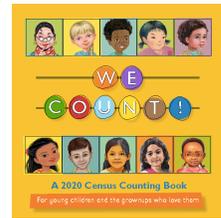


## Evaluation of the WE COUNT! Program Designed by Faith Lamb Parker, PhD



### Introduction

In response to the undercount of children ages 0-5 in the 2010 Census, Simply Put set out (with funding from the Taub Family Foundation) to translate the extensive research on why and how young children were missed or miscounted, into a pedagogically informed adult learning and early childhood literacy program. Our goal was to create an evidence based, culturally sensitive book, program, and implementation strategy that offered engaged learning experience for service providers, families, and young children so everyone in “hard-to-count communities” could confidently and correctly participate in the 2020 Census, and learn the “value of counting” in its multiple meanings.

The concrete, evaluated and replicable community strategy we created has the following components:

- The WE COUNT! Book: A fully illustrated, inexpensive, family counting book, in 15 languages, that is an engaging, clear, consistent, and culturally sensitive tool for children and adults that explains how and *why* everyone counts in the 2020 Census and a democracy.
- A “Trusted Messenger” Training Program for community based organizations’ “trusted messengers” that families already know, that can be implemented in 15-20 minutes, and integrated into existing services, so that providers have the information, a planned intervention, and the confidence they need to support families’ accurate count in the 2020 Census. (trusted messengers include: early childhood educators, childcare providers, home visitors family support workers, faith leaders, peer support etc.)

The Training of Trainers is a 2 hour, online, live, course where participants will learn and discuss with one another in order to:

1. Understand why a correct and complete census count is important, and why it can be complicated for many families to take the census.
  2. Know the difference between telling families to take the census and opening a safe space to have an authentic conversation about complexities and concerns around the census and being counted.
  3. Practice and plan with peers how to:
    - GIVE each family a gift of the WE COUNT! book - individually, or within a group setting.
    - OPEN together to do a “bookwalk,” and find answers to Census questions and concerns.
    - DECIDE together how to count their household.
    - OFFER support as they complete the form in writing, online or by phone.
  4. Gain clarity, sense of purpose, and the confidence needed to step into the role of “trusted messenger” for families taking the 2020 Census.
  5. Replicate the training for colleagues and other service providers in the community.
- An event plan with downloadable promotion tools, so community based organizations can invite families to a fun learning event they will want to attend, where they will have access to free wifi and support as they take the 2020 Census. This intervention can reach families who are unaffiliated with services, or can compliment the reading intervention

**Pilot Partners: Passaic County**  
 Passaic City Board of Education  
*Early Childhood Division*  
 Paterson Board of Education  
*Department of Early Childhood, Family and Community Outreach*  
 Paterson Library  
*Children’s Library Program*  
 Partnership for Maternal and Child Health NJ  
*Nurse Family Partnership & Healthy Families Home Visiting Programs*  
 4Cs of Paterson  
*Childcare Quality Agency*  
 Paterson Complete Count Committee  
 Paterson Education Fund  
 Urban Crisis Childcare  
 Greater Bergen Community Action  
*Head Start/Early Head Start*  
 Highland Family Success Center  
*Head Start/Early Head Start*  
 Success Center for Family Resources, Inc  
 Paterson Mayor’s Office

### The Evaluation Phases:

#### PHASE ONE: Literature Review and Community Research

- Read and understand the existing research on the past undercount of young children.
- Read and understand the future focused research and messaging on HTC communities, with a special focus on marginalized communities, immigrants and young children.
- Listen and learn with Paterson service providers and families about their 2020 Census concerns and questions and through discussion identify the structure and focus of the WE COUNT! book, Training Program and Event Plan.

#### Key Takeaways (ONLY Census related\*):

- It is difficult to create a simple message about how to count complex living situations
- Families are uncomfortable discussing complex or “unconventional” living situations because they feel they are the only one living that reality.
- Families were mistrustful of the government and as immigrants had witnessed government interventions that weighed heavily on their daily lives.
- Those that would be considered “trusted messengers” (ie. home visitors, family support workers, childcare providers, teachers) had seen families torn apart by ICE in Paterson. They were very wary of taking on the role of “trusted messenger” because they did not feel qualified to give advice.

