



MAR 30 2000

MASTER FILE

DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #M-2

MEMORANDUM FOR

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Attention:

Management Training Branch
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From:

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Subject:

Trip Report for Owyhee County, ID

On Monday, March 13 and Tuesday, March 14, 2000, I observed list/enumerate in Owyhee County, ID. I toured the Boise LCO on March 13.

The Local Census Office

The LCO manager, John McCoy, gave me a tour. The LCO was located in an industrial complex. The office was spacious. It was divided into recruiting, administration, and field administration. The rear of the facility had a loading dock with nonresponse follow-up materials. The LCO had bought large Idaho U.S. Geological Survey maps that the office found to be very useful.

The office was in the midst of recruiting. The LCO manager said they were doing a good job in hiring and retaining workers. The census has to compete with tax work and banks for hiring, which pay comparably and may have more benefits or offer permanent employment. On the administrative side, the office was doing some special place review.

The LCO manager said Idaho is divided into three LCOs, each with its own challenges. Northern Idaho has militia and Native Americans. Eastern Idaho has to rent snow machines to access the list/enumerate areas, and it also has anti-government sentiment. The Boise area is the most liberal and cooperative. It has most of the population of the state.

The LCO manager's job is part operations, part public relations. The manager felt it was important to build a relationship with the media and minority and special interest groups, like the homeless, because, though not a large percent of the population, they could be vocal. His

recruiting assistants had taken on many of the outreach tasks. He knew of 30 community count programs out of over 180 communities in Idaho. His efforts were aimed at including all of the communities.

He was not enthusiastic about the census road tour. In the road tour stop he orchestrated, the trailer arrived over an hour late, keeping media and schoolchildren waiting. He had to demand enough t-shirts for the schoolchildren. The advance people counted the media and attendees, without crediting the legwork done by the local officials.

He was not initially getting significant support from the governor's office. Pressure from the media was building, and a proclamation supporting the census was forthcoming. He was trying to get more direct lines of communication open with the state executive officials.

The LCO manager said he got over 1,500 calls about the advance letter. He had worked with the media to downplay the confusion. He was proud of his media-building efforts, and they had paid off in favorable local television and newspaper coverage. The Idaho Statesman ran a front page article about Census 2000 on Sunday, March 12.

List/Enumerate–Day 1

I observed in Owyhee County, ID, which is a large county in the southwest corner of the state. Its economy is ranching, crops, and mining. The enumerator was a homemaker, who was working mostly the hours her children were at school.

The enumerator had been trained last week. This was her first day out. She was organized. She listed addresses, marked map spots, and put bar codes on the questionnaires. She was from the area, which helped her navigate and recognize mobile homes. She wasn't afraid of the unleashed dogs. It had been drilled into her that she was supposed to ask the questions as worded. She distributed the confidentiality notices, and she built trust with her congenial manner.

I observed three interviews—a long-form interview, a short-form interview, and a short-form proxy interview. None of the housing units had city-style addresses. The long-form respondent gave the short-form proxy for her son, who lived in the adjacent house. The short-form proxy identified a boarder who was staying with her son while he was getting a divorce. The enumerator determined that he would not be there on Census Day. The short-form interview took little time. The respondent found the interview to be quick. She told the enumerator that her next-door neighbor wasn't home and informed her when she could be reached. The enumerator left a notice of visit next door.

The long-form interview was more involved and had a couple of points worth noting. The husband was Basque. This was identified in the ethnicity question. However, Hispanic was not checked in the 100 percent item. The respondents were willing to answer all questions. The respondents used three sources of fuel—oil, electricity, and wood. They chose oil as their primary fuel source. They looked up records to answer the income questions. They chose owning their

house free and clear and then in the income section had a deed of trust, which was a form of payment. The enumerator didn't know where to include Individual Retirement Account withdrawals. She was going to check with her supervisor. The respondents owned more than one property. They had to divide up payments to answer the questions for the housing unit we were interviewing in. The enumerator borrowed a calculator to total the income. The enumerator filled in the same answer for two consecutive employment questions asking what you did and the most important part of the job. The enumerator showed flash cards as directed and followed skip patterns as required.

