

**A Rich Resource for Faculty Part 4:
Using the Census Bureau
to Support Your Research Agenda
Dr. Thompson's Mentoring Tip for the Week**

February 18, 2013

Dear Colleague:

Have you ever had trouble starting a writing project, because you couldn't even think of the first word to write? During the writing workshops that I conduct, I offer two strategies to deal with this problem. The first is to write anything that comes to mind without worrying about how it looks or sounds. Furthermore, you can begin writing the easiest section first, even if this means starting with the middle section or the conclusion. During the revising stage of the project, you can always improve what you've written.

The second strategy is to begin the essay, article, or book project with statistics about your topic. Several weeks ago, I resorted to this approach when I needed to find statistical information about Hispanic, Asian American, African American, and White K-12 students for a book that I'm co-authoring. I found what I needed on the U.S. Census Bureau website. A few weeks earlier, when I was revising a journal article about women in the criminal justice system, I relied on the same tactic. The article, which is scheduled to be published in 2013, includes detailed historical statistics about the number of African American women who have been incarcerated in the U.S. since the late 1880s, explains the reasons why women get trapped in the prison pipeline, and describes several sensational cases involving African American females. Because of the article's historical angle, my search for relevant information led me to archival documents, many of which

are on the U.S. Census Bureau website or in the historical decennial census series. By the time I finished writing the article, I had collected numerous reports, statistics, and government documents that I'll be able to use for multiple writing projects in the future.

By now, it should be clear that the main message that I want to share this week, is that you too may find a vast amount of useful information for your writing projects on the U.S. Census Bureau website. The following overview may be useful to you.

What will I find on the Census Bureau website?

The U.S. Census Bureau website (<https://www.census.gov/>) is divided into several categories: People, Business, Geography, Data, Research, and Newsroom. When you click on each heading, a detailed list of subtopics will appear. Clicking on the subtopics will lead you to statistics that you can use in journal articles, book projects, conference proposals, opinion-editorials, and grant proposals. For example, when I clicked on the “People” heading, the following subtopics surfaced:

- Age and sex
- Ancestry
- Birth
- Children
- Community
- Computer and Internet Use
- Deaths
- Disability
- Educational Attainment
- Families
- Fertility

- Foreign-Born
- Health Insurance
- Housing
- Immigration
- Income
- International Statistics
- Language Use
- Marriage and Divorce
- Poverty
- Race
- Redistricting and Voting Rights
- Same Sex Couples
- School Districts
- School Enrollment
- Veterans
- Well-Being

Clicking on one or more of the preceding topics will permit you to access numerous facts.

For example, when I clicked on “Educational Attainment,” I found tables pertaining to the 2012 educational attainment of Americans, as well as disaggregated tables about the educational attainment of Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and Asian Americans.

What additional types of data will I find on the Census Bureau website?

Clicking on the “Data” heading will provide you with additional data sources and subtopics, such as:

- Quick Facts

- American Facts
- Easy Stats
- Population Finder
- American Community Survey
- 2010 Census
- Economic Census
- Interactive Maps
- Data Tools
- Trainings and Workshops
- Catalogs and Publications

For example, clicking on “Quick Facts,” will expose a map of the United States and, allow you to select the states for which you’d like to retrieve specific geography, business, and people statistics. When I clicked on North Carolina, I learned that between April 2010, and July 2012, the state’s population increased by an estimated 2%.

How can I find some of the archival documents that you mentioned earlier?

Clicking on the link:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/hiscendata.html> will allow you to access various “Historical Census Reports” from 1790-2000. These reports contain information about families, states, literacy, poverty, the criminal justice system, school attendance, birth and death rates, agriculture, business, banking, housing, government, etc. during the aforementioned time periods. For example, by downloading the “*Report on Crime, Pauperism, and Benevolence in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part 1,*” I learned that in 1890, 82,329 adults were incarcerated nationwide.

Does the Census Bureau offer professional development opportunities for researchers?

The Census Bureau does offer trainings and workshops. When I clicked on the “Data” heading, and scrolled down to “Trainings and Workshops,” I learned:

Free [training opportunities](#) offered by the Census Bureau give you a jump-start on getting the statistics needed for writing business plans, grants, research papers, community revitalization proposals, and many other important purposes.

Courses are available online, through webinars and in person around the Washington, D.C. area, or in a location near you. For more information, contact a training coordinator in [your area](#), or call the Education, Training and Dissemination Office at 301-763-4308.

Conclusion

I hope that you’ll use the extensive information on the Census Bureau website, and in its archival reports to advance your research agenda. In the meantime, hang in there, have a great week, **keep writing**, and be on the lookout for next week’s mentoring advice.

Blessings and peace, GT