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**Calculating Residence: A Cognitive Approach  
to Household Membership Judgments  
Among Low Income Blacks**

Eleanor R. Gerber

Statistical Research Division  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, D.C. 20233

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This summary presents the findings of a preliminary attempt to determine whether the methods of cognitive anthropology can shed light on the problems of minority undercounting. It presents the results of an initial investigation of the conceptual system which informants (who were primarily poor and Black) use to understand the assignment of individuals to living space.

## II. BACKGROUND

In his April 1987 study, Peter Hainer maintained that the primary reason for undercounting the Black men lies in the way that the presence of certain household members are protected from official scrutiny. Families establish a consistent "paper trail" and if Welfare or other authorities cannot hear of a particular individual, the Census Bureau won't either. This results from deliberate decisions, based on people's understanding of the system and their own calculation of self interest.

Hainer believed that misunderstanding based on differences between the cultural categories of the poor Black respondents and the majority culture played a relatively insignificant role in this undercounting. Since the decision to withhold information is deliberate, he concludes:

"Consequently there are no "folk categories" here or ways of asking questions that will get people to reveal their internal organization, because people feel that such a revelation can threaten a reliable and often only source of steady income." (Hainer, 1987, p. 14)

Hainer is undoubtedly correct that this is a major reason for the undercounting in this population. Indeed, the general level of mistrust in census confidentiality which I found among my respondents is an indication that withholding of information continues to be a major pattern. However, in addition to deliberate withholding of information, conceptual confusions may still exist, and may in fact have an effect on the collection and interpretation of census data. This paper provides the results of a preliminary look at the conceptual system which a small number of respondents use to understand their own living arrangement, and the arrangements of others.

Understanding the conceptual system is potentially useful for two reasons. The first is the possibility of a mismatch of cultural categories between minority and majority populations. If people do not understand terms used in questions as they are intended, their answers are bound to be confusing. Hainer's example is the mismatch between the concept of "family" in the two cultures:

"...Black families are best seen as large loosely structured networks of kin and non-kin alike, who share resources, time and space together. This group, called the "family", rarely conforms to the standard American version presented by the census form or interviewer." (Hainer, 1987, P.9-10).

The standard version to which Hainer refers presumably regards "family" as being based on criteria of descent and marriage, rather than on role. Therefore, questions which implicitly or explicitly rely on the category of "family" are likely to have different meanings in the two cultures. Answers to such questions may be difficult to interpret, even if informants choose to reveal information they regard as sensitive. In this research the interpretation of what temporary residence consists of might serve as an example of the mismatch of cultural categories. (See below).

A second reason is to be found in the circumstances of life which poor people generally face. Even when a system of concepts is shared by the questions-writers and those who answer, difficulties in applying the concepts to particular instances can easily arise. It seems quite possible that universally held cultural assumptions about residence may often not work out in practice in the lives of very poor informants. As a simple example, homeless people may very well share beliefs about what it means to be housed with other Americans. They are not hard to count because they don't understand the census questions, they are hard to count because the circumstances of their lives interrupt the implicit assumption everyone shares that people can best be found at addresses.

In this study, the implicit assumptions which may create difficulty seem mostly to surround our cultural assumptions about how people share living space. For instance, we generally assume that people sleep where they understand themselves as living, that people who share space can account for another's time well enough to answer questions about their alternate residences, or that people's belongings are centrally located in one place. (Some of

these assumptions may inform the way census questions are written, or the rules for where people should be counted.) When people are highly mobile or very poor, it may be that these assumptions don't work out in practice. People's living circumstances will then no longer fit with their understandings.

If questions are asked about people in these complex or ambiguous circumstances, informants will not find an obvious way to interpret their living arrangements. Instead they will be forced into a sort of mental calculation designed to apply the no longer obvious category system to disorderly reality. These calculations may not come up with the same results that census rules do. Or in some cases they may arrive at a similar answer to the Census Bureau's in assigning an individual to a place but they may use a different logic in arriving at it. In the next instance, however, things may not work out so opportunely. For these reasons, it is probably worthwhile to know what respondents are thinking about when they assign people to space.

This paper therefore is a first look at the system of concepts people use in answering questions about where someone lives. It is intended to provide some insights about the terms they use, their concepts, and the kinds of calculations they are likely to engage in when faced with a difficult or ambiguous instance. Although cognitive anthropology often relies on formal semantic analysis there has not been time to collect or analyze data in this way. The techniques which were used differ from those of traditional ethnography in that they are aimed at explicating belief systems, rather than discovering and analyzing behavior. This cognitive emphasis affects both the choice of informants and the nature of the interviews, as described in the following section.

### III. METHODS

#### A. Informants.

The informants in the initial set of interviews were interviewed in a soup kitchen in South East Washington, D.C. The respondents were chosen by the director of the soup kitchen. There were five males and 11 female informants. All but two informants were Black. Only four of the informants were employed, either full or part time, and nine were not employed. (The employment status of two informants was not ascertained.) These informants mentioned contact with a number of social

programs including public housing, rent subsidy, homeless shelters, foodstamps, welfare, disability, and community mental health programs. All were currently housed (although one informant might have qualified as homeless since he lived in an abandoned building.) In general, they reported being quite mobile in the past.

The second group of nine interviews were carried out in a Church near Suitland, Maryland. Again the choice of people in the interview was made by our contact. As a result, these nine were primarily prominent and active Church members. One was male and eight were female. All were Black. Only one informant was not employed and was seeking public assistance. The others were either retired, employed or in one case, in college. (Three others mentioned having gone to college.) These informants were obviously far better off economically than the previous group of informants. However, with some exceptions to be noted later, they appeared to be culturally quite similar. They seemed, in general, to recognize the kinds of residential mobility and ambiguity which the previous group of informants demonstrated, and seemed to respond to it similarly. Therefore, despite their being stable working class to middle class, they were an adequate group of informants for trying to systematize the conceptual system elicited initially among very poor informants.

#### B. The Interviews

The first set of interviews was designed to be very exploratory in nature. Questions were asked to elicit information about who the informants lived with, and what sort of relationship this co-residence implied. Questions were also asked about changing residences and visiting patterns, in order to elicit multiple residence, or shifting patterns of mobility. During the course of the interviews, questions about informants attitudes toward the confidentiality of the census were added to the interview. (See interview schedules, Appendix A.)

The aim of these interviews was to get a general introduction to the informants residence patterns and to elicit some of the concepts and terms they use to understand it.

The second set of interviews were very different in character. For reasons of time, the specific questions about the informants' living patterns were dropped. Instead the meanings of specific concepts, drawn both from previous interviews and the concepts used in census questions, were explored. Informants were asked about the meaning of several terms taken from the wording of the Current Population Survey. Inclusion of a particular name in the survey depends on the respondent's reaction to several questions. Question 14a asks "What are the names of all persons living or staying here?" This is designed to elicit all people present in the residence. However, in order to be included in the rest of the survey, each name must pass an additional test, Question 14c, which asks "Does \_\_\_\_\_ usually live here?" It had already been established in the previous set of interviews that "living" and "staying" had culturally specific meanings to informants which might potentially affect their reactions to these test questions. Therefore it was decided to further investigate the meanings to informants of those terms.

