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Discussion Paper



**Toward an Aboriginal household  
expenditure survey:  
conceptual, methodological and  
cultural considerations**

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## SERIES NOTE

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- to investigate issues relating to Aboriginal employment and unemployment;
- to identify and analyse the factors affecting Aboriginal participation in the labour force; and
- to assist in the development of government strategies aimed at raising the level of Aboriginal participation in the labour force and at the stimulation of Aboriginal economic development.

The Director of the Centre is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor of the ANU and receives assistance in formulating the Centre's research agenda from an Advisory Committee consisting of senior ANU academics nominated by the Vice-Chancellor and Aboriginal representatives nominated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Secretary of the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

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## ABSTRACT

Government assessment of the appropriateness and impact of policies and related programs aimed at improving the economic well-being of Aboriginal people could be considerably enhanced by the analysis of Aboriginal expenditure data. The Household Expenditure Survey (HES) conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is the major source of national expenditure data, but the absence of an Aboriginal identifier means that data collected on Aboriginal households cannot be extracted. This paper examines the methodological and conceptual frameworks used in the HES and evaluates their applicability for obtaining Aboriginal expenditure data. The paper considers the nature of Aboriginal households and finds they are characterised by considerable fluctuations in membership, by dynamic life cycles and by significant variability in type and size. It is argued that the household, as defined by the ABS, is not the appropriate economic unit to be considered in a study of Aboriginal expenditure. The discrete economic units in many Aboriginal households do not necessarily share cash or resources. Rather, extra-household economic networks, usually between linked clusters of households, can be more significant determinants of expenditure capacity than intra-household economic organisation. Other factors such as the redistribution of cash and access to subsistence influence expenditure levels and patterns for many Aboriginal households. In conclusion, it is recommended that an Aboriginal expenditure survey would provide important data to assist policy makers understand the causes of Aboriginal poverty.

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## Foreword

When the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) was established in the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University in March 1990, the University's Faculty Research Fund made a grant to the Centre. This grant was intended for a literature-based study that would complement CAEPR's policy-oriented research agenda.

In 1991, a decision was made to use this grant for a special project that would examine important elements of the Aboriginal economy by highlighting differences between information collected by researchers conducting case studies and that collected, primarily by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in large-scale official surveys like the five yearly Census of Population and Housing and other special surveys like the Household Expenditure Survey and Household Income Survey.

In March 1991, Ms Diane Smith was appointed to undertake this special project. CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 10 which raises conceptual, methodological and cultural factors that will need be considered if a specific Aboriginal household expenditure survey were to be undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is the second outcome of her research. It should be read in conjunction with CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 9 on empirical data on Aboriginal household expenditure patterns. The literature-based nature of her research on expenditure means that the resulting CAEPR Discussion Paper is somewhat longer than is the norm in this series. Nevertheless, I believe that this report resulting from Ms Smith's analysis will be of great value to researchers and policy-makers alike.

Jon Altman  
Series Editor  
August 1991

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has conducted four major Household Expenditure Surveys (HES) between 1974 and 1989. The ABS emphasises that statistics on Australian household expenditure are vital because '... households are important economic and social units' and '... private consumption by households is a major determinant of their well-being' (ABS 1989a: 1). Expenditure data obtained through the HES provide evidence on the relative costs of living for Australian households and are effective indicators of socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage for different groups within the national population (ABS 1990a: 8). However, there is no Aboriginal identifier within the HES and as a result, expenditure data on those Aboriginal households included in the survey cannot be extracted. There are no other quantitative data comparable to the HES which allow an assessment to be made of Aboriginal expenditure levels and thereby of their relative economic well-being, either with respect to each other, or in comparison with the total Australian population.

This paper examines the current methodological and conceptual frameworks used by the ABS for its most recent HES in 1988-89 and evaluates the applicability of these for obtaining Aboriginal expenditure data. It is argued that some HES concepts and coverage rules have shortcomings when applied to many sections of the Australian Aboriginal population. In particular, key concepts such as household, household member, visitor, spender, usual place of residence and so forth, need to be reassessed. Recent empirical literature on the economic and social organisation of contemporary Aboriginal households is reviewed. The analysis presented here suggests that the dynamic and complex character of Aboriginal households, together with key transactions within the informal Aboriginal economy (such as extra-household cash distribution and credit networks, and subsistence production and exchange) are important determinants of Aboriginal expenditure which need to be incorporated into assessments of their expenditure patterns. The paper concludes that a comparison of expenditure patterns within the Aboriginal population, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, has major relevance to government policy and programs aimed at improving Aboriginal economic status. Consideration is given as to whether a separate Aboriginal Expenditure Survey may be required.

### **The 1988-89 HES: methodology and coverage**

#### *The HES concept of income and expenditure*

There are important conceptual and practical links between income and expenditure. Most immediately, levels of income have a crucial bearing

on expenditure levels and analyses of expenditure patterns need income as an explanatory variable. Expenditure data offer an alternative perspective to income that provides a measure of command over goods and services. Accordingly, there are important consequences of the ABS including or excluding certain economic variables from the definition of income and expenditure used in the HES.

Household Expenditure Surveys collect data on the transaction cost to Australian household members of purchasing goods and services for private consumption and for use by all members of the household. Individuals and households finance their expenditure from a number of sources. For most this consists of income from their earnings, financial assets, property ownership, savings, income transfers and so on. In the HES, the ABS assesses current, recurring income to private households and focuses on household consumption expenditure (ABS 1989a, 1990a). Excluded from income are windfall gains from sources such as gambling, loans and credit obtained, the value of home-produced goods where the economic activity of the household is not associated with the production of those goods, irregular monetary gifts and the value of non-monetary gifts from other households (see ABS 1990b:38). A number of these excluded receipts can represent important, ongoing sources of income to Aboriginal households.

On the other hand, goods received in lieu of wages from an employer are included as part of household income by the ABS (ABS 1990a, c, d). Such payments in lieu of cash can represent significant contributions to Aboriginal households. However, intermittent cash sharing between households is not counted in the HES, either as expenditure or as income against specific households. For many Aboriginal households and individuals the redistribution of cash is a crucial determinant of their expenditure capacity. Also, cash expenditure is only one means by which Aboriginal people acquire and distribute a large range of goods and services. Researchers have pointed out the considerable overlap between the informal Aboriginal economy and the cash economy, especially in remote regions. In particular, Aboriginal subsistence production and consumption may have a significant impact upon cash expenditure patterns for particular groups. These informal economic transactions, although difficult to measure, would need to be incorporated into any accurate survey of Aboriginal expenditure levels.

Affecting any expenditure survey is the fact that Aboriginal notions of economy and spending may be different to those held by the wider community. Money itself is said to take on a different value; Sansom (1988: 159) refers to its 'double valence' and Peterson (1977) to its role

as 'social capital'. Also, the HES emphasis on obtaining information on current, regular income - partly to allow for comparison with a current period of expenditure - may not be relevant for many Aboriginal households, obscuring as it does the impact of fluctuating levels of employment and income. What constitutes 'usual' income and consequently 'usual' expenditure, could be subject to varying interpretations by Aboriginal people depending on factors such as their residence, labour force status and sources of income. Cultural differences affect Aboriginal expenditure patterns. These differences would need to be identified and, where possible, taken into account in the collection and final analysis of expenditure data. Some of these methodological and cultural issues, and their implications for an Aboriginal household expenditure survey, are outlined below.