#### PHASE TWO: Service provider train-the-trainer (TOT) 3- hour workshop

- To create and provide a training program that gives community service providers the tools, skills and confidence they needed to support families’ count in the 2020 Census.
- To create a safe space for service providers to decide if the role of “trusted messenger” was comfortable or even appropriate.
- To support authentic conversation between families and WE COUNT! trained trainers train other service providers

#### Key Takeaways

- Service providers had similar concerns and fears about taking the 2020 Census as the parents they serve, and having authentic conversations about their own concerns and fears enabled them to be confident and comfortable talking about the census with families.
- Following the WE COUNT! Training service providers’ felt very confident and comfortable acting as “trusted messengers” that could share accurate census information with parents and could train their colleagues using the TOT training materials.

#### PHASE THREE: WE COUNT! trained trainers – providing training to colleagues

- To evaluate and learn about the replicability of the training.

#### Key Takeaway

- There was no significant difference in the results of the pre/post training AND the pre/post parent intervention of those trained by Simply Put and those trained by trained trainers.

#### PHASE FOUR: Parent intervention and Pilot Event

- To test the WE COUNT! intervention with a single family or a group of families across Passaic County.
- To test the WE COUNT! event kit and plans in a local Head Start.

#### Key Takeways: One on one and group Implementation

- Families were glad to receive the book and accepted it as a valued gift.
- Service providers felt strongly that using the WE COUNT! book to initiate authentic conversations was instrumental in changing parents’ minds about taking the 2020 Census and about understanding how to count their household.
- According to service providers, the messages that were most effective with parents involved benefits to their children and community, and confidentiality in taking the census.
- Families who met in groups encouraged one another to talk about concerns and fears and to accurately figure out together who to count on their household’s census form.

#### Key Takeways: Pilot Event

- The Head Start that hosted the pilot event regularly markets to young families, so they were effective (and eager) to do outreach beyond their current families.

- Playing upon the art and spirit of WE COUNT, the Head Start was able to innovate and integrate the book and concepts into their programming with children and create new collateral material we will share with others. .

*Below is a synthesis of our evaluation of the WE COUNT! book and training program.*

**PHASE ONE:** Relevant Literature, Expert Information, Community Focus Groups, Book and Training Development  
 We used key findings on the census from Simply Put surveys and focus groups, and from additional outside research that specifically targeted families of young children from HTC communities. Our main sources were: Partnership for America’s Children and their researchers, Count All Kids, the US Census Bureau, NALEO, Dr. William O’Hare, Dr. Edward Kissam, Quadrant Strategies for Article 1, and GMMB for First 5 Association California. Altogether Simply Put’s research combined with this additional research informed the content of the book and training. Specifically, we focused on population at-risk of not being counted, why HTC communities are most vulnerable, the best strategies for engaging HTC communities, the best messaging to convince people to complete the census, and the best messengers.

We used a community-based participatory research method to gather data from direct service providers and parents from HTC communities in Passaic, New Jersey. For informational focus groups, we used adult learning strategies for format, structure, and process of these groups, and knowledge and expertise of how young children learn to develop the child-related content of the book itself.

The first focus group met in April 2019, when the citizenship question was still not settled. Questions centered around how much people knew about the census process and Census 2020, how comfortable they were in sharing information for Census 2020, and their likelihood of completing the 2020 Census for their household. Results indicated that at pre-focus group, about three-quarters of participants knew very little to nothing about the census and were very uncomfortable sharing information. Using an early draft of the WE COUNT! book for a deep discussion about participants concerns and fears about the 2020 Census, 88% said that they were now very likely or likely to complete the 2020 Census for their household.

The WE COUNT! book and training program were developed using focus group data and research findings. The training (approximately 2 hours) consists of several key objectives: 1) Understanding why a correct and complete census count is important, and why it can be complicated and frightening for many families; 2) Knowing the difference between telling families facts and asking them to take the census and having an authentic conversation about their concerns and fears; 3) offering concrete strategies on how to give each family a copy of WE COUNT! as a gift, reading the book together to find answers to census questions and concerns; deciding together how to count their household, and offering support as they complete the form in writing, online or by phone. These objectives are met through personal, experiential small group experiences that link staffs’ own concerns and fears to those of the parents they serve, and role playing to practice authentic conversations with parents using the WE COUNT! book as their source of accurate, clear information about why it is important to be counted, and how to accurately count complex households.

