

THE ENUMERATOR RINGS THE BELL

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To statisticians it is axiomatic that not too much can be done to improve data through refinement or manipulation once they have left the pencil of respondent or recording interviewer. If this be accepted, it follows that those interested in census data will do well to take stock of the enumerator, that front line participant in the census taking process. As she mounts the steps and rings the bell, what does the census enumerator bring to the important task before her?

At one time during the Korean War we were told that it cost American taxpayers \$14,000 to put a combat infantryman into action, this including direct expenses of indoctrination, training, equipment, and transportation and the indirect expense of logistic support. While it costs considerably less to prepare an enumerator for her rounds, it does represent a significant part of the Census budget and the elements of this preparation may be worth attention of those who expect to use the statistical product.

First, you should understand that it is not by accident of circumstance that there is an enumerator there to ring the bell. Few citizens point for a career as census takers and many of those approached in 1960 will feel themselves too pre-occupied with day to day concerns, and often profitable part-time work, to take on full-time but temporary duties for two weeks or so. You may be sure that a vigorous recruitment campaign will have been necessary to produce that able and business-like enumerator on your doorstep. Diligent and dedicated effort, often on the part of a number of recruitment sources with appeals to patriotic duty, party loyalty, community and personal self-interest will be needed to produce enough qualified candidates for selection. The economic situation also explains why we refer to the enumerator in the feminine gender. Most of them we expect will be women, since employed heads of families can't afford to take such temporary posts.

You may not be aware that the enumerator who calls on you has passed a written examination designed to test her ability to understand written instructions and to read a map. This latter talent, incidentally, does not necessarily equate with literacy or a high I. Q. Its importance to clean-cut census taking makes it a "must" requirement. You can be assured that she has been sworn to hold in confidence the information which you provide the Census and you may expect her to wear her identification badge and carry her official portfolio. She is likely to be a resident of the area of her first assignment.

Your census enumerator will have had the benefit of a training program which is tailored more to her needs and specific responsibilities than in previous censuses. Two major shifts in procedure have made this possible, the first being

separation of the Census of Agriculture by several months in point of time so that enumerators next spring will have only the job of finding and reporting the population and the units which house them. The second change provides, in all but sparsely settled areas, a two-stage procedure of enumeration, the first concentrating on coverage and complete recording of items asked of all households and a later stage involving only a third of the enumerators in completing more detailed inquiries at a sample of units. This separation allows for specialization in training with more time devoted to method of canvassing, listing, recording sample identification, and reporting in Stage I. Similarly in Stage II it is feasible to concentrate on sample question concepts and follow-up procedures, building, of course, on enumerator's experience obtained in working through the initial stage.

Each enumerator in Two-Stage areas will receive nine hours of classroom training before embarking upon her initial assignment. It will be given in three-hour sessions on three successive days, allowing time for absorption. It will consist of oral presentation--exposition and reference reading, filmstrips and recorded interviews, class discussion and written practice exercises. In designing the program, the Bureau benefited from the advice of professional trainers on the most effective aids in forwarding the learning process. An attempt has also been made to take full advantage of the experience of prior censuses and pretests.

In addition to instruction on concepts and definition of population questions and housing items, the enumerator learns why we take a census, what her job is like, how to locate every possible housing unit and to assure herself that she hasn't missed persons within any household, how to check Advance Census Reports for complete and consistent information, and how to mark and care for schedules so that they will be properly read by FOSDIC, the electronic equipment which translates the data she has recorded through microfilm print to coded computer tape. She learns how to keep within her assigned territory, systematically canvassing, listing, and designating sample households in order of visitation, how to leave the Household Questionnaire at sample units, and how to transcribe information to FOSDIC schedules which will later be used in second stage operation. In order to make her work easier and more profitable (remember that most enumerators are paid on a piece rate) she is taught how to organize her materials for field work, how to manage callbacks, how to handle difficult respondents, and finally how to close out efficiently and with maximum high response.

She is further informed of the fact that her work will be periodically reviewed by her crew leader or (his assistant) field reviewer and is

told what her responsibilities are in connection with each such review. She knows that a further sample check of quality will be made in the field office before her work is certified for payment. She also knows that she may be released if her work is not satisfactory. Finally, she is fortified with knowledge of her rights under the law as a census taker, together with the obligations she has assumed under oath.

As she begins her assignment your enumerator will know that if she does well and finishes her appointed task with dispatch, she is likely to be tapped as a second stage enumerator, or to clean up incomplete assignments, or, if she lives in or near the field headquarters city, as a clerk in the office on editing chores. If she is nominated for second stage enumeration by her crew leader and appointed after satisfactory check-out of her work, she will be given eight more hours of training on the detailed sample inquiries. This again will feature trainee participation. After viewing filmstrips and studying definitions, enumerators will practice reviewing Household Questionnaires which have been mailed in from their assigned area, will learn how to mark acceptable entries on the FOSDIC sample schedules and how to telephone or call at an address in person to complete information which has not been adequately furnished.

If you live in a more sparsely settled part of the country where road condition depends on weather, where levels of literacy and education are not as high and where scarcity of private or limited party telephone service rules out this means of follow-up, you may expect your enumerator to cover both 100% and sample questions (if you are the lucky fourth) in a single visit at your household. For this traditional census procedure, she will have trained four hours on four consecutive days, the content combining that taught in both sessions in the two-stage areas.

So much for your enumerator's personal preparation. Now for her logistic support which in this census has required planning in intricate detail.

She will report to one of 6,000 training locations which will be equipped to provide satisfactory classroom environment with provision for audio-visual aids. This space will have been donated usually by a school system, county or city government. It will be shared by two crews scheduled for morning and afternoon sessions. Here the enumerator will receive her portfolio weighing some 14 pounds fully packed with listing book, FOSDIC schedule books, blank questionnaires for sample household with "extra person" inserts where needed and envelopes addressed to the field office.

In addition there are individual census report forms for visitors enumerated away from their usual place of residence, and miscellaneous forms such as those used to give notice of close-out after several unsuccessful attempts at different times on different days. In such case, the enumerator will have secured as much of the 100% information as possible from neighbors, building superintendents, or other knowledgeable persons and will leave the form at the address indicating how many persons have been reported, inviting correction or amplification of fact. A parallel close-out form will be left at sample households transmitting the detailed questionnaire.

Her portfolio will also include her Enumerator's Reference Manual, indexed to provide ready answers for problems not covered in training class or to refresh her memory on items which failed to "stick." A workbook containing practice exercises to be completed during training is also provided, and finally, each enumerator receives a unique map picturing in detail the enumeration districts included in her assignment.

A less material, but nonetheless real, factor in enumerator support is the publicity which will be beamed at all Americans who read newspapers or magazines, listen to the radio, or watch television programs. This will endeavor to promote awareness that a census is being taken, that enumerators may be expected to visit every household and that citizens themselves have particular responsibilities and some advance homework to do in preparation for the enumerator's visit. Although nationwide publicity media in cooperation of the National Advertising Council make their services available to the Bureau, much of the detailed information of interest to local communities is distributed through the district field offices. Your enumerator's name will probably be listed in news stories appearing in the latter part of March, and she may even be included in a group picture or in a news photograph demonstrating a practice interview.

All of this care in selection, training, and preparation of material is back of your enumerator as she rings the bell. She is one of some 160,000 public-spirited Americans who will begin the nation's inventory on April 1, 1960. As a good citizen we expect that you will do your part in the Census by being a cheerful and ready respondent.

In fact, we shall welcome observations from this professional audience based on their family experience with the 1960 enumeration process, including suggestions and criticisms.