#### *HES sampling technique and biases*

The HES are quarterly surveys conducted over a period of four quarters. The last Survey carried out during 1988-89 covered a random sample of 7,500 households distributed throughout Australia. As the Aboriginal population comprises 1.5 per cent of the total Australian population, some 112 Aboriginal households should be represented within the HES sample. Because there is no Aboriginal identifier within the HES, data on those Aboriginal households remain inaccessible.

The HES sampling technique biases the coverage towards certain kinds of households. Excluded from sampling are 'remote sparsely settled areas', which are Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) with less than 0.06 dwellings per square kilometre (ABS 1990b: 36). This coverage rule effectively excludes whole regions in which Aboriginal people predominate. For example, there are four SLAs within the Kimberley Region of Western Australia. Within each of these the towns of Broome, Derby, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham, classed as 'Urban Sampled', were included by the ABS as a sampling stratum. Remaining areas of each SLA were excluded, thereby cutting out numerous smaller Aboriginal communities and outstations. In the rest of Western Australia, the entire Pilbara region was excluded from the survey, as were towns with significant Aboriginal populations such as Carnarvon, Cue, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Murchison and others in the south-east of the State. In the 1988-89 HES, 79 per cent of all selected Western Australian households were taken from Perth, whereas some 73 per cent of Aborigines actually lived outside the capital city (ABS 1990b, 1989b). The large number of Aboriginal households living in town camps, small Aboriginal communities, pastoral settlements and outstations scattered throughout the State were thereby excluded.



Similarly, in Queensland large areas of Cape York Peninsula including the Aboriginal communities of Weipa, Aurukun, Edward River, Mornington Island and Bloomfield River were excluded. Other Aboriginal settlements such as Yarrabah, Palm Island, Woorabinda, Cherbourg and Domadgee were also excluded, as were large parts of central and western Queensland and the Gulf region. Overall, the HES random sampling biases coverage towards households in areas where Aborigines are comparatively under-represented, that is, in urban areas and capital cities. This bias is most telling in the Northern Territory where of the total 414 fully responding households in the 1988-99 HES, only 7 per cent were from outside Darwin where 69 per cent (or 23,970) of the Aboriginal population live (ABS 1990b: 37, 1990e: 9).

No Torres Strait Island households residing within the Straits were sampled as all were excluded on the basis of the SLA population density rule. Also excluded were those Islander communities living on the tip of Cape York Peninsula which are incorporated within the Torres SLA. However, over 60 per cent of Islanders live on the mainland in large towns, and so in comparison to Aborigines were more likely to be included in the HES (ABS 1991: 7). Once again, however, there is no identifier in the Survey to indicate those Islander households included. The current sampling bias means that even with an Islander identifier, the exclusion of households living in the Straits makes impossible any comparison between those households and Islanders living on the mainland.

#### *HES data collection*

HES data are collected using expenditure and income questionnaires, and personal diaries completed by all 'spenders' (persons aged over 15 years in a household), for two one-week periods in one quarter (ABS 1989a: 5, 1990f). The sample of households completing the diaries is spread over the 12 month survey period (1990d: 55). The expenditure questionnaire records information relating to items which occur at infrequent intervals and so would not be reported systematically in the diary (such as telephone, electricity and gas payments and holiday costs), and information relating to all household payments and purchases requiring more detail than would be obtained from the diary (such as medical and education costs, housing rates, details of housing finance, insurance and superannuation). The ABS (1989a: 2) not only aims to produce data on expenditure itself, but also to explain variations in expenditure levels. Because household income is a major determinant of expenditure, an income questionnaire is used to collect data on current household income from all usual sources.

The HES expenditure diary is used by all 'spenders' within a household to record all payments for goods and services purchased. For each item the spender must keep detailed daily records of: the type of store or outlet where the purchase took place; the weight, volume or number of items; the type of payment (cash, cheque, credit card); and the exact amount of the purchase. For analytical purposes these goods and services are categorised into coded lists covering 17 main expenditure groups which are in turn divided into 100 medium level classifications and then into some 430 detailed items. The major HES expenditure categories consist of: current housing costs, fuel and power, food, alcohol, tobacco, clothing and footwear, household furnishings and equipment, household services and operation, medical care and health expenses, transport, recreation, personal care, miscellaneous goods and services, income tax, mortgage repayments-principal, other capital housing costs, superannuation and life insurance.

In the 1988-89 HES, the ABS took an 'acquisitions approach' to collecting data (see ABS 1989a, 1990a) whereby the cost of items acquired during the reference period, regardless of whether fully consumed or paid for during that period, are included as full costs for that period. In this approach, goods obtained using credit card, hire purchase and so on are counted as expenditure at the time they are acquired rather than at the time of payment. The exception is house purchase expenditure where a payments approach is used allowing data on mortgage interest to be collected using values at the time of the interview, as opposed to value at the time of initial purchase (ABS 1989a: 2).

The ABS (1990a: 74) acknowledges that its survey work depends on striking a balance acceptable to the community between the burden imposed on selected respondents and the benefits derived from the data. The HES is regarded as being '... the most intrusive and burdensome household survey the ABS conducts' (ibid:74). Such intrusiveness will be a prime consideration for many potential Aboriginal respondents. Minimal requirements for providing HES data are literacy, numeracy and commitment. For some Aboriginal people, detailed personal expenditure diaries may be impossible to maintain. Lifestyle, living conditions, mobility and other cultural factors may also militate against people's willingness and ability to make regular entries.

### **The HES concept of household**

In the HES, the household is broadly defined as '... a group of people who live together (in a single dwelling) as a single unit in the sense that

they have common housekeeping arrangements, i.e. they have some common provision for food and other essentials of living' (ABS 1990d: 58). Persons living in the same dwelling but having separate catering arrangements constitute separate households, and one person can be a household according to the ABS approach. For each household the principle source of income is derived from a key 'reference person' who is nominated as such by the members of the household (ibid: 59).

The ABS uses a set of criteria for establishing the membership of a household. At each selected dwelling, all individuals residing there for a period of six weeks or longer after the initial expenditure interview are included (ABS 1989a, 1990d). Those excluded, amongst others, are 'visitors' and 'households' living in a dwelling that is not their 'usual place of residence', who will be staying there for less than six weeks following the initial HES interview (ABS 1989a: 1). Short-term visiting Aboriginal families and individuals would be excluded from a survey of the 'usual residents' of a dwelling where they were staying.

Entirely excluded from selection for the HES would be those Aboriginal households with one or more 'usual members' who could not be interviewed within 14 days after initial approach by an interviewer, or who would be leaving the household and not returning before the end of the diary-keeping period. The presence of three or more boarders or lodgers within a dwelling also excludes that dwelling from consideration (ABS 1989a: 1, 1990d: 59). In this way a range of transient residents, whether they consider themselves members, visitors, lodgers or boarders, would be excluded from membership of a selected Aboriginal household, and some entire households would be excluded as a result of the mobility of their members. In general, the HES is oriented towards residentially stable households.