In addition, the term "usual place of residence" was included in this set of interviews. This term was taken from the interviewers' instructions for Question 14c. If the respondent answers "No" to "Does \_\_\_\_\_ usually live here", the interviewer is instructed to follow up with the probe "Does \_\_\_\_\_ have a usual place of residence elsewhere?" Usual place of residence is defined as "...the place where a person usually lives and sleeps." A usual place of residence must be specific living quarters held by the persons to which he/she is free to return at any time." This term was included because it seemed possible that "usual place of residence" might mean something different to informants than "usually living here."

In addition, seven of the complex or ambiguous living situations which the first informants described were presented to the second set of informants. These were actual situations, and were, if anything, simplified for presentation to the second set of informants. These situations were designed to elicit the kind of computation based on the conceptual system described above. In making the judgement about a complex or ambiguous case, informants revealed what elements of the situation were important to them, and what sort of logic they followed in arriving at a decision. In the

course of the interview, I would vary the circumstances somewhat in order to follow out these trains of logic. As a result, the bulk of the interview consisted of the manipulation of hypothetical situations, rather than the collection of "facts". In addition, questions were asked about attitudes toward confidentiality. 1/  
(See interview schedules, Appendix B.)

#### IV. FINDINGS--THE CONCEPT SYSTEM

##### A. Control of Space and Its Implications.

The general area which this concept system covers can best be described as "the control and sharing of living space." These words are not used by informants. Instead they have a variety of terms which describe people's relation to the places where they can be found. Some of these relationships are tenuous or temporary (like visiting, dropping by etc.) while others connote absolute rights to be there, and stable association (for instance "home"). A variety of other terms intergrade between these poles.

It might be worth it to note that this domain is very different from the one that Hainer (1987) or the Valentines (1971) investigated. Their domains are social structural rather than spatial. The term Hainer says people use for the primary social unit is "the family", and it clearly is part of the realm of kinship. The domain I am looking at cross-cuts "family" in numerous ways. The latter forms one important reason to assign people to particular places. But family members may have very different ways of being spatially attached, and this is clear to my informants.

The control of living space appears to be very important to my informants. I was struck with the number of informants who expressed a preference for having space which is under their own control. Even informants who demonstrated a long history of residential dependency expressed the desire for such control. One informant spoke, for example, of staying with a sister on and off for nine years, with various friends who wanted her to leave, and was currently living with a boyfriend. But her ideal was to have a place of her own:

"...that's going to be my own place...Yes, I have to have that. I don't like being under anybody's dictating."

---

1/ A brief card sorting task, using terms elicited from the first set four informants was also used, but did not prove productive.

Or another man, living with a sister:

"See, I wrote a song about that one time. I've always like to have my own. My basic thing was even before I turned 17, was to get me an apartment."

In fact, people frequently mark the difference between the person who controls and the person who shares space.

"I have never shared someone else's home. I have always shared my home with someone else."

Or:

"I'm living with--well, my sister lives with me."

As the above examples imply, there is a great difference between the statuses of space provider and space-sharer. The informants in the first set of interviews were particularly sensitive to this distinction, since a number of them lived in shared space arrangements. Nine of them were in places rented or owned by someone else. Five of these were with relatives, (generally mothers, sisters, and grandmothers, cousins), two with friends, and one with roommates. Six owned or rented space in their own names. Of these, three lived primarily alone (one had a child visiting on weekends) and two had roommates or others staying with them. The closest thing to a traditional family was a single mother who lived with her two young children. The informant who lives in an abandoned building was alone, he said, "far as I can tell."

In general, people seem to prefer to be providers of space, because it allows them to have things their way. As one informant put it:

"It's still my home--there are going to be rules" (she spoke here of a boyfriend she said she considered "family").

These rules, however, are irritating to those who live under them. People complain of rules about who can visit and when, what time to be in, and describe a series of "frictions" or "fusses"--even with relatives--over these issues. Where the relationship between the individuals is not close, the potential for exploitation comes to people's minds. Interestingly, this is perceived from both sides of the relationship. The homeless man, for example, refused to ask friends for a place to stay:

"No, because they'd continue to put their feet in your face...It's somewhat degrading...Every chance they get, every little bit of money you get they gonna suck it out of you, either you leave."

Space providers often feel put upon, too, and worried over people who might not be leaving quickly enough. They also saw a potential for having relationships deteriorate:

"...it was like she wasn't trying to do anything. She knew she was going to get a check, foodstamps, things like that, and she didn't have to get up and go about herself...So I had to put her out. And when I had to ask her to leave, that's when the attitude came in."

Of course, the situation is very different when a person shares space in a place where they have unquestioned rights to be. This is generally called "home" and it connotes ease and comfort. You can do what you like at home, and have no sense of intruding or altering your behavior to fit someone else's requirements. Most generally, the informants that I talked to said "home" was with relatives. But not everyone living with relatives is at home. It depends on the particular nature of the relationship and the circumstances.

It is clear, then, that the informants have a complex set of ideas, separable from those by which they understand kinship, which have to do with the way space is controlled or shared.

Understanding these informants' beliefs about the control of space may help to explicate several features of the way these informants were living. One such feature was the relatively small size of the reported households. This seems to be one characteristic in which this group of informants do not resemble the people Hainer (1987) and the Valentine's (1971) described. Most of my informants do not seem to be absorbed into the kinds of large households headed by senior women which Hainer and the Valentine's discuss. My informants' households were small (only two reported living with four or more other people) and only two young men and one woman reported living with female relatives in an older generation (a mother or grandmother). In some instances, living away from these kin may indicate a preference for self-sufficiency or a dislike of conforming to other people's rules:

"...my sister's been getting sick a lot because she doesn't like me in the area...I could of went to their house and stayed, but-oh, I'm ready for the rules and regulations now...It's like a terrible curfew...

Q. Would you go back and stay with your mother?

A. That's what I'm gonna have to do. Cause my mother's not as bad--not bad, but my sister's like whew."

Perhaps this pattern appears prominently among this group of informants because they were interviewed in a soup kitchen. If they had been less socially marginal, they would have access to resources provided by kin, and might well be eating in a senior woman's household.

#### 1. Control of Space and Gender.

Another interesting residence pattern which may have a bearing on beliefs about control of space is related to gender. Very few of the women in the first set of interviews (only two of 11) report living with men. It is interesting to consider this in light of Hainer's contention that many households contain males who are hidden in an attempt to protect family resources.

On the whole I did not find evidence of these "missing men". In two instances people told me about males who would not be officially reported. It could be that "missing men" existed in other households and people simply declined to tell me about them.

However, I am not convinced that this was the case. On the whole the female informants do not report wanting to live with men as mates. In fact, only one young woman expressed an intention to move in soon with a boyfriend. Other women spoke of previous marriages or relationships but seemed none too eager to take in another man. For instance, one informant was intending to look for a roommate soon, although she had mentioned a boyfriend. She thought a roommate would be better than living with boyfriend:

"I think so, I got kind of used to it, not being nobody to tell me what to do, 'cause I'm not married to nobody no way...I been married, and I maybe put up with a whole lot of stuff I really don't like to put up with right now...Once I got

into it I would try to hang in there with it, but--if they were not willing to marry you, why should they be there with you?"

