't like me" (Group 4, p.19)

The women realized and accepted that as single mothers they had to play dual roles. One respondent replied that when her children asked questions about their fathers she just handled it:

> "I be the mother and the father," (Group 2, p. 9).

In all cases, the women were the primary caregivers of their children. They had some support from fathers, but primarily emotional and financial support came from family members.

Female Relationships with Children (Control Group)

The female control group members tended not to draw very sharp distinctions between their family relationships and relations with their children.

Male Participation in the Family (Primary Groups)

In general, male and female respondents reported that women were more stable than men. This stability was necessary because of children. It was expected that boyfriends would assist financially and emotionally with children. The respondents were sensitive to the marginal employment status of Black men; however, they were adamant that men should "try to help whenever possible." Children should come first because of their precarious economic situation. They felt that a man's presence should not jeopardize the welfare of the mother and children. If acknowledging his role or living arrangement threatens the family welfare he must go. There was a clear relationship between this concern and including boyfriends in the census. Consequently, this attitude and the reality of Black males' economic status further consolidated the need for the extended family relations and household arrangements. It was felt by the respondents that one could count on their family members but not on male partners. Economic status did not preclude emotional relationships with children. The respondents were very critical of males who did not maintain a relationship with their children.

> "Well, I know what he ain't got he can't do, but when I know he got, he can do..." (Group 4, p.6).
>
> "He can have a job, still won't do it. They don't wanna do it 'cause they just don't do it. Men are weak. They're afraid of responsibility" (Group 4, p.17).
>
> "The only kind of girls I know is that they boyfriends provide for them and give the child things that the child needs and most of the girls that I know are pregnant are really tryin' to get jobs whether they quit school or whatever, they just wanna get a job to take care of their child and sometimes it ends up where they don't finish school and it's sad" (Group 3, p.5).

> "I would expect him to support and be there, not say, just be there financially but be there like you expect your mother to be there, I expect the father to be there also" (Group 3, p.16).

Similarly, other adult males, fathers or sons, were expected to contribute to the household by providing financial and emotional support to the female heads of household and their children.

Male Participation in the Family (Control Groups)

Responses in the control groups varied. One comment from a female control group member provided a marked contrast to the more common negative views of male participation.

> "I think also because they have problems and low self-esteem and they don't have the jobs that they want and then they go out and find other things to do instead of stayin' with their family and trying to work it out. They go out in the street and find other ways to deal with their pressure. But the White man, they tryin to have their jobs and stuff so they don't really have too much to really be upset and depressed about so they go home. But the Black men have all these pressures on them and then they can't take it so they go out in the street and they may leave their family. That's not the way to do it but that's how they do it" (Group CF, pp.7-8).

V. MALE MARGINALITY

Borderline Homelessness (Primary Groups)

While most primary group male respondents seemed to be fairly stable in terms of where they actually lived, some respondents evidenced high local mobility (parent-girlfriend-shelter) cycle. This mobility and subsequent marginality invariably resulted from an economic or financial situation. Employment was always a critical component of residential stability. The ability to make financial contributions allowed the man to stay with the girlfriend or to

even head his own household.

The unemployed male respondent often relied on parents (principally the mother) for shelter. This usually lasted until an argument, disagreement, or sometimes problems with alcohol arose. The potential enforcement of public housing policy also was related to the respondent's leaving the mother's residence. The same situation also applied to girlfriend arrangements.

Some male respondents indicated the presence of more than one girlfriend. In this situation they moved from girlfriend to girlfriend, sometimes including their mother's or a sibling's house in the rotation. Many of the men evidenced a relative lack of permanence. They did not vote (because they lacked a permanent address) or participate in neighborhood activities. Their lifestyles were often transient; moving from one residence to another. Their actual residence was often different from the listing of their parent(s) address which was used for receiving their limited amounts of mail.

Some of the mobility also was associated with the kind of employment. The tendency to do day work minimized the income to the point that householdship on the part of the respondent was remote. Day work was considered low paying, highly irregular, and unpredictable. The fact that many of the men were staying in situations that were "officially" lease violations increased the sense of impermanence. They faced situations of having to leave at anytime, thus they had to "travel light." Some indicated that they had clothing and personal belongings at a number of places.

Women showed much more permanence. They were more likely to hold public or private leases. This was attributed (by the men and the women) to the stability of public assistance tied to household

maintenance and child rearing. The fact that the women, in all of the cases discussed, assumed child rearing responsibilities (custody) contributed to their need to maintain a certain amount of stability through a household. The men understood this limitation on the mobility of women, though in some instances they were highly critical of public assistance. Many talked of governmental control and domination. Those who were most critical of the "government's" role in public assistance were also most critical of what they perceived as the "government's" role in the census.

> "...welfare can control them 'cause they can't do no more that what that check allows them to do. They can put them wherever they want to put them and keep count on them. Like me, I like privacy myself and I don't care whether the government know where I'm at or not really. 'Cause I figure like this, I serve my country, put my life on the line and still gon' get treated bad by the people here in America, so damn them. You know, I don't need them" (Group 1, p.29).