### **HES household and expenditure characteristics**

The 1988-89 HES data indicate that income is an important determinant of expenditure patterns and that household characteristics are, in turn, linked to both household income and expenditure levels. For example, those Australian households in which the average level of total expenditure on commodities and services was significantly (by at least 20 per cent) below average household expenditure (\$502.71 per week), included: one member households; single parent households; households in which the reference person was over 65 years, was unemployed or not in the labour force; and households where the major source of income was from government transfer payments (ABS 1990d: 1).

Conversely, Australian households in which weekly expenditure was significantly (by at least 20 per cent) above the average, displayed markedly different characteristics. They included: group and multiple family households; married couples with dependent children; households in which the reference person was aged between 45 and 55 years; and households in which the major source of income was from wages and salaries (ibid: 1). The HES reported a clear relationship between the number of persons with employment and the size of the household: in two-person households in Australia there was an average of one employed person and in five-person households an average of two employed persons.

### **Aboriginal households: type and size**

The considerable lack of systematic data on Aboriginal household expenditure means that comparable assessments cannot be made of the relationship between Aboriginal household characteristics and their levels of expenditure. However, 1986 Census data indicate certain similarities and differences with HES data and suggest possible links between Aboriginal household characteristics and expenditure levels.

The 1986 Census data defined 51,534 households and some 226,827 people living within them as Aboriginal (ABS 1991: 10). There are significant differences between Aboriginal and total Australian household types. Of those Aboriginal people in private dwellings, 96 per cent belonged to family households compared with 76 per cent of the total population (see ABS 1991, 1990d). A high proportion of Aboriginal family households belonged to extended family households; 45 per cent compared with 29 per cent for the total population. Multi-family households also comprised a much higher proportion of Aboriginal family households than of total Australian family households (11 per cent compared to 2 per cent) and were more common in rural areas. On the other hand, a far smaller proportion of Aboriginal households (8 per cent) were single member compared to the total population (19 per cent) and far fewer of these consisted of people aged 65 years and over (15 per cent) compared to all Australians living alone (40 per cent) (ABS 1991).

There are marked discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households with respect to childhood dependency ratios and economic burdens (Teschfaghiorghis and Altman 1991: 4-5). Seventy-five per cent of Aboriginal family households have dependent children, whereas less than 50 per cent of all Australian family households have dependent children. Conversely, there are significantly fewer couple-only Aboriginal

families; approximately 13 per cent compared to 32 per cent in the total population. Further, among Aboriginal families with dependent children, single-parent families represent close to one-third, nearly double the figure for all Australian families, and have the lowest family incomes (ABS 1991: 12, 27). While the number of persons supported by an employed Aborigine has increased from 3.5 to 4.2 between 1971 to 1986, for the total population this situation has remained relatively stable at around 1.4 persons (op cit: 4). The impact of such high dependency burdens, together with the low levels of average income, will be reflected in Aboriginal expenditure patterns.

An additional factor affecting Aboriginal expenditure capacity is the size of the household. Large household size is one of the most readily apparent features of the Aboriginal population (see Gray 1987: 10). 1986 Census figures indicate that the average number of occupants of Aboriginal dwellings varied from 2.9 in medium density housing to 4.8 in separate houses and 5.0 in improvised dwellings (ABS 1991: 14). However aggregate census data often obscure the wide variations in Aboriginal household size to be found within the Aboriginal population. Research information from ethnographic studies indicates that census figures for Aboriginal occupancy rates are almost certainly underestimates. Studies reveal not only the higher average number of residents per dwelling at different communities, but also the great range in household size within communities, with some households having as many as 14 to 24 people in residence (see Anderson 1982; Ball 1985; Bryant 1982; Gale and Wundersitz 1982; Gray 1987; Rowley 1982; Taylor 1972). The number of persons per dwelling indicates the degree of overcrowding, especially when linked to housing type and condition. Variations in household size also have implications for household expenditure patterns and the relative economic status of households, especially when related to levels of income. Overcrowding creates pressure on household resources and facilities, and influences expenditure levels.

Significant differences in Aboriginal household type and size are apparent between rural and urban areas. Smaller households (one-family and lone-person households) are generally found in major urban areas where about 66 per cent of the Aboriginal population live and the largest households are located in rural localities (ABS 1991). In addition to differences according to geographic location, there are micro-level differences within regions and communities. For example, some town campers have different household characteristics to nearby Aboriginal town residents. Khalidi (1989) found that 63 per cent of town camp households in Alice Springs were extended and multiple family households, containing some

77 per cent of the town camp population. By comparison, only 31 per cent of Aboriginal residents in Alice Springs lived in the same type of family households. Average household size was also smaller amongst town households (4.7 members per household) than amongst households in the camps (7.1 members).

There is little quantitative data comparable to that obtained from the HES from which to assess the consequences of variations in household type and size for Aboriginal expenditure levels. An analysis of available empirical research suggests that Aboriginal households have markedly different expenditure patterns and levels than that found by the HES for similar households amongst the total Australian population (see Smith 1991). Key factors in the different economic status of similar household types are the level of income and residential location. At the 1986 Census almost two-thirds of Aboriginal people had individual annual incomes of \$9,000 or less and a further one-fifth were in the \$9,000 to \$15,000 range (ABS 1991). Single-parent Aboriginal families, which represent one-quarter of all Aboriginal family types, had the lowest family incomes with over 90 per cent having an annual income of \$15,000 or less. For all Aboriginal families, those in rural areas were not as financially well-off as those in urban areas (ABS 1991; Tesfaghiorghis 1991).

It can be assumed that the larger number of single-parent Aboriginal families, together with the high dependency burdens means a greater proportion of Aboriginal households have low income and expenditure levels which are below the Australian average. The HES found that greater numbers of adults in households, and multiple and extended family household types are associated, in the total Australian population, with an increasing ratio of employed persons. This is not necessarily true of similar Aboriginal household types where higher levels of unemployment, low levels of income and reliance on welfare payments often militate against any equivalent economic advantage being associated with an increasing number of adults within a household.

Conclusions made from HES data regarding the levels of income and expenditure associated with particular Australian household characteristics do not necessarily apply to similar Aboriginal households. On the contrary, similar Aboriginal households may have lower expenditure levels and different patterns of expenditure than their HES equivalents. Issues such as the economic status of different types of Aboriginal households, relative to each other and to non-Aboriginal households, will not be clarified until comprehensive expenditure data are obtained for a representative sample of the Aboriginal population that are linked to household type, size, income and geographical location.

### **The nature of Aboriginal household membership**

There are difficulties in applying the ABS definition of household and associated membership criteria to Aboriginal households. The definition of household would have to be more flexible to take into account Aboriginal economic and social realities. Membership of Aboriginal households is primarily recruited through kinship ties, though as Finlayson notes (1991: 201), it is kinship open to liberal interpretation and expanded through ties of historical association and friendship. A variety of social, cultural and economic factors affect the composition of Aboriginal households over time.

Aboriginal households are not necessarily demarcated by the physical boundary of a dwelling. While related household members may eat together, they might not do so, nor will they necessarily sleep in the same house. Aboriginal households also have porous social boundaries reflecting highly dynamic life cycles. In such circumstances, one difficulty lies in pinpointing the relationship between membership and household economic organisation. Little research has been carried out on the life cycle of Aboriginal households and how it relates to household composition. Even less research has been conducted on associated aspects of economic organisation within households.