Another informant, whose ex-husband was currently in jail, was determined not to take in another man because she wanted to protect her children. It would be "confusing" to them to have a man around

"because they know that's not their father, 'cause I don't want them to have no more on their mind."

Her own parents separated when she was two, and she has never forgotten how that felt. In addition, her daughter is 12, and she is worried that a boyfriend

"may try to get sexual with my daughter."

Another informant rejected the idea of living with a man out of hand:

"I lived alone for 14 years, it's extremely important to live alone. The only reason I'm not living alone now--I always thought it was something wrong 'cause I never had a husband or I never lived with a guy and I tried it, and I lost everything I ever worked for...And I'll never do it again...He drove me crazy. He drove me completely nuts."

Other women, even ones currently in relationships with men, resisted attempts to control their behavior. In fact, one of the two women who described herself as living with her boyfriend insisted that it was important that the lease be in her name.

"...In fact there are times I've said, 'Look you've got to leave for a couple of days. If I don't get some air I'm going to hurt somebody...(the lease) makes a difference when it comes down to he says, 'no, I'm not going' and you can call the police and tell them get him out".

(This informant had been abused in a previous marriage.)

I don't want to give the impression that these women informants were completely independent of men. Many had boyfriends, and in fact, they are more likely than men to define the term "living with" in sexual or romantic terms. Nevertheless, they preferred control and independence, and appeared to be using the rules of residential control of space to help them maintain it. In fact, when I fished around for the presence of "missing men" I frequently got responses in terms of the troubles that men can potentially cause, or an ideology of independence.

When Hainer (1987) and Valentine (1971) described the problem of "missing men", they concentrated on the economic benefits these men supply in the households where they are members. What my data tentatively suggest is that women do not necessarily view their presence as an unalloyed benefit. Rather, they are in a position of calculating risks vs. benefits. It would seem that these risks might include the following:

1. Risks to income or housing (described by Hainer).
2. Attempts to control their behavior.
3. Relationship difficulties (for want of a better way to express being driven completely nuts).
4. The dangers brought to the household by illegal activities. (My informants tend to associate these illegal activities with the drug business and the people I talked to respond to it more as a source of a danger than as a source of income, although, of course, it may be both).

Since women do have "boyfriends", might seem that they are attempting to attach men to them without incurring some of the risks described above. The rules of residential control give women a major tool to use here. If people who are something less than fully "at home" in a household are expected to follow rules set by controller of the space, women with leases have a significant power advantage. In the course of the interviews, I heard of a number of men who spend nights and varying amounts of time with their girlfriends. (Two informants described such patterns for themselves). It may be that men in such situations are not in fact culturally understood to be full household members, because women perceive it as advantageous to keep them marginally connected.

From the point of view of census concerns, it seems possible that women's reliance on the rules of residential control may sometimes present an interesting bias. They may prefer to describe a man who is present part of the time as "visiting", "staying over" or some other term which expresses a more tenuous connection to the household, because this is what ideologically leaves them in control. They may in fact prefer not to think of such men as "usually living with" them. This bias would reinforce the practical reasons to hide the presence of men, and would operate even when there were no benefits to be threatened.

There is no reason to expect consensual agreement in matters of gender, and these issues and arrangements may look very different to the men. But men also express a desire not to be controlled in their living arrangements, and are familiar with women who exert such control. For example, one young man spent every other night with his girlfriend. He described this as "staying" or "staying over", and said she didn't like his coming and going as he pleased--each time he goes over he has to discuss it with her first. This man unhesitatingly assigned himself to his mother's house, where he described himself as feeling "at home".

## 2. Drugs and Residence Choices.

In the previous discussion, I mentioned the possibility that the drug situation has affected residence patterns because women may see it as risky to become permanently attached with a man in the drug business. In fact, this only seems possible, and I have no direct evidence of it. However, it does seem clear that the prevalence of drugs has affected the residence patterns of these informants in a number of ways. For want of a more logical place to include a discussion of these effects, I will treat them here.

Drugs often appear to have played a role in people's residential choices. People were often not very explicit, but often they told me enough to make me think that drugs were a draw keeping them where they were. For example, one young woman gave as her address a notorious semi-abandoned building in a government project which was described by another informant as full of "dope fiends." Her mother lived in a nearby neighborhood in Maryland, and as she said

"...what ever I might decide to do is not around there...so I go to visit them, maybe drink or something...so I go there."

Liquor, and the people who drink it, are (as far as I know) available in Maryland, so I assume it is the "or something" which conditions her long stays with her girlfriend.

More often, the need for protection from the drug scene is what concerns people. One informant was living with her grandmother because two uncles, recently released from jail, have started selling drugs in the grandmother's house:

"I'm afraid to leave my grandmother sometimes, not knowing what might, whatever...I'm worried about the fact that, when you do those types of things other people think there's money in your house, or maybe drugs in your house and they might come in looking for some sort of drugs, or money, and harm my grandmother."

In this instance, the residences of a number of people had been affected by the situation. The informant's mother had moved several blocks away, and the informant's son was sent to a sister's house

"because I don't want him around that environment".

Another informant who was living with her 6 year old daughter had left her teenage son in another state with her parents because "DC is not a place for teenagers" and he'd "get sucked into the drugs" because "he likes easy money." (Another informant described her mother as unable to help her after a fire made her homeless because the mother was already caring for the children of a sister "who's gone astray." I suspect this means drugs.) In fact I had a general impression of children being stashed out of harm's way with various relatives, and drug use frequently seems sometimes to play a role in these choices.

The general dangers of a drug environment are also of concern to informants, and play a role in their residential choices. For example, one young man was living with his quadriplegic sister primarily to see that his 12 year old nephew didn't get into trouble:

"It's not really a good environment to bring kids up because there's a lot of drugs and stuff...It's dangerous. It's like sitting on a stick of dynamite. If little kids come into your house with baseball bats, there's no telling what they'll do next."

The informant quoted above who was trying to avoid the sister with the "terrible curfew" felt she was going to have to move soon. She had recently been mugged, and now her building has been entirely enclosed with fencing as a security measure. "I think it's better for like kids, and people taking people's apartments over, you know, just people come into your house and stay and won't leave," but the fence makes the building seem "like a baby Lorton."

Not only do drugs affect these residential choices, there are indications that they may also affect the willingness of people to give out information to those who collect it for the census. This may occur when people are asked to give out information about others who would, for their own reasons, rather not be talked about. For example, I had this exchange with one young woman, who expressed fear of the violence in her neighborhood.

A. ...People like to mind their business. They don't want to get involved, don't want to get hurt, and that's how it comes about...

Q. So the main reason that people don't tell about people who are living places...

A. Is because they're so scared there's going to be something behind it...What they might say or they might hear or what might happen afterwards...it's the person that you're telling on...you afraid to tell because the person might get you, and they afraid because the police might get them."