Intercity Mobility (Primary Group)

Most of the intercity mobility was employment related. This took two basic forms. In many cases men left their hometown in search of job opportunities. Many felt that northern employers were much more likely to hire southerners because of the belief that southerners work harder. They often did better in other places than in their hometowns. One group evidenced a consensus that it was hard for a Black man to make over $12,000 in that particular city. All of the groups agreed that Whites (men) got the better jobs in their area. Some even pursued a peace of mind away from family troubles and the "wrong" associates. They talked of a more organized life away from home, starting a savings account and in general being more conscious of their own well-being.

> "Like I say, when you leave, the only downfall that you got is home. And the only thing that make home so dangerous to you, you got too many people you know. You got too many friends, you got your family, and everybody want something. But when you out there and you done changed states and by yourself, a man don't need but a room man. A room and a peice of job and he can survive. ...You get you a room that you pay forty dollars a week for. If you get a job making four dollars an hour, a room you pay forty dollars a week for, twenty, twenty-five dollars will carry you through the week for food. Only thing you gotta do is just set back and work. You can save money while you're gone. Everything come together while you're gone" (Group 1, p.8).

Others migrated with certain jobs or employers. Often "signing on" with a contractor, they moved with the company to the next job. Many found increased earning ability by staying with a given firm. In all of these cases the men eventually returned to their hometowns. Some cited sickness of a parent while others talked of concern for being near their children. Some talked about a kind of homesickness, missing the familiarity of friends and relatives.

The men who were mobile talked extensively about the freedom involved. They saw mobility as an escape from an impossible economic situation in which they could not fulfill male role expectations. As they were financially unable to maintain a stable residence, they made the best out of the instability. Others talked of a more general coping by escaping what they saw as unreasonable demands by family and friends. Some simply talked of picking up what they owned and disappearing or escaping for a while.

Mobility seemed to be directly related to age with the older respondents less stable and having lived in a number of cities. They talked of the increasing pressures of staying home (with their mothers) as they passed 18 years old and especially as they entered

their 20s. In general, with their age came expectations of independence, responsibility, and economic participation. As their reality did not afford them this identity they more or less became the "gypsies" or transients, thus, not staying anywhere too long.

Intercity Mobility (Control Groups)

While male control group members were quite stable, they were familiar with the high intercity mobility rates of Black males:

> "Yeah, I have a friend, he moved all over Virginia. His problem was he just didn't know what he wanted to do. Cause once he stayed in school for a while and then he let a social life get in his way. He wouldn't do well and then he would go back home. Then he would go to another school, the same thing happened, he goes back home, he comes back down this area and stay for a while. Then he goes back to school. The biggest problem was not education but being brought up in a strict family. When he got out on his own kinda just didn't know how to handle it" (Group CM, p.5).

Responses to Male Marginality (Control Groups)

The high level of mobility among many male primary group respondents suggested an ease of disappearing (or making it difficult for them to be located officially). While much of the mobility is economically induced some of it is intentional. Members of the control groups were also aware of the assorted advantages of a certain amount of marginality. On the subject of disappearing a male control group respondent stated:

> "I know I've heard of cases where there's some guys who did that. They were trying to hide from their wives and they went to places like Philadelphia, like inner city of Philadelphia. It's very large and there's a lot of people there and mostly Black. And they ah let's say lived with the homeless, did odd jobs and nobody asked any questions about where they were from and stuff" (Group CM, p.8).

Members of the female control group made similar statements regarding disappearing and how it can be done.

> "They just live with someone and their name isn't on anything. They don't get no mail or nothin. Not at the house" (Group CF, p.6).

> "And unless they get in trouble that's the only way that the law will catch them. Long as they don't do nothin' else wrong they okay, but just don't get caught" (Group CF, p.6).

> "I'd get on the local transportation and leave and say I'll go visit and wouldn't say who...I'd only tell my mother in case of an emergency. Or my sister. Depending on what it is, my mama, sometimes she might wanna tell, so, I would have to go to my sister". (Group FM, p.6)

Two female control group members cited interesting advantages to the maintenance of dual addresses,

> "Like a bank statement or something, like if you got a husband that's a charger then you might not want your charge card comin' in because he'll see the balance and then might get charged up" (Group CF, p.5).

> "Well sometimes people do it too because sometimes you need a residence for a certain amount of time so you would tend to use that residence for a requirement of different applications or something. Like you have to be there for 10-15 years so you use that address" (Group CF, p.5).

VI. EMPLOYMENT FACTORS

One of the key areas of concern to many of the focus group respondents was employment. Tangential to this concern were issues of education, underground economies, and family relationships. The issue of employment/unemployment was the concern of the male respondents more so than female respondents.

Male respondents felt that the key to being employed or unem-

ployed is the minimum wage. They felt that the minimum wage was not enough. Black people, in their views, cannot afford to live on minimum wage and a lot of people are struggling. As one respondent stated:

> "...man you out there busting your hands; busting suds for a little bit of money...." (Group 5, p.2).

Another stated:

> "I think it's the minimum wage they give ...they don't give us top dollars. They give us that little budget money...like three fifty, four dollars. See we need, for a Black Irish man, we need like seven, eight, nine dollars, ten dollars, 'cause we got families out here. We need money like that" (Group 5, p.2).