Ethnographic case studies consistently report highly mobile elements of the Aboriginal population travelling within a social network. This mobility occurs not only between towns, settlements and outstation, but also within a smaller orbit between camp-sites at an outstation, between related outstations, town camps, household dwellings within a community and so on. Aboriginal mobility plays a crucial role in determining the composition and viability of Aboriginal households. While Aboriginal mobility is much referred to in the literature (Young and Doohan 1989) few researchers have recorded detailed data on the actual numbers and networks involved. An exception is Taylor's (1988, 1990) survey in 1987 of Aboriginal households in Katherine. Taylor identified 201 Aboriginal households in Katherine and surveyed 145 households in the town and 44 in the surrounding town camps. He found that the visiting Aboriginal population was 'highly dynamic', both in terms of movement in and out of town and within the town. One-quarter of all Aboriginal households in Katherine had visitors on a more or less constant basis, while half had visitors once or twice a year. Taylor estimated that almost one-quarter, and on occasions up to one-third, of the Aboriginal population in Katherine consisted of visitors. These visitor rates increased the average number of people per dwelling from 5.4 to 7.8 persons (1987: 43).

In an earlier survey of Aboriginal housing needs in Katherine, Loveday and Lea (1985) estimated 800 Aboriginal visitors annually. They regarded this figure as an underestimate, if anything, and suggested at least 1,000 visitors to their 221 households. Visitor numbers of this magnitude will play an important role in determining the expenditure patterns of Katherine Aboriginal households. Loveday and Lea (1985: 90) point out that while most visitors stay for short periods of time, they often come in large numbers and severely tax the resources of the households they stay with, especially since visitors often did not contribute to household costs. Indeed, the burden to some households was such that they did not want a house with more living space simply because they could not afford the extra expenditure entailed by even more visitors (ibid: 92). In a similar vein, Ross (1987: 93) reported that extended family households in Halls Creek were continually short of money owing to the burden of providing food for the many extra people taking advantage of their house space.

The economic impact of high mobility on Aboriginal households has been observed by a number of researchers. Anderson (1982: 98, 143) referred to 'floating males' who went from household to household for meals at Wujalwujal. These men might stay within a given household for several weeks at a time, or for shorter periods, depending upon how long a household would tolerate a particular man, how much work he was doing, or how much money he was bringing in (ibid: 98). Smith (1980) described the mobility of 'marginalised' children and teenagers at an Aurukun outstation who lived by 'foraging' for meals at different camp sites and maintained erratic residence patterns. Altman (1982: 8) and Sutton (1978) mention the transient population of predominantly young men in Arnhem Land and in west Cape York who move between outstations. The level of mobility can be considerable, as evident from a survey of Western Desert outstations by Cane and Stanley (1985: 158-9) who found over half of the camps they visited entirely empty, temporarily vacated by resident households many of whom were travelling on ceremonial business and for social and economic activities. Bryant (1982: 95) observed that most Aboriginal households in a small Victorian country town had casual visitors staying nearly all the time, referring especially to the large contingent of mobile, single men who shifted from house to house. Dagmar (1982: 151) reported the financial burden to households in the Carnarvon region of Western Australia of the remarkably high number of visitors and drifters who, at one time or another, fell back on the meagre budgets of households with more permanent sources of income.



Detailed, ethnographic research on the dynamic social and economic nature of the Aboriginal household has been carried out by Finlayson (1991) at Kuranda, north Queensland. Finlayson concludes that mobility is a significant factor affecting the composition of Kuranda households and determining a cyclical pattern to their economic well-being. Some individuals appear to be always transient as they repeatedly move between households in surrounding communities. The impact of mobility was not limited to adults. Finlayson (*ibid*: 222) found that the changing residence of children had particular impact on the economic viability of welfare-dependent households because of the income often derived from their care. Whilst the 'host household' in Kuranda expected visiting members to be self-sufficient and economically independent, in reality this was rarely the case. Rather, in an already fragile domestic economy, non-contributing visitors significantly depleted the resources of a Kuranda household (*ibid*: 227).

Household is not a static concept and Aboriginal households in particular are characterised by considerable flux in membership, often being composed of a stable core with a highly mobile fringe of transient members. This dynamic picture of household membership represents a more accurate reflection of the nature of many Aboriginal households than indicated by a stable nuclear or even extended family definition. What constitutes 'usual residence' for highly mobile people presents an interesting question in itself. The standard approach taken by the Census is to allocate people who have no 'usual place of residence' with one; namely, the place of residence on census night. The ABS's exclusion from the HES of various classes of 'visitor', 'drifters' and 'floaters' results in the possible omission of a significant group of Aboriginal people from households where, according to available ethnographic evidence, their coming and going has a considerable impact on expenditure levels. These fluctuating fortunes cause a cycle of household fragmentation and reformation. The HES bias towards residentially stable households would exclude many Aboriginal households characterised by such dynamic life cycles and unstable membership.

A revised definition of household for the purposes of collecting expenditure and related income data, and for assessing the economic status of Aboriginal people, should include transient residents as members. In accordance with Finlayson's definition (1991: 194), the Aboriginal household comprises residents who are '... core members, together with those people who are short-term visitors and those who stay for specific periods of time'. The focus for a survey of Aboriginal expenditure would need to be double-edged: firstly, on the economic organisation of all individuals resident during a given reference period;

and secondly, on the household life cycle, to document the economic relations of members with each other over time and to obtain an estimate of overall visitor pressure on the core household over the full period of the survey.

### **Households: the basic Aboriginal economic unit?**

The HES is premised on the assumption that the household, in its various manifestations, is the basic economic and social unit within society. The key issue is whether 'household', as defined by the ABS, is the equivalent economic unit to be considered in an assessment of Aboriginal expenditure. While household is a useful concept for referring to the physical realities of a dwelling and thereby to the individuals living there and their financial arrangements, research studies suggest that it is not the most important or basic Aboriginal economic unit.

Finlayson (1991: 199) argues that Kuranda households are best described as combinations of separate economic units sharing a common residence. Several economic units may form a household having been drawn together by kinship links, marriage ties and economic need. A Kuranda household typically comprises sets of these economic units: such as a mother and some of her children, childless couples, single individuals, or groups allied through marriage, ties of friendship and common history (ibid: 202). Households may consist of one of these economic units, but changes over time mean that they are more commonly characterised by a collection of such units.

Contrary to the popular notion of Aboriginal households as communistic and egalitarian, where members share resources easily and equally, Finlayson's data emphasise that the economic units within households do not necessarily share resources and do not all contribute to the common financial costs of managing the dwelling itself. Even amongst core residents, joint contributions to household finances are not always regularly given. Most household members take the attitude that their incomes (welfare in large part) belong exclusively to themselves (ibid: 199). The pattern of sharing food and other resources within Kuranda households is determined by kinship and social alliances between particular economic units. People without cash incomes may be financially supported to a certain extent by others, but such support cannot be relied upon for long periods. The result, Finlayson notes (ibid: 207), is that some individuals live a 'maverick lifestyle' depending on other households for food, money, cigarettes and so on. In this manner, members of an impoverished economic unit within one household will

form vital economic alliances across several households. These extra-household economic networks can be more significant determinants of household expenditure capacity than intra-household economic organisation. Finlayson's ethnographic data clearly indicate that the Aboriginal household is not the kind of cohesive economic and social unit it is commonly characterised as being within ABS definitions. An analysis of Aboriginal expenditure at Kuranda would require quantitative data to be obtained at the level of the smaller economic sub-units within households and especially of their expenditure relations across different residences.