B. Living vs. Staying

Various patterns of mobility and the concepts which govern residence produce, as we have seen, a range of co-living arrangements.

Informants often express these differences in their use of the terms "living" and "staying". These two terms are good indicators of the level of attachment informants perceive in person's living situation.

One caveat is important. Two informants told me that there are regional variations in the use of the two terms. They said that people from the rural South often use the two terms identically. For instance, they may ask "where are you staying" and this could elicit your permanent, official address. But this sounds wrong to informants from the D.C. area.

"Usually people from the South, and people from more rural areas will come here and ask the question, 'Well where do you stay?' and I'll say 'Well gee, I don't stay anywhere, I'm a permanent resident.'"

To some informants the two terms sounded the same initially, but all recognized the linguistic distinction implied in the sentence

"I'm staying with my sister, but I live with my mother."

Some of the complexities of understanding the use of these two terms can be illustrated by the following segment, taken from an interview in the first set.

A. "I'm just a friend of hers. I lost my apartment in December...That's why I said I'm staying there, cause I'm not living there. I'm doing everything I can to find a way out of there.

Q. So you're not living there.

A. Well, you would say I'm living there, I been there since December, but I'm just saying it's not mine...But I live there -- I bathe there, I sleep there, I dress there, my clothes are there--not everything I own. Most of my things I got out of storage and took to my mother's, but basically

everything I have to live with since December is there. As a matter of fact, it's packed up at the door. Because I'm trying to get out...I don't want to admit it, but I'm staying there...No, if I was somewhere else, like I stayed places like a roommate--well, I actually lived there, I paid my half and they paid their half. I've just gotten used to saying "stay there." People say "you living there?" I say, "Yeah I staying there right now, that's what I can do right now..."

Q. So when you say "staying?"

A. Don't get me all caught up in there, that ain't the real thing...

Q. If they asked you "do you usually live here?"

A. I'd say, who said I'm living here...

Q. Though in fact you are--

A. Staying here, right....

It is clear that living and staying mean very different things to this informant, and as we shall see below, she expresses some of the major elements which people use to make decisions about where to place people residentially: intentions, permanence, physical presence and carrying out basic maintenance functions, the presence of a person's belongings and the possibility of a "real" or "official" address.

An understanding of the way informants use these two terms may some day prove of interest to those who write census questions, since both terms appear in the questionnaire. The following discussion presents my impression of the ways in which people understand the dimensions of meaning which underlie the use of the two terms.

These factors are, I believe, the principles which people use to calculate where others should be assigned in complex or ambiguous cases. Most of the data used here will be drawn from the segment of the second set of interviews in which informants made judgements about complex or ambiguous cases drawn from actual circumstances.

## 1. Stability

Most of the time, if informants are asked about the difference between the terms "living" and "staying", they will respond that "living" is more permanent, and "staying" is more temporary.

"Staying is more temporary. It explains her living arrangements for the time being, you know...She's staying with whoever, but in the future she'll be living with her mother. She's staying with her sister right now, for the time but that she was going to her mother...I would figure that she was staying with her sister for some other reason until something gets organized at the mother's or the room gets ready at the mother's or the mother paints."

Temporary and permanent in this context are not, however, simply measures of duration. In fact, people may be thought to "live" in places where they are almost never found. In these data, the people who fall into this category seem frequently to be young women. I heard of several young women who spent a major portion of their time "staying" with others. In the first set of interviews, three informants described for me a pattern of gravitating back to the neighborhoods where they grew up, and spending the bulk of their time with various friends. This may result (as it did in two of the cases) when the informants' mothers left the area. "Home", where they "lived", had moved on, and they "stayed" behind. Another young woman was described as seldom living at her "home":

"...I have sisters and brothers, I'm from you know, a family of 17, and my youngest sister, she still lives at home, but she stays with all the different ones that live down there, but she really lives with my parents. But there's so many of us she just floats.

Q. So she might actually not be at you mother's most of the time.

A. Right, right."

The informant explained to me that when she was thinking of where someone "usually lives", "I don't count days...very rarely do I count days. I'm not really like that."

In certain instances, however, time does enter into informants' calculations. Informants see a possibility that long periods of "staying" might eventually turn into "living", if enough time has elapsed.

A. "She's been there for five months? Over five months I would say living there. She's usually living there, she's been there that long.

Q. How long would it take to become "living there"?

A. I'm like this --up to three months. But the 4th month you've decided you're going to live here, right? I mean 'start paying some rent' you know."

Three months would have seemed to short a period to another informant -- in fact, five months seemed like a clear case of "staying there." She referred to a son who has had a cousin with him for longer than that, and her family still regarded that as a "stay."

If informants do not rely much on duration to estimate permanence what do they mean by the temporary/permanent distinction? It seems to be primarily an estimate of stability over longer cycles of time. If a person generally or eventually returns to the same place after various periods elsewhere, that is likely to be counted as his living place. Informants applied the logic particularly to young men with girlfriends. Examples such as these were presented to the second group of informants, in hypothetical situations (vignettes) which they were asked to judge. (See Appendix B Part 4.) Vignettes D and E presented young men who shared time between girlfriends and other relatives. In assigning these characters to permanent places, informants often touched on the idea that they would, in the future or in the long run, return to the home of a relative. For example:

- a. "He could be locked out the next night, you see, and then he really would go back home"
- b. "Boyfriends and girlfriends come and go, you know...There's some consistency with your (mother's) house, he may spend nights at girlfriends or anywhere else, but there's some regularity."
- c. "Eventually, I'm going home to Mommy's"
- d. To me none of those other places is permanent, he's just sleeping around. And when he gets ready he's going home to Carrie.

Several points may be made about this logic. First, it did not seem to matter much, in applying this criterion, whether the person actually resides part of the time with the relative in question. Vignette D and Vignette E look similar in this respect to the informants, despite the fact that the person in Vignette D spends 50 percent of his time with his mother, while the person in Vignette E seems to have no fixed place of residence. In both cases, the relatives house seemed like the stable base, like "home."

It seems possible that the informant's tendency to assign young people to their mother's houses might in part be a result of their cultural expectations that they will return there more than to any other place. Perhaps it is this expectation more than kinship per se which motivates people in making this judgement.

It is also clear (from informants' use of terms like "eventually" and "the next night") that part of the informants judgement of permanence includes a calculation about what is likely to happen in the future. This explains why a roommate who will be there for a long time counts as permanently "living" somewhere, even on the first day, while someone "staying" five months is still only temporary.

This leads to perhaps the most important criterion people use in judging residence: that of expectation and intention.

## 2. Expectation and Intention

Over and over again, informants let me know that what really counts in deciding where someone lives is the kind of intentions they and others have. This was very clear in their responses to situation A. For almost everyone, this was clearly "staying" because suitcases at the door signalled the character's clear intention to leave:

"Because whether she has moved or not she is expected to move at any time."

"Because she's still planning to leave, I mean it's not as though they've agreed at this point in time..but if at this point Mary said I'm gonna move in...then circumstances would change."

For many informants, the easiest way to read these intentions and agreements, especially in complex situations, is to determine where a person's belongings are. Many informants discuss these belongings in making up their minds about hypothetical situations.