In general, the male respondents were not optimistic. This was related to the lack of economic self-sufficiency that they experienced. Emphasis was placed on the day-to-day survival issues, such as food and shelter. The men pointed out that they had to "survive" the best way they could and often surmised that single status, temporary relationships, and living arrangements were the requisites for survival. From the views of the male respondents, the economic reality of trying to maintain a family was difficult in light of their marginal status in society.

> "I mean if you're living with a family and you don't have to pay no bills or nothing like that, three seventy-five, maybe, three seventy-five sounds good if you are not paying any bills at all; just people have their wants and needs too. Three seventy-five is nothing" (Group 6, p.25).

Female respondents also saw the minimum wage as a problem. But some felt that men could have jobs but are so afraid of responsibility that they just won't find employment. The female respon-

dents saw finishing school as the key to obtaining and maintaining a good job. But men saw themselves caught up in a vicious cycle: no education; can't get a job; because of no education. One male respondent felt that school desegregation had an impact on education. In his view, White administrators were harder on Black students and the administrators tried to get rid of as many as they could. Unless the student was determined, he would drop out of school.

> It is hard to find a job without a high school diploma (Group 1, p.17).

Racial Issues (Primary Groups)

While some male respondents argued that men could get a job if they wanted to, other respondents felt that, although there were plenty of jobs available, they would not be hired. Any jobs they got tended to be temporary with low pay. They felt that laboring jobs were the primary work opportunities available for Blacks.

Male respondents also felt that while Blacks "labor" Whites have the "cushiony" jobs, or behind-the-desk jobs. As one respondent indicated:

> "The difference is, they get the better jobs. Behind-the-desk jobs. They got me behind a truck; I'm dumping garbage cans, but I respect my job because I got to survive..." (Group 5,p. 17).

Another respondent saw himself in a similar situation when hired by a contractor.

> "...all Black people they hire. Here it is I'm out there pushing a lawn mower, usually be hot too. All of a sudden they hire some White people. He driving the tractor...He driving the truck...I say man, why? I say, man, I been here for two months; three months; before him, and he got a tractor, and you got me pulling a lawn mower that won't start. For eight hours. You know...yeah, and he driving a truck..." (Group 5, p.26).

Overall, many of the respondents felt that Blacks work harder than Whites for less money. As one respondent stated:

> "...see what it was, it was all Blacks working for this man. Then he went off and got a few White boys. And you know White boys don't work as long as a Black man works. And will get paid more than the Black man get paid, too. They gon' sit around with the belt hanging off their bellies and drinking a Budweiser... (Group 5, p.26)."

Racial Issues (Control Groups)

Members of the control groups were also sensitive to issues of race. One male control group respondent stated:

> "This is still a White man's world. And a Black person has to work three times as hard just to get to an equal level as a White person does. For example, I know a friend who applied, this person had two years of college and he applied for a job as a manager and the person who beat him out was a White girl with a high school education " (Group CM, p.10).

Impact of Economic Marginality (Primary Group)

The lack of adequate employment has created many problems for Black men and women. It has affected family relationships and led many Blacks (males and females) to participate in the underground economic system of drug dealing.

Many of the male respondents acknowledged that employment or lack thereof, can affect relationships with girlfriends/wives, children and parents. They indicated that if they are living on their own and lose a job they can no longer afford to live alone. The result may be living with friends or returning to their parents' homes. Further, relationships with girlfriends/wives tend to deteriorate if there is a lack of money. Sometimes the women will

take care of the men, but often money problems put a strain on relationships. As one respondent stated,

> "You lose a job you go through problems with a female...they still love you...They'll put you out in the cold too... (Group 1, p.5)."

In response to the question of why a man was put out by his girlfriend, one respondent stated,

> "I got put out...something might've been late; something might've been late like a month...like a bill. I'm not saying only the bill, I'm saying money. Money, point blank" (Group 5, p.13).

When asked what they did between jobs, respondents replied that they did what they could to survive, for example:

> "Yeah, but it's rough man. We call it scrambling. That's when you call it street sense. You beg people for a few dollars...It's called getting it on the rough. Lack of employment can also lead to scrambling and hustling through selling drugs" (Group 1, pp 2-3).

Some respondents indicated that anywhere there is welfare, there are drugs. In this view, drug pushers and/or users are usually on welfare. The same view suggested that welfare recipients will spend their checks and food stamps for drugs. Female respondents indicated that the money from drug sales goes toward paying bills. Some saw drug income as a method of fast cash. It was seen as money that can be made quicker than having to work a week and waiting to get paid. One male respondent asked,

> "Why work for minimum wage when one can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in one night? (Group 3, p.19).

There are many ways to hustle to make money, but one respondent indicated that she warned her children against doing something illegal. She stated,

> "...but I do tell them this: drug money is no money...If you want money, go work for it. It may take time to get what you want but eventually you'll get it. But all these flashy cars and jewelry and gold and all this... that's nothing" (Group 4, p.3).

The female respondents felt that drug dealing and using were detrimental to Black families, although some expressed an understanding of what led to it. Some of the male respondents saw drug dealing simply as a method of "scrambling" to earn quick money.