Finlayson's findings are supported by other researchers. Gerrard (1991) found that the pattern of internal residence within Kunibidji households at Maningrida was one where the occupants split into domestic units, each largely autonomous with respect to the use of their incomes and the purchase and consumption of food. Like the economic units within Kuranda households, the units composing Kunibidji households do not automatically pool their resources and might have their strongest economic and kin ties with other households. To treat the residents of a Kunibidji household as one unified economic unit would be inappropriate and produce misleading data.

Using information from a survey of Alice Springs town campers, (Rowse 1988) questions the appropriateness of the standard notion of household. Whilst 'household' may be useful as an administrative concept deriving from the physical, political and financial realities of 'the house', Rowse concludes from his analysis of payments by town campers for food, electricity and rent, that they do not behave as cohesive households in the organisation of their finances. Rather, the most common strategy for paying electricity bills was for residents to wait until cut-off is imminent or actual and then seek contributions quickly from a number of people who are not necessarily members of the household (ibid: 59). Likewise, with rental payments, Rowse (ibid: 60) found that almost one-third of payers were not officially responsible tenants nor even recorded members of households, yet they still paid some rent. The appropriate economic unit amongst the town campers, Rowse (ibid: 62) argues, is not the household but wider social groupings which overlap the boundaries of dwellings. In the Alice Springs town camps, households do not function as the basic units of 'common housekeeping arrangements', nor as the units for 'common provision of food and other essentials of living' as defined by the ABS (1986: 3). As with Kuranda and Kunibidji households, the assumption that 'many items of expenditure such as food, accommodation and household goods and appliances relate to the

household as a unit' (ABS 1986: 1) is not borne out amongst Alice Springs town campers.

In a similar vein, Anderson's (1982) research at Wujalwujal, led him to conclude that when considering the functioning of such an economy '... the individual household cannot be truly isolated for analysis'. Even if the extended family nature of a household is granted, he argues it cannot be assumed that '... because members of a household live and eat together they also form an autonomous economic unit' (1982: 143). Rather, direct observation of cooperation between households on food-gathering bush trips revealed that the effective economic unit at Wujalwujal was a 'group of linked households'. Members of these linked households not only undertook subsistence trips together, they also shared equipment such as boats, outboard motors, rifles, knives, spears and the hunting dogs needed for the trips and importantly, shared the resulting subsistence returns.

While Anderson refers to this network as 'linked households', Altman (1987: 182) writes of the household 'cluster' as the 'commensal unit' at Maningrida outstations. No single household, he reports, is able to control or restrict access to foods that it procures or produces, and households do not usually camp individually. Household subsistence returns are uncertain and cannot be predicted. Given few techniques for storing subsistence produce, when large game is successfully hunted, it is shared with a larger group than the household as a form of insurance in lean times (*ibid*: 118). The household cluster, on the other hand, does manage to restrict access to resources to some extent. Households within a cluster share a hearth or 'covered kitchen' (similar to Sansom's (1980) hearth group). Whenever market or bush foods are cooked they are shared primarily within the household cluster, except with large game which is distributed throughout the whole outstation. The households cluster is also the most common unit of consumption of market goods such as rifles, axes, knives, cassette recorders, fishing equipment and tarps. Such clustering helps ensure the ongoing economic viability of individual households and their economic units. It is the household cluster that is the 'minimal residential grouping' and the 'smallest viable economic unit' at Momega outstations, not individual households (Altman 1987: 102, 118).

In general, Aboriginal households do not operate as cohesive, discrete entities with respect to the organisation of their expenditure and cannot be satisfactorily isolated as the basic unit for collection and analysis of expenditure data. Rather, empirical research indicates that while 'the household' is certainly a useful concept for referring to the physical realities of a dwelling and the individuals residing there, many

Aboriginal households are compositionally complex and often characterised by a state of considerable flux in membership and by economic vulnerability. The private consumption of goods is not organised primarily at the level of household. Arrangements for the purchase and cooking of food, and for the payment of accounts important to the running of the dwelling are often organised at a level other than the household. Smaller, discrete units within households act as the primary economic units for the consumption of resources and management of finances. However, Aboriginal mobility and poverty often means that the continuing financial viability and expenditure capacity of these smaller units are heavily dependent upon support from outside the household. Access to resources and cash by the individuals in these units occurs via social and kinship links to economic units in other households. These extra-household economic relations, and in particular those between 'household clusters' or 'linked households', appear to be more significant determinants of the effective expenditure capacity of many Aboriginal households than intra-household economic relations. Household clusters and the economic linkages between them are the appropriate economic units with respect to determining Aboriginal expenditure levels and patterns. Regional and cultural variations which influence household characteristics, together with the level of individual and household income, determine the extent and importance of these clusters.

### **The role of cash redistribution in Aboriginal expenditure**

Empirical research indicates that cash redistribution, though difficult to quantify, represents an extremely important set of transactions between the economic units within households and across households, and plays a vital role in determining Aboriginal expenditure levels. However, irregular cash gifts are not counted by the ABS as income to, and expenditure by, households.

Anderson (1982) concluded that linked households were particularly important economic units in terms of cash-sharing for expenditure purposes. A striking feature of the Wujalwujal cash economy was the great difference in levels of household income and expenditure, and the fact that these differences were not directly reflected in household living standards. The reason for this, Anderson argued, was that linked households were able to ameliorate cash differences by sharing income. For those households shopping only at the local store, 45 per cent of income remained unspent. This immediate surplus was distributed primarily within linked households via gambling and cash gifts. Cash

distribution at Wujalwujal helps explain the ability of some households to spend more than they earned as income.

There are considerable difficulties in measuring cash flows between Aboriginal people, even within small, isolated communities. Aboriginal people are discreet about cash transfers which may travel from giver to receiver via circuitous routes, owing to kinship restrictions, rules of etiquette and desire for privacy (Altman 1987: 155). Altman (*ibid*) is, to date, the only researcher to quantify this informal cash distribution. Over a prolonged period at Momega outstation, Arnhem Land, Altman recorded all cash transactions including income and expenditure, savings, gambling transfers and other kinds of cash giving and receiving. Momega residents showed a distinct preference for sharing cash rather than purchased goods. These cash transfers most often occurred when spending took place with the arrival of the supply truck or boat. Expenditure at Momega averaged about 78 per cent of disposable income, recorded savings 6.5 per cent, and recorded transfers of cash by residents to others 5.8 per cent. A residual 9.5 per cent was taken up in unrecorded or 'invisible' transfers of money (Altman 1987: 62).

Cash distributions played a vital economic role amongst Momega residents. Like Anderson, Altman found considerable variability in household income. While all households had some form of positive monthly expenditure, when gross expenditure was subtracted from cash income some households were found to have negative net income. These were the households which were not receiving social security payments. In explanation Altman (*ibid*: 158-61) demonstrated that cash redistribution from positive to negative net income households was occurring. The effect of such transactions was to reduce income disparity and associated differences in expenditure capacity. Importantly, this distribution was primarily occurring within household clusters. Some households with low or negative cash incomes were found to be consistently supported financially by others within their cluster.