"... a lot of people go to their girlfriend's house and stay 4,5 days a week but they still live at home. They live where their belongings are - maybe their body, physically, they might be [at their girlfriends.]"

This is the significance people see in "moving in." It is a sign for people of an intention to stay put:

"If they move all their personal things, their furniture and their T.V. and all this stuff, then you know they're living there... When you move in you bring all of it. If you're not making that your home you're only gonna bring essentials."

Belongings seem more important to the somewhat more affluent informants in the second set of interviews than to the informants in the first. However, at least one of the "drifters" in the first set understood belongings as an important symbolic message. If you intend to "live" somewhere you want to bring something along with you to show it.

"You gonna bring something that you know is yours with you...Try to make something work, being there, to achieve to that living there...try to put some furniture there, so then I'll call myself resident or living there."

Another important measure of people's intentions which showed up in the data has to do with having a key to the place. This showed clearly in hypothetical vignette D, where a young man's girlfriend didn't give him one. Informants frequently said, "When you have a key you have the authority to consider yourself a resident" or words to that effect. Informants seem to want a kind of equality to exist between persons seen as co-living. They should be able to come and go as they please instead of being invited, should be able to invite whom they please to come over. Ideally they should share in responsibilities (paying rent and buying groceries were frequently mentioned). In fact, this criterion was sometimes read into the hypothetical situations even when it wasn't explicitly mentioned. For example, one informant had decided that the man in vignette E "usually lived with" his grandmother, partly because

"I'm sure he's going to pay his grandmother something! She's not going to let him stay around there for nothing! He can see his girlfriends different nights for free, but if it's me he's gonna pay and buy some food too!"

The issue of intentions and agreements may also be an important one in assessing the residence of children. Vignette C posited a high school aged girl who was living with her mother's sister in order to go to a better school. Most informants agreed that she should be counted with her mother. Their main reasons seemed to be that the mother was still making decisions for her or that she was still paying the daughter's bills. The child was still intended to be under her jurisdiction. At least one informant explicitly denied that it had anything to do with space being saved for the child at "home."

From what several informants told me, the residence of children who spend time with relatives is judged by similar expectations and agreements. One informant said her great grandson "lived" with her, and went on to explain

"...he's mine because then he sets up my rules and comes under my regulations... And when he goes with [his mother] then I ask her to do the same way that I would... you should have an agreement because children just get too confused."

Other informants mentioned agreements similar to this one between relatives in cases where a child is living away from his or her mother. They may affect the way people count children as "living" with certain relatives.

### 3. Official Living Place

There is a third dimension on which some people base judgements about residence. This is a concept which might be called an "official living place". For some informants, where you "live" is equivalent to what they often call a "permanent address." This could simply be one of several places chosen by an individual who has access to several. One informant pointed out that she has had much experience with forms which expect her to have both a "local" and "permanent address". In her mind, the search to find where a hypothetical character "usually lives" almost always turned on where the "permanent address" was taken to be.

In some cases, informants who take this line look at where a person receives mail. For these informants receiving mail was an element in making calculations about vignettes F and G:

"...the reason she should count him would be because...he's getting his mail there..."

There seems sometimes to be an official dimension to this permanent address. What matters is where the government thinks you are. Situation F mentions a parole officer, and this was occasionally compelling:

"especially, you know, your parole officer. That's the one who's got to know where you are, and if you're using that as the address. I would want that to coincide as the permanent address."

Other informants mentioned other kinds of governmentally "approved" addresses -- the driver's license address and where the IRS sends a person's forms were brought up.

It should be stressed that the mailing address is an important thing to a relatively small number of informants. Others see the issue of mail as unrelated to where a person "usually lives":

"you can get your mail somewhere where you don't live. If for no other reason than to have a steady address, a steady mailing address."

Even though most informants do not see a person's "living" place as arising from interaction with bureaucracy, many of them do want to be able to "find" a person predictably where they are living.

"To find them or identify where you live... where should I contact you, it seems it would be at that place... You should be able to."

There is another version of "living" in a place that strikes me as related to the concept of "official" residence. If a person performs what one informant called "basic necessities" in a place then this is regarded as the place where they usually live.

"I guess if you say live, that should be the place you handle all your necessities, you have to eat, you have to sleep, preferably you should do it at your house, so I guess that's what I'm trying to call living... she bathed there, she ate, she slept..."

This is not once again, primarily an estimate of time spent in a place. The informant quoted above told me about a cousin who spends virtually every waking moment at the informant's house but still takes care of "her life threatening things" at her parents home. The latter house is where she lives, she just "hangs" at her cousin's.

A similar logic was sometimes used in assigning the grandson in vignette F to his grandmother's house, because the segment mentions eating with her.

It is interesting to note that of all the basic functions, sleeping in a place seems to be the least important. Even for situations which mention a sleeping place, informants often deny that this has played a role in their calculations.

A. "...If they're there until 2 o'clock in the morning, I would say they're generally living there.

Q. So sleeping somewhere isn't that important to you?

A. No, not in this modern age, no. There used to be a time when I'd definitely say if you slept someplace you lived there, cause people would go out in the day and then go home. But now there's so many people just sleeping ... that doesn't mean they live there... the word sleep is not as important.

#### V. MISMATCH BETWEEN INFORMANTS' BELIEFS AND CENSUS JUDGEMENTS

It seems possible that informants' understanding of the terms in this domain and their judgements of the rules of residence questions could have an effect on the way informants answer survey questions.

The respondent's distinction between "living" and "staying" does not, presumably, interfere with the collection of names for the Current Population Survey, since the names of everyone who is "living or staying here" is required of them. But in order to be included in the rest of the survey, each name has got to pass the test of the respondent's judging that the person "usually lives here." (See above, P.3)

As we have seen, "living" somewhere has, for this group, specific connotations which involve a culturally distinct relationship. Asking someone if a person "lives here" is not a simple judgement about their presence or absence in the household. People who have been absent a long time may be seen as regularly connected with households where they seldom are, and people who have been there full time for a long period, with no other place of residence may be judged as merely "staying". In the latter instance, the linguistically appropriate answer to the Question 14c ("does \_\_\_\_\_ usually live here?") is frequently "no." It is clear that to accept "no" to this question without further systematic probing to determine the individual's actual living circumstances is a risky procedure.

It seems clear that people's judgements in cases of culturally defined "staying" differ, on occasion from census definitions. This was clear in the answers informants provided in vignette A. The census answer to this long "stay" was that the "temporary" person should be counted, but it was clear to seven of nine of my informants that she should not. The reasons for their decision were, it appears, completely distinct from formal census inclusion rules. Informants relied on the stated or implicit agreements between the characters in the story, and location of the "staying" character's belongings. Even the two who were ready to include her were responding differently from the census assessment - the issue was not whether she had another place of residence but how long she had been there in total. Even their handling of time was different. If the question had postulated the "stay" as three months instead of five, it would quite clearly have been counted as something akin to a "visit" by all informants.