Overall, male respondents had all worked and indicated that they wanted jobs. Some stated that they worked not only to support their families but as a means of insuring that they can have social security at retirement. Many respondents, male and female, saw many positive aspects in the Black community and felt disheartened at economic problems and living conditions in public housing.

VII. RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK AND WHITE FAMILIES

Views and stereotypes of Black families may contribute to their underenumeration by the Census Bureau. To get a better understanding of this phenomenon, respondents were asked if they thought there were differences between Black and White families. This provided an indication of the depth of such views and stereotypes within the population studied. The majority of the respondents argued that there were differences between Black and White familes. Those differences ranged from financial to differences within family relationships.

Financial Differences (Primary Group)

Both male and female respondents felt that White families were better off financially. In their view, White families had more opportunities to obtain material things and got better jobs. As one male respondent put it:

> "A lot of White families born with silver spoons in their mouths."
>
> "They (White children) don't have to work hard for something because their fore parents are already established for them when they came along" (Group 1, p.2).

Another respondent stated:

> "...when you got a sixteen-year-old boy coming up in a White family and his father dies, he leaves him stock. He leaves him a little something to start him off. When a Black person father dies or they mother dies, the majority have nothing to leave. So you got to start off from the ground and come on up. Usually a White family already got something they can work from. Only thing they got to do is continue to build what they already have. We gotta start from rock bottom and get a foundation. We gotta start from the ground..." (Group 1, p.12).

There was also the view that because White families had more money they were able to provide their children with more material advantages. In this view, Black families try hard to make it, but they are not seen as getting anywhere.

Differences in family Relationships (Primary Groups)

There were perceptions on the part of primary group respondents that the interaction of family members with each other was also different. Female respondents felt that White families disciplined their children differently (i.e., Black mothers tended to discipline their children in public whereas White mothers did not).

Some female respondents also felt that White parents were more caring than Black parents. Some contended that Whites may have problems with their children just as Blacks do, but White families will do all they can to help get their children out of trouble. It was also perceived by some respondents that Whites would not put their children out of the house. As one male respondent indicated:

> "...When you get eighteen in White folks' house, you ain't on your own. Your family still behind you, but when you're eighteen in a Black person's house, you're on your own. White folks, their fathers gon' make sure they have something going" (group 5, p.17)

Some female respondents felt that Black families fought each other more while others felt that Black families tended to be more open and talkative than White families. Some respondents stated that Black families had more love and trust between them. As one female respondent indicated,

> "I think Black families are more family-oriented. They (Whites) are closer with their friends and their friends' families than they are with their own family... it's more discipline in a Black family and it's more of a parent-children relationship, and White families to me just seem buddy-buddy. I think they (Black families) value things more because it was harder to come along than it was for Whites. They take more pride in the things they do" (Group 2, p.6).

There were differing views on the relationship that family members have with each other. Generally respondents felt that Black family members looked out for each other and helped each other to the extent that they could.

Family Relationship Differences (Control Groups)

Many members of the control groups made similar statements regarding differences between Black and White families. A major contrast, however, was the introduction of class or economic differences as a factor in Black and White family comparisons:

> "... you look at economic differences in some families. For instance, you have a Black family is poor, and the White family has more money. The type of mentality growing up for Black children is different. Like for example when you see 'Cosby' and you see how the mentality is there. They have money and it's not just because you're Black or White and the way they're growing their kids up it's different than a Black family watching the TV and saying that's not the way it really happens. And they would say that's not the Black family. But it's not just color that makes that happen like that, it has to do with growing up, money has a lot to do with it. If an say for instance if a Black family has a lot of money and one Black family doesn't have a lot of money, you sometimes have different mentalities and the way of bringing up children sometimes and you have one doing one way and one doing another way. The same kind of thing you see with Black and White parents. It's a different type of mentality you know teaching your kids growing up 'cause you got, if you are poor and in a real bad area there's this thing a young Black man has to do all for himself and not for the family...." (Group CM, p.12)

Societal Views and White Attitudes (Primary Groups)

There appeared to be an underlying assumption on the part of some respondents that White attitudes and societal views have created the different perceptions of Black and White families. For example, some respondents felt that drugs were destroying Black families and it was White society that placed drugs in the Black community. Although White families were also affected by drugs, it was Black families that were the focus of the media. More negative attention tended to be focused on Black families.

When asked how they would characterize a White family, one female respondent answered: "High classed." Her explanation of "high classed" was a certain attitude among Whites. She reasoned,

> "You got some that's like they look down on you and they ain't no better than you is. They living status might be they got a little bit more money than what you got but it's like they're up in the world. They can get what they want. They can go out and buy a car now, today, and you gotta buy, you gotta get yours like, it take you a while. But they, they just dish out money...Well with you have to pay a little at a time. They high classed..." (Group 3, p.16). "

Thus, Black families and White families were seen to differ economically. However, there was a tendency to underscore those differences and project more negative images upon Black families.

Overall Perceptions of the Family

One female respondent defined family as,

> "Love, discipline. Friends. Caring for each other. And, you know, if you have a family you care about each other and you respect one another and it's like a group of people that you can always trust and that's there for you. That's what I think is a family 'cause--or you could be in a group of friends and you've just gotten so close you just call them your family" (Group 1, pp 6-7).