Similar, though less detailed reports on the crucial role played by Aboriginal cash distribution networks have been made by other researchers. The evidence points to the important role played by cash sharing in determining Aboriginal expenditure levels. At Yuendumu, Young (1981: 258) found that relatively high-income earners bought more consumer goods than those who depended on social security, but also used their cash to repay and establish obligations. The result was that income inequalities within the community did not necessarily correspond to large differences in ability to purchase goods (*ibid*: 258). In a study of Aboriginal diet at Kempsey, Sibthorpe (1988: 118) similarly reported

that income and spending were modified by a complex network of borrowing and repayment between both kin and friends. This cash network was used on a day-to-day basis and as a cushion against the hardship caused by large, irregular financial outlays (ibid: 118). Collman (1988: 98-9) reported a dependence on the Aboriginal cash network amongst town campers who pooled cash resources. Because the residents of one Alice Springs camp were 'collectively linked', they were able to bridge income fluctuations by sharing and developing patterns of assistance and credit (ibid: 99). Dagmar (1982: 155) described an informal network of cash distribution amongst the Carnarvon Aboriginal community which made it possible for some men and women to survive without any income at all for long periods. Carter (1988: 67) observed the strategies of 'sharing, gambling and pawning' in a coastal New South Wales Aboriginal community used to create economic flexibility in the face of severely limited resources, and Altman (1985: 87) noted that gambling in particular, served as an important mechanism for redistributing and accumulating cash at an Arnhem Land outstation.

Available data indicate that cash redistribution does not occur randomly as a result of some generalised ethic of reciprocity. Kinship and a range of historical ties are the key idiom used to initiate or refuse requests for cash and other resources. Altman (1987: 163) observed a large number of cash transfers, obtaining verified data for 72 cases. By far the greatest number (67 per cent) were to people within kin-related household clusters. Of the remainder, most were to meet particularly significant kinship obligations. Overall, cash gifts were directed along kinship lines: 49 per cent of transfers occurred between siblings, and between parents and offspring; 18 per cent between brothers-in-laws; 17 per cent between parents-in-law and sons-in-law; and the remaining 16 per cent variously between grandkin, and between aunts and uncles and their nieces and nephews (ibid: 161-3). Such sharing, or 'demand sharing' (Peterson 1991: 74), is subject to considerable strategic planning as individuals invoke a range of claims and obligations in order to gain access to cash and food resources. Altman and Peterson (1988: 81) report that the extent to which people are able to restrict the claims of others to their cash is primarily dependant on the degree of income variability between households. If cash is inequitably bestowed then it is more widely redistributed (like surplus game); if cash is equitably bestowed then there is only limited redistribution beyond the household.

Kesteven (1984) reported the same range of related people being involved in cash transfers at Oenpelli, Arnhem Land. Other writers (see Bell; Eckermann et al. 1984; Finlayson 1989, 1991; Ross 1987) have noted that social security transfers and other income are often viewed as

being either 'women's money' or 'men's money' and are not necessarily used as a contribution to the household within which the recipient is living. Peterson (1991: 83) argues that the non-affinal emphasis in cash distribution has in fact militated against the emergence of the household as the major economic unit.

Economic units within Aboriginal households are often reliant upon networks within an informal Aboriginal economy for their continued survival. In particular, the distribution of cash and other resources between linked households enables many individuals and households with nonexistent or low incomes to remain economically viable. The importance of the economic relations between linked households is highlighted by the process of cash redistribution.

### **Aboriginal subsistence: an income and expenditure item?**

The ABS does not include output from Aboriginal subsistence activities as income in the HES and therefore it is not seen as having a cash expenditure equivalent. However, researchers have commented that access by some Aboriginal groups to subsistence production introduces greater economic flexibility to their expenditure capacity.

Information on the contribution of subsistence production to the Aboriginal economy has primarily focused on outstations. Altman (1982, 1987) notes that bush foods accounted for approximately 81 per cent of protein intake at Momega outstation, Arnhem Land. Meehan's (1982) research in Arnhem land indicated a figure of similar magnitude. However, there are marked regional differences in the contribution of subsistence production (see Altman 1987; Blanchard 1987; Ellanna et al. 1988; Fisk 1985; Young 1981). Young (in Blanchard 1987) estimates that in central Australia bush food provides no more than about 20 per cent of food depending on environmental variations. Based on their observations of subsistence consumption in desert outstations in central Australia, Cane and Stanely (1985) estimate that bush food made up 23 per cent of the total diet. A similar estimate was made by Palmer and Brady (1988: 134) for the daily consumption of bush foods by outstation residents in the Maralinga region, which amounted to 22 per cent of total per capita daily consumption. However, the researchers (*ibid*: 40, 134) found that bush meat contributed a very important 66 per cent of daily meat consumption; a figure much closer to Altman and Meehan's calculations for the Top End of the Northern Territory. Harrison (1986: 155) reports that when Tiwi hunting was at its maximum during the dry season, approximately 25 per cent of meals had bush food as their



principal item. For those Aboriginal people living in more centralised settlements on Aboriginal land, Fisk (1985: 20-1) suggests that on average, only 5 per cent of food supplies came from subsistence production. Access to subsistence foods obviously depends on the residential location of people, as well as on a range of social and cultural factors.

The importance of subsistence production for Aboriginal standards of living in certain regions can be gauged when levels of cash income are taken into account. Taylor (1991) found that more Aboriginal men and women at Northern Territory outstations received lower levels of income compared to the wider Territory and Australian Aboriginal population. He noted though, that this did not reflect the supplementary imputed income available to many outstation residents from subsistence activities. Altman (1982, 1987) recorded an average per capita cash income at Momega outstation of \$64 per fortnight in 1979-80. He argued that cash income alone gives an inadequate guide to living conditions at Momega because cash only accounted for 36 per cent of estimated total income if subsistence was valued at its market replacement cost. Subsistence production was effectively the mainstay of the Momega economy relieving the pressures on low levels of cash income (Altman and Taylor 1989).

Apart from Altman and Meehan, most assessments of the importance of subsistence output are based on more short-term field observations, invariably of consumption of bush foods at meals or participation in hunting trips, as opposed to the systematic weighing and quantification of all subsistence production and consumption. Also, the information suffers from a bias towards remote communities, with little information available on the economic importance of bush foods for Aboriginal people in other geographic locations. Nevertheless, for some Aboriginal groups subsistence production remains a part of their preferred lifestyle and correspondingly influences their cash requirements and expenditure patterns.

Reliance on quantifying cash expenditure as the primary means of assessing Aboriginal command over commodities can be misleading if subsistence production and exchange are overlooked. Including the possible value of subsistence production allows for a more appropriate assessment of Aboriginal cash expenditure patterns. In many cases subsistence input may be minimal. In other cases, it helps alleviate the economic hardships associated with dependence on low levels of cash income, often from welfare sources, allowing a greater degree of flexibility in cash expenditure.

### **An Aboriginal expenditure survey: some methodological issues**

It is unlikely that Aboriginal expenditure data of the kinds discussed above will be obtained via the HES, in which case a separate Aboriginal expenditure survey may be required. Four main methodological issues that are relevant to the conduct and design of such a survey are briefly raised here. These are the nature of the Aboriginal household; the role of cash redistribution; the economic significance of subsistence activities; and the cultural and social issues affecting survey design.