I cannot judge, from my data, how important a phenomenon these differences are, and the extent to which data collection may be biased by them. It probably would mostly apply to people who are highly mobile, the "drifters" and "floaters" who my informants mentioned. Presumably quite a number of such drifters would be picked up elsewhere. In these data, there is a strong tendency to assign young people to the homes of their parents, regardless of their actual presence in these places. They might therefore be counted, but not where census rules would be likely to assign them.

However, I would not make the assumption that parental households of absent drifters will always include them. In my sample, mothers were great proponents of the formula that young people "belong" at "home" no matter what. Respondents who are mothers of absent drifters may be likely to include them. But other categories of respondents often use other principles on which to base their calculations. If the respondents in the alternate households adhere to judgements based on the location of belongings, mailing address, or sharing of rent and responsibilities, for example, results may not lead so predictably to the inclusion of drifters even at the wrong location. It is also not clear from my data what will happen in the case of older persons with no fixed residence who are simultaneously less likely to have living parents or grandparents willing to claim them, and more likely to have had a previous "permanent address" where relatives think they appropriately belong.

The existence of these alternate principles for determining where a person "lives" may create differences from census judgements in other ways. For example, in vignette F, I was told that there would not be enough data to resolve the character's inclusion according to formal census rules. It was necessary to know where else the individual might be after 2:00 a.m., in order to determine if there was another more appropriate place for him to be counted. Most of my informants, however, found the situation less equivocal. Six of nine agreed that the character should probably be counted, responding either to mailing address or to the idea that a person should be counted where they can be found during most hours in the day.

In other instances, the alternate principles may have led to the same conclusion as that of the census rules, but for somewhat different reasons. Vignettes C and E fall into this category. In vignette C, the underlying issue for informants was whether the mother appeared to maintain jurisdiction over the child, as a result of family agreements. In this instance, because of the way the situation was written, they happened to agree with the census decision about the case. But it seems quite possible they would have responded differently to a school child who had come under the "rules and regulations" of the fostering relative, even if the child returned to the mother's house when school was out.

In vignette E, informants also use different principles to arrive at the same conclusion. Here again, they were not concerned with assessing the character's other possible places of residence. Rather, they made their decision based on their assumptions about the long term stability of the grandmother in her grandson's life, and on the location of his belongings.

Whether or not it is important if people come to appropriate conclusions for the "wrong" reasons is something which this research cannot determine. I have no way of knowing if the use of the culturally appropriate principles may someday or in other situations be applied in ways which will result in significant errors. But perhaps knowing about them may help in interpreting results and in predicting people's responses to new questions.

## VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

During the course of the interviews, I began regularly including questions about the issue of census confidentiality. The issue of confidentiality may be seen as central to the question of respondent's deliberately withholding information. If they genuinely believed the information they provided was not certain to fall into the wrong hands, they might be more willing to provide it.

The results here are fairly clear, however. Almost all informants do not believe that the census is confidential. (Most of the handful who did believe it were in the second, more stable group of informants, and were perhaps a little less accustomed, as one informant put it, to having to "hide to get by.")

Two main reasons were presented for people not believing in confidentiality: A. Deliberate sharing of information between agencies of government, and B. Individual, almost unintentional leaks of information by census employees.

### A. Belief in Sharing of Information by Government Agencies.

In general, people's understanding was that information which was available to one government agency was available to all. Some have specific beliefs about the way this occurs. For example, one informant believed that census records could easily be subpoenaed in court. Others seem to think that census records are simply open:

"...it's not confidential information. Because the census is a public record, public information."

Another thought that the Census Bureau and the Draft Board obviously shared information because:

"...they're basically the same, I think it's one public organization that does both of these... Everybody knows the Census Bureau and the Draft are the same, they're in one building."

A somewhat more popular theory however, was a belief in a central government computer:

"I know they have a way they've got to access to anything you've got. They have a set up where you can punch into a computer, and all these agencies cross. They can tap into everything. They have a network. There really is..."

or

"They know, once you put it in a computer. I can dial any office building, use the TTY, is that what they call it? And put the phone on there."1/

People believe in the sharing of information even when they have only the vaguest sense of how it occurs. The principle seems to be a non-academic version of the nature of centrally organized states:

"Because the first thing you're gonna think is the census is hooked up with the government, and the government is probably hooked up with the Welfare Department...Everything is linked, as far as a government situation is concerned."

I have the impression that this kind of general suspicion was the first response most of my informants had when I asked why people might withhold information. Problems with leases or Welfare come up as an attempt to provide evidence for this theory, rather than as pressing personal concern in most cases. In fact, in a number of interviews it was I who brought up the issue of the lease. This is not to say that the lease isn't an important concern to some informants. Three people specifically told me that they would feel compelled to lie because of the presence of people in their households who were not on the lease. For one person, this was centrally important and infuriating. She had come to the interview specifically prepared to tell me what she thought:

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1/ A TTY is really a telephone mechanism for the disabled.

"...you cannot afford, say, a three bedroom apartment, which would be required if you have two boys and two girls and...yourself and your husband, so what we normally do is just count two of them, the two boys or the two girls...it burns me up you have to do those kinds of things...I stormed into the lady's office...I said...you're making me lie!"

It is worth noting that such lease rules make sexes of children, as well as the total number of people in the household, into sensitive information since children of different sexes are not supposed to share a room. (Ages are obviously sensitive information for other benefit programs.) But the lease is not necessarily seen as very problematic by all informants. The powers that be may not actually care about lease infringements:

"The owner that they have now, he really don't care who's living there as long as somebody pay the rent."

Interestingly, this attitude may also be taken by people who live in public housing:

"A lot of them don't worry about the lease, not to me...I guess they figure that once they're in there it's all over...and especially because, you know, it's the government, and a lot of them can't be put out, because it's low income, and there ain't no where to go. Some of them don't even know where their lease is at."

And, in fact there were conflicting attitudes and beliefs about what housing authorities would do in the project referred to here. There were rumors of a "sweep" to check for people who were there illegally, but there was also talk that families recently evicted from the project would soon be returned there because conditions at the motels used as shelters for homeless families were so scandalous. Perhaps the latter rumor is what the above informant is responding to in saying "there ain't no where to go." It may seem to her that if the City can't house the homeless, they won't be able to evict anyone.

Another informant seemed to indicate that the specific names on a lease were not very important in public housing. One young woman described living in a semi-abandoned building in the same project. She felt she couldn't be put out, but it turned out that the informant could not have appeared anywhere on the lease.

"...see, my Aunt, she left it to me. She moved out about six, seven months ago...And my Aunt asked me would I watch everything in the apartment. She left me the lease and everything."

Perhaps in some instances, the danger people perceive in lease infractions does not come directly from the housing authorities. An informant who was worried about being evicted for living illegally with a disabled sister felt that the main problem with leases was that they could be used a tools of factional dispute within the project.

"See, usually it's the people who cause all the trouble who be complaining about things like that...the trouble makers gonna tell them just basically who they want out of the building...It's like a gang of people...That's how it is in these projects...and then you have most of these people that's good friends with the Mayor, or whatever. Like one lady, she supposed to be like a project manager, maybe. She has more things going on than enough, but she blames everybody else. And she doesn't like my sister...(She said) We don't have any room for trouble makers."