The respondents did not view Black families as always or necessarily being nuclear. One respondent stated that:

> "...the average Black family, they're not happy. So you have family by who you have, if it's your grandmother, your mother, your sister, and your grandfather. That's your family. Your aunt, your uncle, or whatever... (Group 1, p.7)."

Respondents saw, families as the people who love and care about you, blood relatives or not. That definition of Family for Black people exceeds the traditional "nuclear family" definitions.

Future of the Black Family

The female primary group respondents were optimistic about the future of Black families and emphasized long-term plans for their children. Specifically, they expressed a desire for children to finish high school and, hopefully, go on to college. The support of family was viewed as critical in this regard. Respondents were adamant in the view that they did not want their children to be single parents. This was particularly true for female children. This was perceived as a major obstacle in their own lives and they did not want their children to face the same hardship.

> "I want them to have a better life, and I don't want them to have a life like I had when I was coming up 'cause I used to use and I don 't want them to come up usin'. I want them to have a better life" (Group 4, p.31).

> "I want the best for mine. Now I wants to be out. I'm gon to college. I'm gon get the child...I won't try to ruin her life for my baby. As long as, if I know when he grows up it's gon' be something anything maybe for him, then I'm gon' be fine" (Group 2, p.26).

There was consensus that drugs affected family and community stability. A primary group respondent observed:

> "...And it's just I know out there they try to make money so they can...see alot of them out there sell the drugs but they don't use drugs. That's how those people are. That's over half, I'm sayin' maybe seven out of ten because they're selling the drugs to make the money and they know if they start using the drugs it's gonna deduct from the income that they're bringin' in" (Group 3, p.8).

"All these parks, everywhere, somebody sellin' drugs" (Group 4, p.12).

"...drug money is no money. Nobody wants nothin', you got to keep lookin' over your shoulder everyday to see who is behind you, if anybody comin' up to you. If you want money, go work for it. It may take time to get what you want but eventually you'll get it. But all these flashy cars and jewelry and gold and all this and as they say megabucks and rolls and stacks and packs, that's nothin'" (Group 4, p.13).

VIII. ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE U.S. CENSUS

This section provides a descriptive summary and analysis of data related to perceptions and attitudes expressed in the focus groups about the U.S. Census. Additional data related to variations in Black family structures also are presented. It is posited that the underenumeration of Blacks, and Black males in particular, is related to structural variations of Black families. This idea is based on the assumption that the Black male undercount can be examined in the context of sociocultural and socioeconomic factors. The salient themes in focus group analyses provides the framework for this discussion.

Descriptive Statements (Female Primary Group)

In two of the three female primary group sessions, the respondents had little or no factual knowledge about the meaning or purpose of the U.S. Census. One group knew of the census as a population count. That group tended to be younger as many of its members were currently attending school or had recently graduated from high school. In general, they were unaware of the census in school.

All respondents indicated an interest in wanting further clarification on the censusing process and sought information at the start of and during the interview process. Once the moderator explained the meaning and purpose of the census, the respondents indicated that most people would be willing to participate in the 1990 Census. A major factor mentioned that would increase possible participation was the adequacy of the instructions and explanations given on the form or by the field enumerators. The willingness to participate was also related to knowledge that other family members, friends and neighbors had filled out their forms and could be used as a resource on how to answer the questionnaire correctly.

Typical comments by the respondents on the familiarity with the census and its procedural aspects included:

> "That's where they count everybody in every city and state to see how many people there are in a population" (Group 4, p.23)
>
> "They count...It's a population count" (Group 2, p.9).
>
> "I knew that they counted but I never really knew anything about it" (Group 3, p.11).
>
> "I don't know, but I never heard of the Census" (Group 2, p.21).
>
> "Yes, I would answer them. I get through calling my mama and everyone else. Well, did you get one? Did you fill it out? And, how come?" (Group 4, p.3).

Descriptive Statements (Male Primary Group)

Male primary group respondents had limited knowledge about the census. After some initial explanation from the interviewers they indicated some familiarity. Only a few of the males knew that it was a "survey." In general, they were unfamiliar with the procedure of mail response, but did indicate some knowledge of people coming

to their door to ask questions. In this context, there was a lack of understanding about the importance or significance of the enumeration process. The males were adamant, however, that they were not counted in the 1980 census and did not expect to be counted in the 1990 census. This lack of participation notwithstanding, the respondents did not express an unwillingness to participate, rather they were inaccessible because of working and living conditions. The following comments reflect the trend in responses:

> "Yeah, it's something like a count I think. Just to to find out how many people livin' in one area or you know, this, that and the other. I guess" (Group 6, p.13).
>
> "Survey... yes, that's what they're going through now" (Group 1, p.21).
>
> " It should be individual...everybody in your household... It shouldn't be head of the household thing, it should be an individual thing when you come round and take the census...But see they need to talk to everyone. How we gone be counted and they not talkin to us and our mother's not countin us" (Group 5, p.32).

Reasons for Census Non-Participation (Female Primary Groups)

In general, most of the respondents agreed that Blacks wanted to be counted. However, there also was a consensus among the respondents that Blacks would be "fearful" of participating in the census. The major reason indicated was the fear that public housing officials would get access to the information on the number of people living in the household who were not part of the lease agreement. The number of people living in the household was viewed as a potential threat to public housing regulations.

