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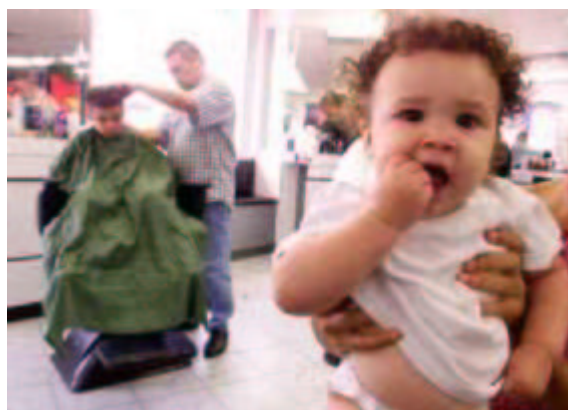
State's Hispanic's Miscalculated?

By: Stacy Albin, Herald News

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The U.S. Census Bureau miscalculated certain Hispanic communities in the state - sometimes by as much as 89,000 people - according to one sociologist, who pinned the problem on the wording of a particular question on the form.



Andrew Figueroa, 8 months, of Puerto Rican descent, waits for his cousin (not seen in photo) to get his hair cut at the Montesino Barber Shop on Market Street in Paterson. (Photo by Lisa Kyle/Herald News)

John R. Logan, director of the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research at the University of Albany, reviewed the Aug. 15 release of the 2000 Census for New Jersey, and in particular the Hispanic communities that wrote in their ethnicity after checking off "other."

Logan said that 265,955 South Americans live in the state, a number that exceeds the Census' figure of 177,017 by 88,938. He also said that 154,194 Dominicans live here, not the Census' figure of 102,630, and that 120,941 Central Americans live here, not 80,497 as reported in the agency's latest release.

The largest discrepancies between Logan's calculations and the Census Bureau's for Passaic/Bergen counties were in the Dominican and South American communities.

Logan said that 50,792 Dominicans and 69,005 South Americans resided in the two counties. The Census, however, put Dominicans at 36,360 and South Americans at 48,245. Of the individual South American countries, the biggest discrepancy was over Colombians. Logan's calculations put the community at 28,791, while the Census reported 20,208.

Logan also disagreed with the agency's figures that, even after the breakdowns, 209,993 were still categorized as "others" throughout the state.

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Logan determined what proportion of Hispanics could be linked to a specific national origin from the ethnic and place of birth information in the March 2000 Current Population Survey. Based on that statistic, he calculated that there should be only 29,047 "other" Hispanics in New Jersey in 2000, rather than the 209,993 reported by the Census. The excess "other" Hispanics were allocated across national origins in proportion to the relative size of those groups, he said.

Rajenda Singh, who oversees undercounting issues for the Census, said that Logan's method would likely produce figures different than the bureau's. That survey, he said, computed population using adjusted information from the 1990 Census, naturalization estimates and the birth and death rates.

"If I have to say which numbers are more accurate, I believe the more accurate one is from the bureau not from the survey," he said.

Logan traced the apparent problem to how the Census worded the options to question number 7.

The question read: "Is Person 1 Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? Mark (x)"

The options read:

"No..."

"Yes, Mexican/Mexican Am., Chicano"

"Yes, Puerto Rican"

"Yes, Cuban"

"Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino - Print group. "

"They were taking some bias away by taking away the examples," said Logan. "But actually it sort of backfired on them."


Instead of writing in a specific ethnicity, Logan said about 17.3 percent of Hispanics nationally wrote a general term like "Latino."

In the 1990 Census, when the bureau gave examples, only 8.7 percent of Hispanics answered that way.

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