**PHASE TWO:** Service Provider Training of Trainers (TOT)

Thirty direct service providers from Passaic County, NJ representing 10 organizations serving families in HTC communities who were considered “master trainers” by their organization received Train-the-Trainer training in October 2019. A late draft of the WE COUNT! book was used for the training. By this time, most participants knew about the census and were planning to take it in 2020. However they were much less confident that they could answer questions and concerns from other staff and parents. Answering at pretest on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “not at all confident” and 10 being “very confident, most of the participants (two-thirds) marked a 5 and under.

At posttest, participants were confident or very confident that they could answer questions and concerns of other staff and parents, with 100% of participants marking 8-10 on the scale. They also felt that they could confidently

serve as trusted messengers to explain the Census and address families' concerns, and felt that they would be comfortable providing the training they received to other staff at their organization.

Participants felt that WE COUNT! training constituted a different and helpful approach for talking about the Census with families, and realized that they had an important role to play in supporting parents to take the census. They acknowledged that The WE COUNT! book was culturally sensitive and that parents would identify with the illustrations and the census stories portrayed. They also felt that parents would find the dual purpose of the book, a book for their child and a book for themselves, very exciting. All participants agreed that "having the book as a tool to use helps a lot."

In terms of the structure and process of the training, participants felt that the entire training was helpful and useful, and that it could easily be turn keyed to get more social workers, family workers, and health providers involved. They especially liked the "respectful," "clear," and "comfortable" way the information was presented, the use of the book as a tool to brainstorm with the group and in small groups to locate relevant information and answers to questions.

A big take-away for participants was learning how to ease parents' concerns on confidentiality and the importance of taking the Census for their families and community.

PHASE THREE: Training of service providers by WE COUNT! Trainers (attendees of the Simply Put "TOT") There were no significant differences in the outcomes of the TOT training by Simply Put and the training given by the WE COUNT! Trained trainers and no significant differences in the responses from parents to master trainers who received training from the Simply Put team and those who were trained by the WE COUNT! trained trainers suggesting that the training may be easily turn-keyed to service providers in the HTC communities.

PHASE FOUR: Parent intervention (quantitative and qualitative)

Twenty-three service providers implemented the parent intervention using the 2nd draft of the WE COUNT book with parents. Fifteen had been trained by Simply Put and 8 trained by WE COUNT! Trained trainers: 15 family service providers/family workers, 5 social workers, 1 director, 1 children's librarian, and 1 infant-toddler specialist. All trainers work with families in HTC communities.

A total of 103 parents/guardians participated in the intervention: 99 females and 4 males. Seventy-seven people participated individually and 26 participated in small groups. Fifty-six people ethnically identified as "Spanish," 17 as Mexican, 10 as African American, 9 as Middle Eastern, 5 with countries in South America or the Caribbean, 2 identify with countries in Northern Africa, 1 as Italian, and 1 as Bangladeshi. The countries represented were Mexico, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Poland, Peru, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Bangladesh, and the United States. Fluency of the English language spoken range from 1 to 5 with 1 being no English and 5 being fluent, with Mexican participants as a group having the lowest fluency rate; all other groups spanned the 1-5 continuum. Fifty-two participants received information in Spanish, 40 in English, 9 in Arabic, 1 in Bengali, 1 in a combination of Arabic and English.

At pretest, 60% heard or knew little or very little about the 2020 Census scoring 5 or below out of 10; another 25 % knew nothing about the census scoring 1 out of 10. Fifty-two percent said they were likely or very likely to take the 2020 Census scoring 8, 9 or 10 out of 10. Forty-one% were unlikely or very unlikely to take the 2020 Census scoring 5 or less on a scale of 1-10. The top concerns or fears were the confidentiality of private information, immigration issues/ICE/deportation, they wouldn't know how to do it, or that it was too complicated.