Violation of public housing policy (with specific reference to boyfriends) would result in jeopardizing housing for mothers and her dependent children. In addition, the fear of having the rent

increased was cited as a major deterrent to participation. Although a majority of the participants expressed a willingness to answer other questions accurately, they were not prepared to disclose the actual number of persons in the household. Similarly, the fear of interruption and/or loss of social service benefits was also a factor. Medical benefits were also viewed as critical because of children. The following excerpts are illustrative of the respondents' general apprehensions:

> "I think they do wanna be counted" (Group 2, p. 21)
>
> "It's nothin' to lie about. You don't know who the father is, he don't give you no money...I ain't got no stocks and can stop answerin' questions" (Group 4, p.26).
>
> "It's coming to you. It's supposed to be for them to ask questions. If that's the case, send two. Send him one and send me one. I answer mine, what I'm doin', how I'm going about it. Send him one. Is you livin with so and so and so, that way...I think what they send me is me. It's for me to answer. For me and my family not for him" (Group 2, p.24).
>
> "Yeah...you get in trouble...if they say more than that, you can get in trouble. If that person isn't working it really doesn't matter, but if that person's bringing in some income" (Group 2, p.22).
>
> "I won't see 'em outdoors, but I know you not supposed to have one else stayin' with you unless they on the lease, understand, but I'll probably do it for a little while" (Group 4, p.4).
>
> "...yeah, raise the rent, call your agency, medical, your medical is automatically turned off you got kids...you gotta have those benefits" (Group 2, p.22).

A factor mentioned with lesser frequency related to the perception of the form itself. That is, the census form was considered as junk mail and would not be given priority for a response. For example:

"A lot of people think it is not important. They think it is junk mail or something" (Group 3, p. 11).

Reasons for Census Non-Participation (Female Control Group)

The control groups were actually conducted after the 1990 Census had been taken. Interestingly, some of the ambivalence expressed by primary group members relative to the 1980 census was also expressed by some control group members after the 1990 census. Most of the respondents were very familiar with the publicity associated with Census 1990.

Moderator: "Why didn't you participate"?

"Because I didn't think it was fair. They said they would do it because they allot a certain amount of money or certain programs for certain people. But I still don't think that they do it. To me it's being nosey" (Group CF, p.10).

"I think it was a big issue this year anyway. A lot of people participated this year and didn't participate before. 'Cause when you get forms you can just throw them aside and it's no big deal but this year there was more publicity" (Group CF, p.10).

"I think they tried to make Blacks feel they wanted to do it because every commercial I saw was about that" (Group CF, p.10).

Reasons for Census Non-Participation (Male Primary Group)

The male respondents, unlike the female respondents, did not express a suspicion or fear of the procedure; rather, they contended they were inaccessible due to their living conditions and lack of job opportunity. That is, they were moving about trying to find employment and/or a place to live. For example:

"Oh man. Well like I said at that time we was in Virginia. I was traveling back and forth to Washington and coming back. Then baby wasn't home. Right now, we really don't stay

there now. First, I really can't stay home. I don't remember '80'" (Group 1, p.22).

"Do is look around man. You know what's funny about this area? You can come from Ohio and get a job quicker than somebody that's been living here all their life. That's the way it is. But see that's that same way if we, you know, somebody from up north. If we go up there, and we can get a job quicker...They guess just 'cause we, you're not from around here, you'll work harder. They got more, you know" (Group 6, pp.13-14).

Reasons for Census Non-Participation (Male Control Group)

Male control group members expressed similiar positions on this issue.

"Moderator: ..can you think of any reason why some people might not have gotten counted?"

"Some people just don't care, don't think nothing of it, don't send their forms back in. Don't care."

"I sent it in. I had to write something" (Group CM, p.14).

Attitudes About Government Agencies (Female Primary Groups)

Respondents made no distinction between the various agencies of government and viewed the census as an extension of the bureaucratic network. Thus, the census, social services and the local housing authority were all perceived to be interrelated. The issue of confidentiality of the enumeration process was not believed by the participants. Public housing residents, in particular, felt that the information would be used as a criterion affecting eligibility or housing status. Several respondents expressed agreement with the view that they were guaranteed confidentiality with other government agencies (i.e., social services) to later have that information used against them in denying benefits and services.

Based on one respondent's experience, when she did the "right thing" and provided honest information there were negative consequences. Consequently, the respondents felt that the system was punitive toward economically disadvantaged Blacks. Respondents' comments included:

> "Well, cause even though they say it's confidential, it is no proof that it is....You know you get these phony door-to-door people that...somebody living in your house that's not supposed to be and they're scared of these people asking questions" (Group 3, p.22).
>
> "I think a lot of people think no matter what, social services will find out...They find out. And it's a lot of people that make sure they find out. You got a lot of people out here (housing project) that you watch this person and such" (Group 2, p.23).
>
> "I don't understand it though. The way the system works it's o.k., you're on social services okay. You go out and try and get a job. You're being honest and tell them alright. Immediately you're cut off from everything because of the job. And that makes it easy, it makes people wonder..." (Group 2, p.22).
>
> "It seems like when pick stuff up, when you're trying to get out on your own, they just knock you right back down. No matter how high you tryin' to get out of it, you can still get knocked right back down" (Group 2, p.24).