Despite this threat, the informant saw the situation as manageable. He was well enough connected to hear in advance about a search for people illegally in the buildings, and planned simply to stay with his mother during that week. He was already planning what to take with him to remove it from prying eyes.

Perhaps it is interesting to note that the informant quoted above who didn't think her private landlord cared had previously been involved in a lease-related eviction. It seems to me that she, like the young man in the project, had a practical and realistic sense of how much trouble a lease infringement can cause.

B. Belief in Leaks of Information by Census Employees.

Almost all my informants believe that it is simply "human nature" to talk, and that census employees are no exception. This is typical.

"They go down the street and talk...Loose lips, sometimes. It might be something that strikes you as strange, and you go down the street and get talking to people--because some people can draw that out of you, not intentionally, but they're the kind of people you like to talk to. You might find something funny, like "Twelve people in that apartment!" In jest, you know, But the twelve people in that apartment don't see it as a joke at all."

These "leaks" are essentially seen as extensions of gossip, and while understandable on a human level, they provide a strong reason to keep all potentially damaging information to oneself.

People also sometimes believe that it is wrong to give certain information to the Census Bureau for a related reason. They express a belief that it is wrong to talk about others simply because one should not discuss "other people's business." This seems to be regarded as a more serious matter when the people involved are not kin. Two informants told me they were not sure that even the names of roomers or roommates would be supplied to the Census Bureau. As one of them put it:

"It's not their business or your business to tell about somebody else's business."

Talk may be, in some instances viewed as directly dangerous. As we have already seen, people regard it as risky to discuss individuals who may be involved in the drug business. "Words" as one informant told me, "are weapons."

C. "Evidence" for Lack of Confidentiality.

I frequently asked people what made them think that census information was not confidential. The amazing scope and variety of the responses leads to the conclusion that people do not make distinctions between

one aspect of government and another, and tend to see the fate of all written information as the same. In only one instance did this evidence relate to the census at all. One informant concluded that information from the census was available to all because it, had been suggested that she might recover her mother's birth-date from the census. (She rather liked the idea of non-confidentiality, because she imagined that medical information might have been collected which could be useful to a family's descendents.)

More often the "experiences" which people described are vague and not well remembered. This suggests to me that the principle that "nothing is confidential" has become part of conventional wisdom, an item of widely shared folk belief rather than an opinion which one might be called upon to back up.

When people do produce corroboration for the belief, it is often about sharing of information by non-governmental groups. People mentioned employment applications, credit applications, getting phone calls from retailers who know your name and what you've recently purchased, winding up on mailing lists you never signed up for, and people falsely representing themselves to collect money and information. (One elderly gentlemen told me he had heard of con-artists in his neighborhood working a door-to-door scam by pretending to be census employæes.)

People also take experiences with other government agencies which they have witnessed personally or heard of as a proof of their ideas. One informant was particularly amused by the suggestion that it might be genuinely confidential. She had previously worked as a secretary in a national security agency.

"...I worked in a confidential office, but it was a big joke. When they say it's confidential, I say right. How much, how far, what do you consider confidential? How many people? As long as they're in that office and they need the information, right. And they're not going to say anything when they get outside that office - that's a joke. I think it's a joke."

The same informant took a friend's experience at "social services" as proof of the existence of computer linkages. This friend apparently gave nothing but a social security number to the case worker, and was told several previous addresses and which cars had been registered in her name. (This sounds like a link with a DMV computer.) Someone else mentioned the opening of "closed" adoption files.

Another source of support for the belief that "nothing is confidential" are the successes of the crusading press.

"...for example a person might have done something as a kid and he might have straightened his life out, cause they'll tell you this won't go on his records. And then, he maybe gets to be Mayor or some other good job and all of a sudden it comes out that he swiped a camera when he was about 10...So you feel like, what makes you think the census records are going to be any different..."

General distrust in government also plays a role. One informant's disbelief in confidentiality was justified in this way:

"Our country just does not engender the same kind of trust that it used to. Maybe years ago we might have believed that, if any agency said to us that the information was confidential, we'd probably believe it, but we see so much covert activity going on, where people have access to information..."

(Two older informants told me they did trust the census assurances of confidentiality precisely because they didn't think the government would lie. Perhaps there is a genuine generational difference in these attitudes.)

D. Reasons for Participation Despite Distrust.

When people distrust confidentiality so widely, it might be asked why they participate at all? In general, they do so because they believe that in their own circumstances, information either cannot or is very unlikely to hurt them.

Several informants told me that they would not lie to the census because they "had nothing to hide", or (as one of them put it) "I'm not old enough to have any major dirty secrets." But even if there are questionable circumstances, people who subscribe to the gossip-leak theory may be willing to take the risk of talking. If they see the main danger as idle chatter between census employees and their co-workers and friends, the likelihood of information about them getting back to the authorities can be interpreted as almost non-existent.

"...you never know who somebody else knows...that still seems a little far fetched to me...the likelihood of the happening is so slim...to the point where you wouldn't even worry about it."

If the respondent is mainly worried about "loose talk", his personal assessment of the interviewer or enumerator can be important. Several informants gave me the impression that they relied on immediate experiential judgements to decide if they should answer questions. For example:

"you'll never know (whether to believe it's confidential) unless you there yourself, and you gotta put your hand on something. Because what you hear, what you hear, it has never been a known fact that it's true...It's a decision that you gotta take a chance along the way..."

"Putting your hand" on the situation is said to depend on the "vibes" you get from an interviewer.

"I believe you true. But it depends on who you're talking to, though, that makes you believe them."

I was, however, unable to elicit a set of characteristics which people associated with trustworthiness.

However, I did note that several informants referred back to a form I had them sign. The form was a release to tape record the interview, but it also contained an assurance of confidentiality. An assurance of confidentiality was repeated before beginning the interview.

I first noticed that this form impressed people when an informant asked me for a copy she could keep, and the subject arose with four others. It seemed important to these informants that both the interviewer and the respondent sign a statement of confidentiality, and that the informant should have a copy to keep.

To some extent, these people regard having this form as a way of assuring themselves of recourse if the information they provided does leak out. For example:

"Like you had me sign a paper saying it would be confidential, maybe that's what they should start doing, having people sign a paper, so if any of the information gets out, they can go to court..."

The paper looked like a "contract" to two of these informants. Perhaps this, explains why they want both signatures on it. People want personal accountability even when they do not envision using the document in court. When people fear gossip by strangers, the possession of name may seem like a significant protection:

"Because that would mean that person would feel, well, I got the person's name, and this agency here - I know if I hear anything, this is the person I talk to."

"I'm going to find you, I'm going to see you because you said you weren't going to tell anybody. So, the contract might make it a little bit more binding, a little bit more valid"

It is also possible that the main effect of signing the paper is to reinforce the respondent's experiential sense that the interviewer is trustworthy:

"I think that's the way the mind works. It's at least they're trying to do right, because at least they're willing to put their names and sign their name, and sign my name, and both get a copy of this. So this is more like they're being honest."

## VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. A set of terms and concepts exists by which informants in this study assign people to living space. This domain is separate from their concepts of "family".
2. Since there is no comparison group, it cannot be established here to what extent this conceptual system is exclusive to low income people or to Blacks. There is a real possibility that many features of the system described here are generally held beliefs in American culture.
3. In cases where residence is complex or ambiguous, people use this conceptual system to calculate culturally appropriate responses to questions of residence. Low income respondents may be called upon frequently to make such calculations because of the presence of many highly mobile persons in (and away from) their households.
4. Culturally appropriate responses may or may not coincide with Census Bureau judgements. The criteria people use naturally may have no role in the census rules (like using intentions and agreements, location of belongings, or where a person receives mail). Or people may interpret a similar criterion differently (like judging a five month stay as temporary.)
5. It is not clear to what extent such confusions contribute to undercounting.
  - a. There is a strong likelihood that young persons with no fixed place of residence will be counted in their parental homes even if they are seldom if ever in them. I suspect, however, that this is less likely to be true for older persons with no fixed address.
  - b. Some women apparently use the rules of residence to reinforce their own power in relationships with men. Potentially, this may give them a reason not to count certain men who are connected to their households. This aspect of gender relations might reinforce the undercounting of men in the attempt to protect a family's income. However, such gender-related reasons for undercounting might operate even where benefits are not threatened.

- c. In other cases the results of conceptual confusions are unpredictable, and might rely on a myriad of personal factors. The way families calculate the residence of children being fostered by relatives is an example. In the informant's concept system, the judgement depends primarily on family agreements about who has jurisdiction over a child. If a family is in conflict over this assessment, it might as easily lead to the child's being mentioned twice as to his not being mentioned at all. Similar problems might arise if people disagree over someone's "intentions" about a long term stay.
6. People do not, on the whole, believe that the census is confidential. This appears to be part of a commonly held folk belief that "nothing is confidential" and is believed on the vaguest of grounds.
7. People perceive two important mechanisms by which breaches of confidentiality occur:
  - a. Deliberate sharing of information by government agencies.
  - b. Gossip by census employees, which results from "human nature."
8. Some people worry about revealing household members because of their leases, but often seem to make a realistic assessment of how much trouble a lease infraction might cause. Others are not primarily worried about leases at all.
9. Some informants are worried about revealing information about others because of direct reprisals which might be taken against them by people engaged in illegal activity.

#### VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The way people interpret "living" in a place may be important, since inclusion in the survey depends on the respondents making the judgement for each name suggested that X "usually lives here." Since respondents' criteria for making this judgement are different from census rules, it might be wise to provide the respondent with a brief definition of what the survey means by "usually lives here".

This would enable informants to translate from their own system into the formal one, in cases where that appears necessary. (It would certainly be less complex than translating census questions into folk categories).

2. People's belief in confidentiality might be improved by the use of a signed assurance of confidentiality. Because people seem to make immediate experiential judgements about participation, it should be presented as part of the interview itself. A prior contact letter will not have the same effect. The assurance of confidentiality should be signed by both the interviewers and the respondent. (It is important to people that they have the interviewers name, and their own name on the form seems to remind them of a contract). The respondent should keep a copy of this form, (since they seem to view possession of it as a form of protection).

#### IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## Appendix A: First Interview Schedule

1. What kind of place do you live in now?
2. Who else lives or stays with you there?  
How are these people connected?  
How do these people come to live or stay together?  
Is there a difference between living and staying?
3. Who comes to visit you a lot, and how long do they stay?  
Do they live somewhere else?  
Can they come and go as they like?
4. Is there anybody else who might change living arrangements soon, and why?
5. Is there anybody else who you think could become part of that living arrangement, and why?
6. Who eats with you regularly?
7. Who helps out in your place, and how?
8. Is there anybody who keeps or stores their things with you, and why?
9. Is there anybody else you think might be part of your household, but you're not sure?
10. Is there anybody you would be unlikely to tell the Census Bureau about, and why?

Explanation: I'm doing these interviews for the Census Bureau. They have an idea their questions may be confusing to some people. Perhaps it's because people's living arrangements are more complicated today than they used to be. So we decided to talk to some people about where they live, what kinds of people they're with and why.

All the information you give me will be kept strictly confidential. Your name won't appear anywhere in my notes. We don't have to use any real names; in fact I'd prefer it if we assigned new names or letters to the people we'll talk about.

## Appendix B: Second Interview Schedule

Explanation: I'm doing these interviews for the Census Bureau. In their surveys, they ask people the question "What are the names of all the people living or staying here?" Sometimes it is not always clear who should be included in the household. So we decided to talk to people about how they are thinking when they answer this question.

All of the information you give me will be kept strictly confidential. Your name won't appear anywhere in my notes or on the tape. We don't have to use any real names, in fact, if we talk about real people, I'd prefer it if we assigned new names or letters to the people we'll talk about.

1. Read them the census questions-
  - Names of everyone who lives or stays.
  - Relationship-Do they usually live here."
  - What does "usually live here" mean?
2. What does "usual place of residence" mean?
3. Card Sort: These cards have a set of terms on them which people use to describe their own presence or the presence of others in certain places.

I'd like you to make two piles of cards--those which seem to indicate "usually living with" another person and those which do not. If you are unsure of a term, put it aside and we'll discuss it later.

4. Do you think there is a difference between living and staying? What?
5. I'm going to give you some examples of people in different living situations. I'd like you to tell me whether such a person should be included as "usually living" where they are.

A. Mary asked her friend Helen if she could stay with her for a few days while she looked for a place of her own. It has been five months since then. Mary's suitcases are still packed, and are at the front door. Should Helen count Mary as usually living there?

B. Jane is at her girlfriend's apartment. She comes to visit her girlfriend every Friday and often the visit extends until the next Tuesday. Jane says she really "belongs" at her mother's house. Should she count herself as "usually living with" her girlfriend?

C. Grace's daughter Tonya is 16. Last year Grace decided to put her in a better school in a different town. When she's at school, Tonya has a room with Grace's sister. Tonya spends all summer, school holidays and each weekend with Grace. Should Grace count Tonya as "usually living with" her?

D. Danny, a young man of 21, spends alternate nights with his girlfriend and with his mother. He can come and go as he likes at his mother's place, but his girlfriend has refused to give him a key. Should Danny's girlfriend count him as usually living with her?

E. Carrie raised her grandson Dave. Occasionally he sleeps on a couch at her house, but he spends most of his nights with one of several girlfriends, or elsewhere. He often eats with Carrie, and stores his things at her house. Should Carrie count Dave as usually living there?

F. Joan's nephew has just been released from jail. He usually sleeps elsewhere, but he and his friends are to be found at Joan's generally until two in the morning. His parole officer sends him mail at Joan's address. Should Joan count Jim as "usually living with" her?

G. Vera has two male roommates who she estimates are gone about 50% of the time. She doesn't know much about where they go when they're gone but they pay her rent, and pick up their mail. Should Vera Count them as "usually living there?"

6. Before we interview a household, we tell the respondent that the information is confidential and that no one other than census employees have access to the information. Do you think it is confidential? Why or Why not?