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## The National Census of Deaf Persons

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## THE NATIONAL CENSUS OF DEAF PERSONS

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JEROME D. SCHEIN, Ph.D.

By the time you read this, you may have already assisted the Census in its efforts to locate *all* deaf persons. The National Census of Deaf Persons, you will recall, is the first attempt in 40 years to determine the number and characteristics of the deaf population of the United States. Earlier studies have been limited to states or smaller areas or have merely been "guesstimates" based on the 1930 Decennial Census of the United States or the 1935-36 National Health Survey.

The present Census is methodologically complex. The first step is to gather as many names and addresses of deaf persons as possible. The resulting list will then be verified by mailing a questionnaire to every person on the list. Then a sample household survey of the entire United States will be made to determine the extent to which the enumeration is complete. Finally, samples of verified deaf persons will be interviewed to get the detailed information on vocational, educational and related topics. But we must proceed step by step.

The Census, as you may know, has been gathering names and addresses of deaf persons from many sources. Rehabilitation agencies have been particularly helpful in locating the disadvantaged deaf persons who seldom join established organizations and so often are not known to the larger deaf community. If you have not sent your list of deaf persons known to you, please do so during January, 1971. It is possible that you may significantly add to the Census count with your contribution of names and addresses.

Since list building is nearly concluded, the Census now turns to you for a different kind of assistance --- the kind you are highly qualified to give. During January, 1971, forms will be mailed to every person on the Census list. The questionnaire is very simple and should only take five minutes or less to complete. But some people have gotten into the habit of ignoring mail appeals. We cannot blame them; the mails have been abused too often in the past. So we need your cooperation in urging *everyone* who receives a Census questionnaire to return it.

This step in the Census is vital because it is the only means by which we can validate our list. If we do not receive a reply from someone to whom we mail a questionnaire, we cannot be certain that the person is alive, deaf and at the address we have for him. Our only alternative, if the questionnaire is not returned, is to take the person off the list.

It is equally important that hearing persons also return questionnaires they may receive. We know that some persons with little or no hearing impairments must be on our list. To remove them, we need their responses to the questions about their hearing. The reasons that it is so important for them to return their questionnaires are both statistical and economic. Statistically, the responses from those who are not deaf will aid us in estimating the overall efficiency of our procedures, as well as providing some information about affiliation patterns in the deaf community. Economically, a response to the first questionnaire saves the cost of mailing follow-up questionnaires --- no small matter. We will repeat mailings until the probability of getting any answer approaches zero. From the foregoing discussion, you can see why. You can also see why we are asking you to encourage anyone who receives a questionnaire to return it promptly. (Incidentally, *every* questionnaire received should be returned. We hate to admit it, but our computer is not infallible. It will not match two entries for a person whose entries have small differences in the spelling of his name; e.g., John Smith and Jack Smith may be the same person. Even more difficult to match are girls who become married; both their maiden and married names may be on the list. Naturally on the questionnaire addressed to the nickname "Jack" (for John) or to the no-longer-appropriate maiden name of a lady now married, the person misaddressed should note the correct spelling and or the

present correct address. We would only know about these duplications after we get back both corrected questionnaires.)

There is another important way you can aid the Census. Some deaf persons cannot read well enough to complete the questionnaire. Your assistance to them in answering the questions is absolutely all right. The Census is seeking information, not opinions. By reading the questions to an illiterate person, you make it possible to get the correct information about him.

In several test mailings of over 1,000 Census forms, we have uncovered some problems which people have in responding to the questions asked. Here are the more common difficulties (refer to Figures 1 and 2 for front and rear views of the Census form):

*Mailing Address.* (See Figure 1.) Be sure to make any corrections, even small ones, if the person's name, street address or zip code are not exactly right. Sometimes the form will arrive in a household with both hearing and deaf family members. If so, the questionnaire should be completed for the person to whom it is addressed, *even if that person is not deaf*. There is space on the other side of the form to put in the name of any deaf family member who does not receive one. Particular confusion arises when a hearing parent of a deaf child receives the form and assumes, incorrectly, that it was intended for his child. The parents should respond for themselves if a form is addressed to them. They can then add their children's names at the end of the questionnaire.