The census also was perceived to be intrusive. However, some respondents acknowledged that they were accustomed to being asked to fill out forms and reveal sensitive information because of their dependence on public assistance.

Attitudes About Government Agencies (Female Control Groups)

Members of the female control group shared mixed feelings regarding the census. They seemed to have a sense of the beneficial aspects of the census yet they expressed concerns that were similar to and in some cases identical to those of primary group members.

> "I thought they took it to see how many people in which area so each school would get a certain amount of money based on that" (Group CF, p.11).

> "I think everything is different. It's a different program" (Group CF, p.11).

> "Your money will be alloted but still they already made up their minds what they gonna do with the money anyway. I have a bad thing about the government anyway. I think most of the Black people have a bad image of the government" (Group CF, p.11).

> "Well you think it's a gimmick behind things. Everything has a gimmick behind it. You feel like when you fill it out there's a catch. They always telling you you can get this if you do this but it's a trick behind it. You don't wanna take no risks so you just throw it out. And if they find out, suppose you went to a household and the census said you got thirty people livin here. You already know that you got a code to follow and if you be honest and say you got thirty people and the census might come back and say you got to move them thirty people out. Then you gonna feel like they betrayed you. 'Cause they have certain rules to go by even to apartments. Like people rent their apartments to other people, but if you put down that you got extra people on that lease then they gon' come in and make you move" (Group CF, p.13).

> "Just like people on welfare supposed to be somewhere else. They be livin' somewhere else, they don't fill out nothin' either. You got two or three families livin' in your house but you ain't gon' tell them that 'cause you ain't supposed to be there yourself" (Group CF, p.13).

Attitudes About Government Agencies (Male Primary Group)

The male respondents, unlike the female respondents, did not make specific reference to the relationship of the census and other governmental agencies such as departments of social services or public housing authorities. However, the men articulated a clear sense of the impact of institutional racism and economic discrimination and their relation to the lack of stable residence among Black males. This marginal status was viewed as directly affecting household arrangements of Black families, and Black men in particular. The following comments illustrate these attitudes:

> "Another thing is finance. Seem like around here the jobs that you qualify for you can't get so you take what you can and half the time them jobs only last four or five months and then you back on... You're always in and out of jobs" (Group 6, p.2).

> "I was saying like okay, you can't forget the lady's here. A lot of brothers I know I had a little bit going, but when everything fell to the side, I had to go back to the lady or somethin'. I had to live off of her until I got myself back together to help her out" (Group 6, p.3).

> "Job-wise make me come back. Lose my job, can't afford to keep going on so I come back home" (Group 5, p.2).

> "It's jobs out there but it's not for the Black people. It's for the Whites first man" (Group 5, p.27).

> "...but I want my dream though. Like I said, a Black man got it hard out here in society" (Group 5, p.29).

Thus, the above statements reflect cynicism about the "entire system" without singling out the census. Moreover, none of the males expressed any clear sense of benefits for Blacks participating in the 1990 Census. As one respondent summarized,

"You got to want to be counted. That's what I told you, man. Just like the individual thing, man. It's your right" (Group 5, p. 37).

Attitudes about Government Agencies (Male Control Group)

Cautious to negative sentiments about governmental agencies were also expressed by male control group members.

"I guess I feel like the information can be used against you to harm you."

"Going back to when you were asking do you know of anybody with two families in one apartment. That house or apartment for a certain number of people not time or money. The Census going to want to know what's everybody doing in one house. Then they'll send somebody over there to see what's going on. ... raise their rent" (Group CM, p.15).

"I think it's like he was saying being bothered with it because it's like when a person comes home from work sometimes they don't feel like watching the news they want to watch something that's going to entertain them. Instead of watching the news that pertain to them as well as everyone else. They don't feel like being bothered. It's the same thing with this, who wants to be bothered? A lot of people feel that way. I think it has a lot to do with that too" (Group CM, p.15).

"I think as far as counting, I think we're always in the bottom. Like I said, some people just don't care. Hard time trying to get an accurate count of how many Black men and women. some of them just don't care That's the bottom line (Group CM, p.20).

Perceived Benefits of Census Participation

Despite the general mistrust of government agencies, the respondents felt that there were positive benefits for Blacks participation in the 1990 Census. Respondents were optimistic that accurate enumeration of Blacks could result in social change and improved quality of life. Foremost among the benefits is changing

the negative perceptions of the Black family by the larger society. Providing accurate information could assist in dispelling the stereotype that "all Blacks are alike." There was special reference to the perception about people living in public housing (i.e. all people who live in public housing are bad, don't want to work, or are involved in drugs). Similarly, accurate information could result in increased funding for social programs (i.e., low income housing, funds for education, etc). Finally, respondents expressed the sentiment that their children would benefit from the census results (i.e., school funding). These comments were typical:

> "...People see what they wanna see regardless of what color you are. They don't know. I have seen people come out, say, never been in this neighborhood, don't even know where this neighborhood at. All them Black folks over there, them folks is crazy. Never been there. Everybody out here in this park is not crazy. Everybody out here is not bad. All the kids out here don't steal. There are still good kids out here. There are still children that are children" (Group 4, p.22).