The definition of household used by the ABS is inappropriate for application to Aboriginal economic and social circumstances. Related concepts and coverage rules for categories like 'spender', 'visitor' and 'usual residence', and the sampling bias within the HES mean that data collected by the ABS will primarily cover residentially stable, urban Aboriginal households. Whilst Aboriginal households (taken as all members of a particular dwelling at any given time) obviously provide a useful visible focus for an assessment of Aboriginal expenditure, the precise nature of constituent economic units and their related financial management, and the economic relations between linked households, must also be investigated. An Aboriginal expenditure survey would need to include the possibility for estimating the nature of cash linkages between economic units within a household and between linked households. A longer time-frame for collection of such data would need to be built into an Aboriginal survey in order to account for special features of Aboriginal households like high mobility (often linked to seasonality) and associated fluctuations in income and expenditure.

Cash redistribution is significant in determining the expenditure levels and patterns of many Aboriginal households and should be quantified in an Aboriginal survey as an expenditure and income item. However, it is clear from the discussion above that the cash incomes of many Aboriginal people do not always reflect their true command over goods and services. Reliance on quantifying cash expenditure as the main means of assessing Aboriginal economic well-being can be misleading if subsistence production and exchange are ignored in those situations where they are significant. Including the economic value of subsistence production within an Aboriginal expenditure survey would allow for a more appropriate assessment of expenditure patterns. In many cases this subsistence input may be minimal; in other cases it may potentially alleviate the economic hardships associated with low cash income status.

A separate survey would need to be based on a special stratified sampling of the Aboriginal population to reflect its geographical distribution, and

appropriate methodology and specific questions would be required to reflect Aboriginal cultural heterogeneity. Cultural and social factors determining Aboriginal expenditure will need to be thoroughly investigated in order to construct a survey design appropriate to Aboriginal concepts and behaviour, that will accurately report their economic status. There may be problems in using survey-based and aggregate data research techniques when looking at Aboriginal economic behaviour. Such problems could surface, for example, in the comparability of figures from different geographic and cultural settings, and in judgements made as to what constitutes 'normal' levels of expenditure.

An expenditure survey is intrusive and burdensome. It raises issues of confidentiality and ownership of information that will need to be seriously addressed. Questionnaire formats, interview techniques and field delivery will need to be culturally sensitive and pre-tested. Questionnaires, whilst perhaps onerous, nevertheless allow for the collection of comparative information and may prove effective if filled in with help from local Aboriginal fieldworkers over a longer period of time. If bureaucratic and political recognition of the considerable value of Aboriginal expenditure data to policy and programs aimed at improving the economic well-being of Aboriginal people is forthcoming, then a concomitant and imperative commitment by Aboriginal communities and organisations to a comprehensive expenditure survey may emerge.

### **Conclusion and policy implications**

HES data have played a central role in informing several important government initiatives and policies. Government assessments of the spending patterns of Australian households have been used to determine the appropriateness and adequacy of income support payments and to identify household types that are economically vulnerable. Likewise, government reviews of taxation policy, of the adequacy of social security programs, of the equity of income distribution, and of the impact on households of changing economic conditions all rely heavily on HES quantitative data. Data from the HES are also used for establishing the standard 'basket of goods' that forms the basis of the Consumer Price Index, and are used in national accounts estimates for the measurement of private final consumption expenditure. Assessment of expenditure levels provides a complementary perspective to income. It enables a partial measure of household command over goods and services, especially where income is hard to define and measure (ABS 1990a: 8). Patterns of

household expenditure not only indicate relative economic inequality and money wealth, they also reveal a great deal about cultural values reflected in obligations to consume in various ways, and about the extent of individual and household incorporation into wider economies (see Gregory and Altman 1989: 175).

Given the comparatively low levels of Aboriginal income and employment (see Tesfaghiorghis and Altman 1991), it is equally important to determine the costs of living and the impact of changing economic circumstances for the Aboriginal population. The availability of quantitative expenditure data would enable assessments to be made of the relative costs to different Aboriginal households of: living in remote communities, town camps, in rural towns or city suburbs; of purchasing basic necessities and essential services; of using education and health facilities; of their housing, transportation and of rearing children. Data on these costs would also allow comparison with the expenditure levels and patterns of other Australian households. There are currently no quantitative data, comparable to the HES, which enable a cross-sectional analysis of Aboriginal household expenditure levels and patterns, or a comparison with the non-Aboriginal Australian population. Accurate indicators of poverty and of the standard of living actually achieved by the Aboriginal population require direct measurement of their expenditure capacity and patterns.

The analysis presented here of the conceptual, methodological and cultural issues related to obtaining Aboriginal expenditure data has wider policy implications. Government policy and associated programs oriented toward improving the economic well-being of Aboriginal people, need to be directed to both the appropriate units within households and to linked household clusters. Focusing programs at the 'community' level may be inappropriate and overlook the marked variations in economic status between households as a result of their differing composition, dependency burdens and levels of income. Assessments of the impact of incomes on household expenditure capacities, made on the basis of combining all household earnings and welfare payments (see, for example, Commonwealth of Australia 1991: 391), can be extremely misleading. Such assessments are based on the erroneous assumption that the income of all household members is contributed to, and shared within, the household. The research reviewed above indicates that this is by no means the case. When sharing of resources and distribution of cash does occur, it may well be only within a particular economic unit in a household, or directed to specific individuals in other households. The evidence suggests that low-income Aboriginal households remain viable because of financial

support from members of other linked households, rather than primarily from the financial contributions of their own members.

Cash redistribution networks are significant in determining the expenditure patterns of many Aboriginal households. Redistribution has implications for government policy and programs. For example, at the same time as cash sharing extends the income and expenditure capacity of some Aboriginal households, it can also limit the further expenditure of those household members providing the cash. For such households, the burden of supporting others may act to further restrict their ability to improve their own economic status and may limit incentives for greater involvement in the mainstream economy. Assessments of the appropriateness and impact of government programs aimed at improving the economic well-being of Aboriginal people could be considerably enhanced by the analysis of Aboriginal expenditure data.

It is unlikely that Aboriginal expenditure data will ever be obtained via the HES. A separate Aboriginal expenditure survey may be required. As it stands, the HES overlooks special characteristics of the Aboriginal population by subjecting it to the same assumptions and techniques used for the rest of the Australian population. The Aboriginal population is extremely heterogeneous, with people living in a variety of geographical and cultural circumstances. These variations, together with differences in household type and size, extremely dynamic household life cycles, and poverty, create significant differences in expenditure levels and patterns between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households. Quantitative expenditure data are needed to clarify the nature of the economic variations within the Aboriginal population and the causes of their low economic status as measured by formal social indicators.