Day 2

I spent about an hour with the crew leader as she met with individual enumerators. She had a steady stream of appointments. She signed time sheets, logged in work, and reviewed completed questionnaires. She was supportive of her crew and complimented their work.

The following are some of the situations that were discussed:

- One enumerator complained that \$.325 a mile doesn't cover gas expenses for a pick-up truck that gets 7 miles/gallon.

- Question 34, on housing unit tenure, should always be completed, even though the double underline was omitted.

- 4-wheel drive is necessary for back roads.

- An enumerator had to be reminded to fill in the interview summary.

- An enumerator mixed up the long/short form pattern. He ended up switching the long with the short form and marking this on the listing register. He was told to be more careful in the future.

- The crew leader said an enumerator could ask neighbors if there were any living quarters on questionable roads. One enumerator did check an island by inquiry.

- Migrant workers don't fill out housing questions.

- Some of the area had no roads, and it would require driving through Oregon to get to these areas. Overnight stays might be required to complete the work.

Second Day Observation

The enumerator was a retiree. He had worked on the 1990 census. He told me he wasn't comfortable being observed. He wasn't very organized, but still seemed to get the work done.

The first housing unit we came to had no answer. He had a phone number for the residence and called from his cell phone in the driveway. A lady answered the phone. He explained that he was here to take a census, and we went inside. He would ask the questions as if he knew what the answers were. He mentioned that he got her phone number from the next door neighbor, whom he referred to by name, which didn't seem like a confidential way to conduct business. He did notice a mobile home on her property and had her fill out a long-form questionnaire for this vacant unit.

The enumerator was from Boise and had to orient himself. He mentioned that maps with highway mile markers would have been helpful. Most of the streets did not have road signs. He drove while reading the maps. We did one more long-form interview, and then we canvassed the area to get more familiar with the assignment. He complained about the maps, but he didn't correct any map features of existing roads. He did add a road that led to a living quarters. It didn't seem like he was systematically completing one block before starting the next block.

The long-form interview was at a home with two persons. The person refused to answer any questions at first, besides what was needed to be counted. The enumerator did elicit the short-form person information from her. Age was a sensitive question. She said she was 50+. She said all of the other information was private and not necessary.

Two housing units had no one home. He had left some of his materials at the first interview, so he couldn't leave a notice of visit, distribute confidentiality statements at the units with persons home, or use the flash cards.

At another home we were able to do an interview. There were three housing units on the property. One was occupied by a migrant worker, and one was occupied by the adult children of the respondent we found home. The respondent answered a long form for herself and for the migrant worker, whom she said would not cooperate and spoke broken English. The enumerator left a short-form questionnaire at the house for the adult children to complete. The daughter-in-law was also enumerating for the list/enumerate operation. He would pick up the questionnaire later.

The respondent found the age question to be sensitive. She responded 60+. She complained that so many questions didn't need to be asked. She described herself as French Indian. The enumerator put this down as French Indian—he didn't take up one space for French and another for American Indian. In the 100 percent race question, American Indian hadn't been selected. The enumerator had quickly glossed over the question with his assumption to mark white. The enumerator prolonged the interview by making small talk. The enumerator missed one skip pattern when the respondent stated she hadn't worked in the past week. The respondent refused to answer the income questions and stated that she provided that information to the Internal Revenue Service. She did say that the ranch was for sale for a substantial amount of money. The enumerator filled in some questions as he expected them to be answered. The enumerator filled in the language for the proxy as Mexican instead of Spanish. He posed the question of income for the proxy as "Do you refuse to divulge his wages?" He didn't open the interviews with an estimate of how long they would take.

Summary

Overall, the operation was going well. The quality of the work varied with the interviewer's organization skills and attention to detail and the cooperativeness of the respondents. The task was large and was being assigned in an orderly fashion. Map updates were made haphazardly.

cc:

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