> "White people live in the projects. White people live in the poor section too. They're in it, too. That's true. That's very true. But it's more focused on Black people cause Black people supposed to be bad. They supposed to be ignorant and illiterate. So therefore whenever a Black person does something wrong it's everywhere. When a White person does something wrong, you don't know really its a White person unless you pay attention to what's goin' on" (Group 4, p.22).

> "Maybe if more people were counted, like she said a lot of people in low income houses, if the people knew that they were in a situation where they were low income and they had a lot of people livin' in they would build up more low income places for them and they would be able to afford it" (Group 2, p.12).

Suggestions to Increase Census Awareness

Respondents were quite willing to discuss ways to increase Black participation in the census. This was directly related to the perceived benefits of increasing the number of Blacks counted in the population. The most frequent suggestions were:

a) introduce more census information in the public schools

b) target the Black community emphasizing the importance of the census for improving the quality of life for the community, and

c) change negative views of the Black community.

Respondents stated,

> "...I guess it just raises the number because regardless of us being counted or not...we're all here and it's not really benefitting us. The fact that I'm not counted doesn't mean that I'm not here" (Group 2, p.12).
>
> "Let them know that we are here. You know. Maybe things will change" (Group 2, p.25).

IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There has been considerable research on the status and structure of Black families. This proliferation of research notwithstanding, there has been little systematic analysis of structural variations in Black families and the problem of underenumeration of Blacks in the U.S. Census. Special emphasis has been placed on the undercount of Black males between the ages of 18-25. As documented in this discussion, several major trends emerge from the data that provide insights into the problem of censusing the Black community.

The data indicate that both males and females had limited knowledge about the census process. The female respondents, unlike the male respondents, expressed greater reluctance and suspicion of participating in the census. This fear was related to concerns about the consequences for social services support. Local housing

policies and regulations that classify males over the age of 18 as a special case for leasing purposes were identified as a major factor affecting the willingness to give accurate information. Males more often stated an unavailability, or an uncertain residence as accounting for their non participation. Most of the respondents, both male and female, were willing to participate and give general information with the exception of the most critical issue, the number of people living in the household.

The perceived benefits of census participation varied among male and female respondents. The females cited the potential for social change and eliminating negative stereotypes about the Black family and the Black community as an important long-term benefit. The males, by contrast, were more pessimistic about the census. Their marginal economic status influenced their willingness, and more importantly, their availability to participate. The lack of economic and employment opportunities necessitated an unstable lifestyle that was not conducive to census participation. The males felt alienated and socially disenfranchised from the system.

A crucial theme in the data was a realization on the part of the respondents, both male and female, of the social reality of economic and social discrimination and its impact on the Black family. Black family patterns, living arrangements, and social interactions are impacted by structural conditions. There is also a proximal relationship between the larger socioeconomic and sociocultural dynamics and variations in Black household structures.

The findings of this research have implications for the enumeration process within the Black community. In light of this data, exploration of the impact of the structural variation in Black families and households were linked to the problem of the undercount

of Black males. Suggestive of this relationship were the perceptions and experiences of the respondents related to economic marginality, structural alienation, and inaccessibility of large segments of Black males. These factors contributed to conceptualizing a theoretical and substantive underpinning of research in this area. Thus hypothesis development is necessary to further explicate and potentially validate the relationship(s) between these phenomena.

X. HYPOTHESES

This research suggests a number of preliminary hypotheses. These hypotheses are briefly outlined below. Each lends itself to a significant general research project.

I. There is a relationship between the high number of female-headed households among Blacks and the undercount of Black males.

   a. Unenumerated Black males are more likely to actually live in their mother's household than in a girlfriend's household.

   b. Unenumerated Black males are more likely to actually live in public housing than private housing.

   c. The presence of unenumerated Black males in their girlfriends' households is more likely to be marginal and/or sporadic.

   d. Unenumerated Black males present in a girlfriend's household are more likely to be the father of her children.

II. Extended Family Households

   a. Extended family households are more likely to be female-headed.

b. Extended family households are more likely to include females and their children.

III. Homelessness

a. Unenumerated Black males are very likely to be found in marginal living arrangements (borderline homelessness).

b. Unenumerated Black males tend to be structurally invisible. Their lack of formal attachments result from cash payments for work, not registering to vote and non-participation in social programs. They are very likely not to have a formal (official) address.

IV. Hypotheses derived from primary - control group comparisons.

a. Black males found in private households, moderate income and above, were most likely to have been enumerated in the 1980 Census and the 1990 Census.

b. Blacks (male or female) counted do not necessarily possess a positive or favorable view of governmental agencies or the census.

c. Where favorable government identification is present among males, it is more likely to be tied to the social security system.

d. Females were more likely to voice general support of the census as it may result in social change or increased services (e.g. more housing, opportunities for children).

V. The under-enumeration of Black males is not unrelated to the larger issues of socioeconomic marginality in this group.

a. Socioeconomic marginality of Black males is related to chronic unemployment and negative outcomes from the educational process.

b. Socioeconomic marginality leads to the inability to successfully perform expected male household or family roles which are often based on financial participation.

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