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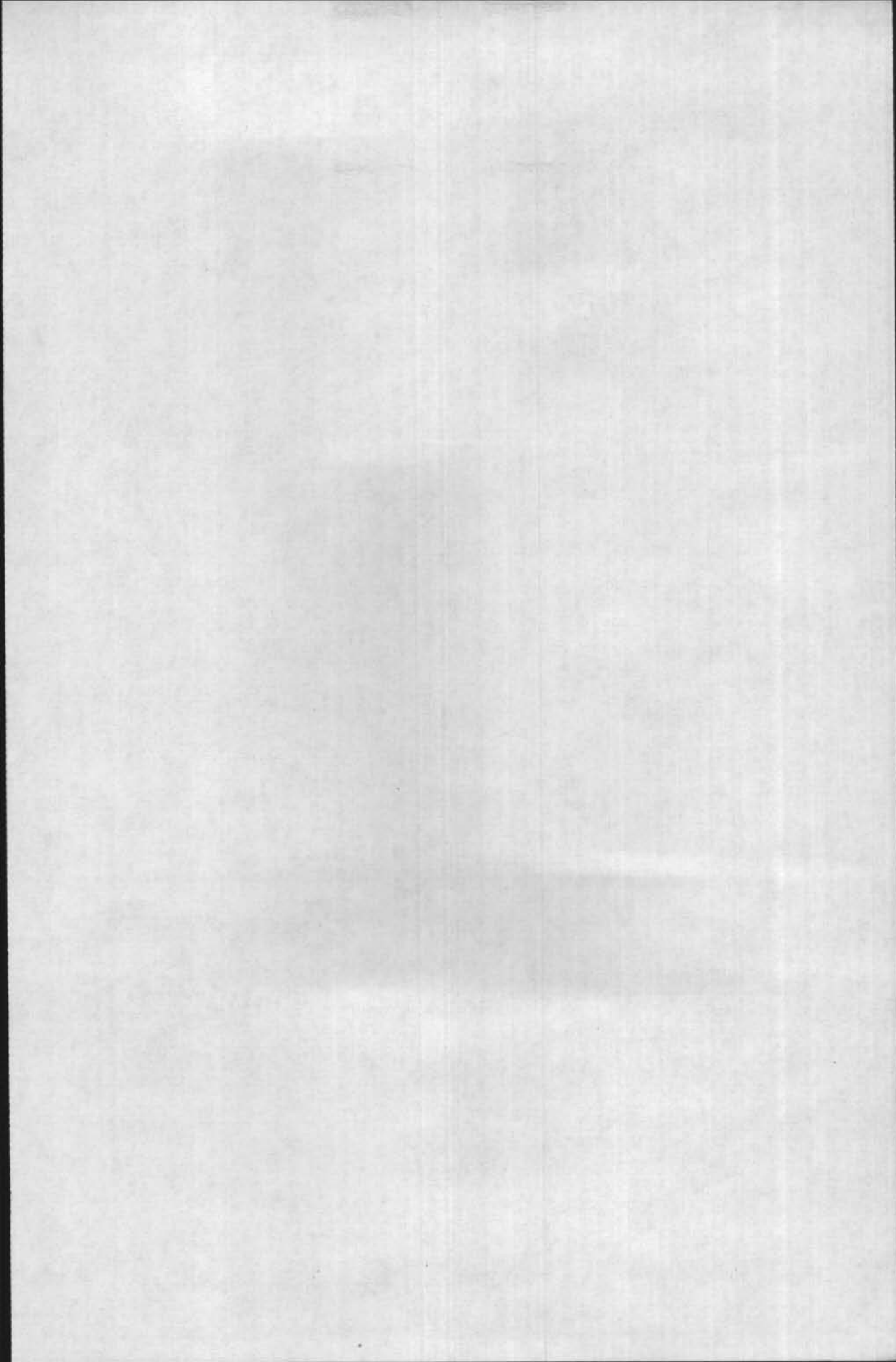
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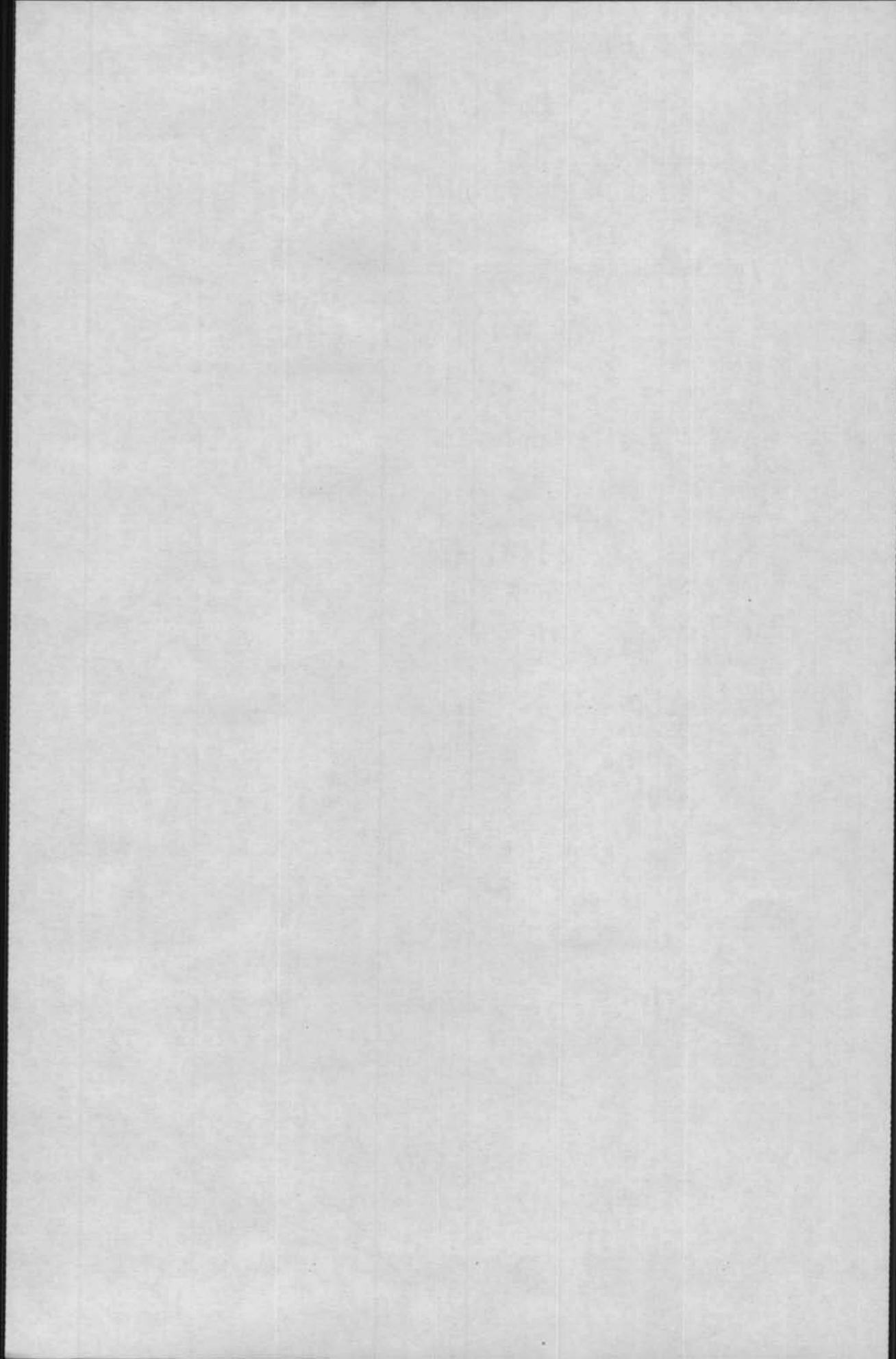
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