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July 6, 2001

Expert Offers New Estimates of City Hispanic Populations

By JANNY SCOTT

A sociologist said yesterday that he had come up with new estimates of the numbers of Dominicans, Colombians and other Hispanics in New York City, estimates that he and planners for the city believe are much closer to the truth than the 2000 census figures released by the Census Bureau last week.

The sociologist, John R. Logan, a professor at the State University at Albany, said he had used existing Census Bureau data to recalculate the 2000 census numbers, and had concluded that the number of Dominicans in the city was 593,777, a figure that is 186,304 higher than the bureau's official count.

He put the city's Colombian population at 115,312, or 36,700 more than the bureau's estimate, and the Ecuadorean population at 148,392, or 46,935 higher than the bureau's. His estimates of the size of more than a dozen other Central and South American groups significantly exceeded the bureau's numbers.

"What's most interesting here is to see the magnitude of the effects," Professor Logan said at a news conference in Manhattan. "Instead of a rather mild increase of the Dominican population, our conclusion is there

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was more than 50 percent growth of Dominicans in New York City in the last decade."

He recommended that the Census Bureau revise its estimates of the Hispanic population groups by using procedures like his. "It's possible to get better numbers," Professor Logan said, "numbers that will be more useful to public officials and planners and city organizations."

Demographers for New York City, and others, believe the bureau significantly underestimated the size of numerous Hispanic groups in data from the 2000 census released last week. They trace the apparent problem at least in part to a change in the wording of a question about Hispanic origin on the census form.

An unusually high percentage of Latinos in New York City and nationwide failed to identify their specific Hispanic group or national origin on the form. As a result, many Dominicans, Colombians, Ecuadoreans and others appear to have ended up categorized by the bureau as simply "other Hispanic."

The uncertainty of the numbers causes problems for social scientists studying ethnic change; for social service organizations trying to obtain funds and to plan services; for advocacy groups; and for local governments, which use them for planning and other purposes.

The city's Planning Department and others had urged the bureau to rethink its estimates of the size of those Hispanic groups. Several people said yesterday that Professor Logan's work, done in a week, suggested that a reliable revision could be done.

"The approach he uses, I think, is very reasonable," said A. Peter Lobo, deputy director of the planning department's population division. "And it jells with estimates that we have come up with that have been constructed in a totally different manner."

There was no comparable problem with the count of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Cubans. Members of those groups have a separate question on the census form.

Professor Logan, who plans to post his methodology and findings on the university's Web site (www.albany.edu/mumford/census), used data on ancestry and place of birth taken from the 1990 census, and data on birthplace from a survey done by the bureau in March 2000, to try to determine the specific Hispanic origin of people categorized "other Hispanic" in more than 100 cities.

Using that method, he reduced the number of people in New York City categorized as "other Hispanic" from 403,952 to 51,317, and

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recategorized the rest - Dominican, Salvadoran, Honduran, Panamanian, Colombian, Ecuadorean and so on.

Professor Logan and others said yesterday that the Census Bureau could develop even more accurate estimates than his by using data from the 2000 census that it had not yet released - data from the longer, more detailed questionnaire filled out by one in every six citizens. That form has a question about ancestry.

In a telephone interview yesterday, Arthur Cresce, a demographer in the population division of the Census Bureau, said: "I don't think there will be any sort of reprocessing of the data or anything like that. The answers are what they are. They have been provided by the respondents."

But Mr. Cresce said the numbers would probably be analyzed, especially after the long-form data are made public. "Any time you have these kinds of responses or changes or shifts," he said, "you do want to understand them better."

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