All of the following items appear on the other side of the Census form (Figure 2):

*Names.* Be sure first names are entered first. There are a number of people who have "two-way" names; e.g., Frances Dale and Dale Frances. For married women, the maiden name should be entered in place of the middle name; e.g., Miss Sara Jean Smith would write in Sara Smith Jones after her marriage to Mr. Jones. That will help us eliminate the duplication, if any, under her maiden name. People who do not have a middle name should draw a line over the space to show that it was intentionally left blank.

*Birthdate.* No problem.

THE NATIONAL CENSUS OF DEAF PEOPLE

NATIONAL CENSUS OF THE DEAF

All information received is kept confidential. Names and addresses will not be published or used for any purpose except for the census. PLEASE PRINT

Please give the following information about the person to whom this form is addressed:

A. NAME  
12-19 FIRST 20-29 MIDDLE (Maiden, if married) 30-41 LAST

B. BIRTHDATE  
44-45 Month 46-47 Day 48-49 Year

C. 50 SEX  
 Male  Female

D. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (if any)  
51-59 NUMBER (if any)

E. 60 COLOR OR RACE  
 White  Negro or Black  
 Spanish-American (Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, etc.)  
(4-7) Other: which?

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PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT HEARING FOR THE WAY YOU HEAR WITHOUT A HEARING AID.

1. Please tell how well you hear by marking ONE of the statements below for EACH ear.

61 a. IN LEFT EAR (without hearing aid)  
 1 My hearing is good  
 2 I have a little trouble hearing.  
 3 I have a lot of trouble hearing.  
 4 I am deaf.

62 b. IN RIGHT EAR (without hearing aid)  
 1 My hearing is good.  
 2 I have a little trouble hearing.  
 3 I have a lot of trouble hearing.  
 4 I am deaf.

2. Be sure to answer every question either yes or no. Answer the way you hear without a hearing aid.

63 a. Can you usually hear and understand what a person says without seeing his face if that person whispers to you from across a quiet room?  Yes  No

b. Can you usually hear and understand what a person says without seeing his face if that person talks in a normal voice to you from across a quiet room?  Yes  No

c. Can you usually hear and understand what a person says without seeing his face if that person shouts to you from across a quiet room?  Yes  No

d. Can you usually hear and understand a person if that person speaks loudly into your better ear?  Yes  No

e. Can you usually tell the sound of speech from other sounds and noises?  Yes  No

f. Can you usually tell one kind of noise from another?  Yes  No

g. Can you hear loud noises?  Yes  No

3a. How old were you when you began to have serious trouble hearing or became deaf?  
64  
 1 At birth  I was about ..... years of age. 67-69  
 2 Less than 1 year old  3 I'm not sure. (See 3b.)

b. I'm not sure, but I was:  
 4 Less than 6 years old  6 Between 12 and 18 years old  
 5 Between 6 and 11 years old  7 19 years old or over  
 8 I don't have serious trouble hearing and I am not deaf.

4. Are you now a student at a school or in a class for those with hearing problems, or a school or class for the deaf?  
69  1 Yes  2 No (go to question 5)  
 If yes, what is the name of the school? .....,  
 In what city and state is it located? ....., CITY STATE

5a. Are you now:  
70  1 Married  2 Widowed  3 Divorced  4 Separated  5 Never Married

b. 71 If you are now married, which of the following best describes your husband's (or wife's) hearing without hearing aid?  
 1 His (or her) hearing is good.  3 He (or she) has a lot of trouble hearing.  
 2 He (or she) has a little trouble hearing.  4 He (or she) is deaf.