At Posttest, 80% responded they would definitely take the Census (score 10 out of 10); 13% responded they would take the Census (score 8 or 9 out of 10); 7% responded that they were still not sure (score 7 or below; none scored below 5). Seventeen percent of participants counted their household wrong at pretest; of that number, 100% were able to figure out the correct number of household members at posttest. Ninety-nine percent found the book helpful; 99% will look at the book again; and 100% of participants think other parents would like to receive the book and learn about the 2020 Census.

Responding to the question: Is there anyone else that you would want to answer your questions or concerns that would help you decide to take the 2020 Census? 95% said that the book answered all their questions.

Responding to the question: Who will you tell about the WE COUNT! Campaign? Most mentioned family, friends, and neighbors; a few mentioned their school administration or health care professional, one answered, “my husband.”

Service Providers, in comparing small groups to individual conversations, commented that small groups allowed participants to voice their concerns, share stories about their families and how to count them, and debate why it was important to participate in the 2020 Census. Some participants who were in small groups took the opportunity to talk to those they didn’t know and left chatting with their new “friends.” Families who didn’t have documents preferred not to be visited by a census worker, but were willing [after the intervention] to receive help from a home visitor and complete the census form.

Participants commented [only the highest number of duplicate comments are mentioned here] that the book was easy to read, easy to follow and understand, gave clear explanations, with great scenarios that everyone could relate to. The book is colorful, with multicultural illustrations where they were able to “find themselves.” The information from the service providers was presented in a clear and easy to understand way that was “very informative,” very “insightful,” and breaks down what you need to know about the census, answering lots of questions and doubts about taking the 2020 Census.

*simply put is a social impact publishing, programming, and distribution non-profit that reaches neglected audiences in the US and around the world with critical information and innovative learning opportunities. Our mission is to give millions of adults tools, skills and opportunities to make positive change for themselves, their children and their communities. Parent’s voices lead the way. Listening, learning and creating with parents, providers, experts and communities we create books, media and programming together that fills gaps in the way educators, healthcare and social service providers support America’s most marginalized families. We have taken on issues related to the 2020 Census as an important project that resonates with our mission.*

*Originally funded by several family foundations in New Jersey to address the massive undercount of children in Passaic County, particularly its largest city, Paterson, we have now obtained funding from the Carnegie Corporation to take the WE COUNT! program across the country. live training of master trainers from partner organizations (TOT). We conducted the research for the program in four phases: literature review, initial field research, and finally parent intervention.*

#### **FAITH LAMB-PARKER, PH.D.**

Director - Research, Culture and Equity

Before joining simply put, Dr. Faith Lamb-Parker was a Senior Research Scientist at Bank Street College of Education. There she directed the Head Start National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness and then developed the Center for Culture, Race and Equity. Prior to 2011, Dr. Parker was Assistant Clinical Professor of Public Health at Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, where she conducted research/evaluation, taught child development and social policy, and directed the international and domestic practicum program. A well-respected researcher with a specialty in early childhood, family engagement, community-based design and programming, she is considered a leader in the intersection of families, education, social justice, and racial equity. Awarded multiple grants and contracts from the federal Department of HHS and private foundations, Dr. Parker has altogether led projects funded at over \$300 million during her career. She has over 25 years of experience in community-based research, where she uses her skills as a mental health professional to develop and implement evidence- based programs for disenfranchised communities, families, and children. She was the scientific director for the first 11 Head Start National Conferences beginning in 1991 and conducted every 2 years, funded by DHHS/ACF/OPRE, to promote evidence-based practice and policy for young children and their families for over 20 years. She created a research-to-practice journal for the National Head Start Association, the NHSA Dialog, and has authored numerous articles and chapters on Head Start, child outcomes, parent involvement, and advocacy strategies for very young children and their families. Since 2001, Dr. Lamb-Parker has been teaching and training internationally. She co-developed the first ever masters-level program in child development in Bangladesh, and gave training and technical assistance to a number of Early Childhood Development NGOs in Liberia and South Africa. Dr. Lamb-Parker presents at national and international

professional meetings on community-based participatory research, training, and advocacy focused on the health, mental health, and development of infants and young children and their caregivers in rural black townships in South Africa.