6. If there are any deaf people living in your home who have not received a form like this one, please write their full names and ages here.  
72  
 Name..... Age.....  
 Name..... Age.....  
 Name..... Age.....

It is extremely important that this form be returned immediately. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION  
 Fold top third of form down; moisten seal below; firmly attach; no postage required.

# Schein: The National Census of Deaf Persons

## YOUR HELP NEEDED IN FIRST CENSUS OF DEAF PEOPLE IN FORTY YEARS !

If there is a mistake in your name or address, write in your correct name and address here:

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### WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE MORE THAN ONE QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Fill out one questionnaire completely.
2. Write your full name and address and mark the duplicate box below on the extra questionnaires.
3. Return all questionnaires to the Census.

DUPLICATE

Dear Friend:

This form is an important part of the first census of deaf people in 40 years, and the results will help in the planning of future services. Please help to supply the needed information.

The Census must know the hearing ability of every person to whom a form is addressed. Even if the person to whom this form is addressed is **NOT DEAF**, the form should be completed for him or her.

Some deaf children will be counted at the school or class they attend, some at home. If this form is addressed to the child's home, do not change the address to show the school address.

If you receive more than one questionnaire, **PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS AT TOP OF THIS PAGE.**

Those concerned with deafness realize how little is known about deaf persons in the United States. We hope that all citizens will cooperate with the Census.

**NOW PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS FORM.**

**SPECIAL NOTE TO PARENTS OF HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN**—If this form is addressed to you, please do not fill it out for your hearing impaired child. The Census needs to know about your hearing ability.



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
First Class Permit No. 39482—Washington, D.C.

NATIONAL CENSUS OF THE DEAF  
P. O. BOX 9041  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003



*Sex.* No problem.

*Social Security Number.* If the person has none, he should draw a horizontal line through the boxes.

*Marital Status.* No problem.

*Color or Race.* This is a difficult, but important, item. We are not trying to rewrite "The Races of Mankind." We are only trying to get the information badly needed about various groups of people, whether they be thought of as races or ethnic groups or by skin color. The box to check is the one which most closely fits the individual's self concept. There is no use in telling someone who considers himself to be a Chicano that he is also a Caucasian. We would prefer to know how many Spanish-American deaf people there are, but some will prefer to check "White" in response to this query, and that response is also correct. If "Other" is checked, the blank space should be filled in with whatever race or color is not covered by the preceding check boxes; e.g., American Indian, Japanese, Oriental.

*Rating of Hearing for Each Ear.* The only problem here is created by the person who checks only one box. We must have a rating for *each* ear.

*Hearing Scale.* Again, every item, a through g, should be answered either Yes or No.

*Age at Onset.* For many deaf persons it is difficult to know the exact age when they lost their hearing. They may have a progressive loss, in which case they should give the age at which they became deaf; that is, how old they were when they could no longer hear and understand speech. If a person is not sure when he became deaf, he should give his best estimate. Without the information on the age at onset, the individual cannot be classified.

*School Attendance.* We need to know if the respondent is a student. If the person is a student, we need the name of the school he attends and the location of the school. In that way we can adjust our records to the Annual Survey of Hearing Impaired Children and Youth.

*Spouse's Hearing.* This item calls for an estimate of the wife's hearing ability by the husband or vice-versa. It has caused no difficulty.

*Other Deaf Members of the Household.* The full name and age of any other deaf person living at the same address should be written here. If we do not already have the person on file, a Census form will be sent.

The preceding discussion covers the most common difficulties people have had in responding to the Census form. In general, the questions are self-explanatory and easily answered. When a person does have a problem responding, we hope you will help.

As you can see, you can make a valuable contribution to the success of the National Census of Deaf Persons. Encourage people to return their questionnaires, and help them to answer them when they need help. Please remember: there is not likely to be another nationwide effort like this one for another ten years. So let us make this Census a success.