

Review of Cooperative Research and Demonstration Grant Program

by DONALD M. PILCHER*

THE PURPOSE of the research program of the Social Security Administration is to develop information and analytic tools for continuous and forward-looking evaluation of the social security system, its effectiveness in providing for economic security, and its relation to overall economic and social policy. Such an evaluation is concerned with both specific and detailed aspects of the existing old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program and with broad questions concerning the impact of social security on the economy and its relation to social policy and goals.

The original Social Security Act of 1935 recognized that continuing study and new approaches to changing problems would be needed if the basic purposes of the social security program were to be achieved. It therefore placed on the administering agency the duty of studying and making recommendations to Congress. Throughout the history of the Social Security Administration, research has been a vital element in policy formulation and program administration. The Administration's Division of Research and Statistics conducts surveys, research, and studies of operating statistics in pursuit of program goals.

In general, the research carried on by the Social Security Administration concerns the interactions of economic factors and social characteristics of families and individuals, as well as the broad overall relationships between risks and protection. The interrelationships among existing programs, and the threats to economic independence with which no existing program is coping, are studied. The advantages and costs of alternative lines of action are examined in relation to the basic objective of providing income security, consonant with rising levels of living, for all segments of the population.

A major focus of research interest reflected in several projects currently being carried on within the Division of Research and Statistics is the broad area of income and security. Because the

meaning of economic security must be translated in terms of individual and family income, certain questions are the subject of continuing study: What have been and are likely to be the relations between individual and family income over the life cycle? What are the relative amounts of income needed by families of different size and composition to achieve the same level of living? What measures of income adequacy are most appropriate and meaningful? What is the relative importance of cash income and derived income from services among different groups and in different circumstances?

The Division is also concerned with analyses of the share of the total national output going to the aged, the disabled, families with children, broken families, low-income groups, and Negroes and other subgroups in the population; the changes in these shares during recent decades with the development of social security programs; and probable future trends, assuming alternative economic and social policies.

One aspect of the research program that makes use of talent outside the Social Security Administration is the cooperative research and demonstration grants program, which was inaugurated in the fiscal year 1960-61 with an appropriation of \$350,000.¹ Sixteen grant awards were made in the first year of operation. Twelve new projects were initiated in the second year, and 10 of the earlier projects were continued. In the third year 16 new projects were supported, and 17 were continued from earlier years. In all, by the summer of 1963, 44 new project awards had been made.²

When the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was reorganized in 1963 and the

¹ For a discussion of the early phases of the program and the history of its inception, see Ida C. Merriam, "Cooperative Research and Demonstration Grant Program of the Social Security Administration," *Social Security Bulletin*, September 1961.

² For a complete listing of all projects that have received support through June 1964, see Lee Burchinal, "Projects Aided Under the Cooperative Research and Demonstration Grants Program," *Welfare in Review*, June 1964.

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Welfare Administration established, the cooperative research and demonstration grant program was placed under a different administrative arrangement. Since September 1963, it has been administered by the Welfare Administration in cooperation with the Social Security Administration and serves the interests of both agencies. Under the joint administration, most new projects have been allocated either to the Welfare Administration or to the Social Security Administration; in a few cases, projects are jointly supported by both agencies.

The Welfare Administration is responsible for the administrative, fiscal, and budgetary matters relating to the entire program, with support from the Social Security Administration on the projects that either are predominantly its concern or are of joint concern to the two agencies. The Social Security Administration provides staff services, including technical consultation and other professional services, to applicants whose projects may be accepted for support, as well as to directors of projects actually receiving support. In the material that follows the focus is primarily on the Social Security Administration aspects of the grant program.³

The statutory authorization for the program under title XI, section 1110, of the Social Security Act provides for grants, contracts, or cooperative arrangements with universities and other nonprofit agencies, public and private, for the support of "research or demonstration projects such as those relating to the prevention and reduction of dependency, or which will aid in effecting coordination of planning between private and public welfare agencies or which will help improve the administration and effectiveness of programs carried on or assisted under the Social Security Act and programs related thereto."

PROCEDURES, POLICIES, AND CONDITIONS FOR SUPPORT

Federal grants under the program may be made, as noted above, to public agencies and nonprofit organizations. They are not available to individuals, even though the individuals may be

³ For an article on the Welfare Administration aspects of the program, see Lee Burchinal, "Cooperative Research and Demonstration Program," *Welfare in Review*, August 1964.

affiliated with public or nonprofit agencies. By law, the grants can be used to pay only part of a project's cost. The amount that the applicant agency must supply is not specified in the authorizing legislation. To assure, however, that the available Federal funds support the maximum number of projects, each applicant is expected to finance as large a part of the project cost as possible. The applicant must pay some direct costs and not merely indirect or overhead costs.

In general, grant funds may be used to pay all or part of the following project expenses: Personnel salaries, permanent equipment, consumable supplies, and travel and indirect costs (within certain limits). Grant funds may also be used to cover the costs of publishing the project report, if agreement has been made in advance.

Grantees are required to submit a financial report within 60 days after the end of each grant period, and a progress report summarizing project developments must accompany each request for a continuation grant. A final report, summarizing the total project and findings, must be submitted within 6 months after the termination of a grant and completion of a project.

Grants may be awarded for either research or demonstration projects. Research projects must meet standards of substantive significance, including national rather than local relevance, and excellence of research design. Demonstration projects should involve experimentation with new procedures or principles and must include provision for scientific assessment of results. Primary factors considered in evaluating an application are the potential value and national significance of the knowledge to be obtained, the soundness of the project design, the adequacy of resources to conduct the proposed research or demonstration, and the relationship of the project to similar projects already completed or in process.

Grants are made for a period of not more than 1 year. When projects require more than a year to realize their objectives, additional grants may be made on an annual basis. The initial notice to applicants that a grant has been awarded indicates the number of years for which support is recommended. The amount of support for each year after the first is determined annually when the continuation grant is requested and is dependent on congressional appropriations and satisfactory project progress.

Grantees are requested to carry an acknowledgment of assistance received under this program in their published material. Unless other arrangements are agreed upon in advance, however, results of any work supported by grant funds may be published without review by the Social Security Administration or the Welfare Administration. The research or demonstration conducted is, in every instance, the responsibility of the grantee organization.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications for grants may be submitted at any time without previous consultation with Administration staff.⁴ On the other hand, an applicant may wish to submit a preliminary proposal before a formal application is made and obtain the Administration's reaction concerning the appropriateness of the research plan and the design and methodology proposed. This preliminary interaction can be very helpful to the applicant, the grant program, and the Division of Research and Statistics of the Social Security Administration. The more nearly complete the proposal, the more helpful the interaction is likely to be.

The statute establishing the research grant program provides that projects may be supported only on the advice of "specialists who are competent to evaluate the proposed projects as to soundness of their design, the possibilities of securing productive results, the adequacy of resources to conduct the proposed research or demonstration, and their relationship to other similar research or demonstrations already completed or in process."

Such expert advice is obtained in several ways. Individual proposals are sent to selected experts who review the project and return their comments by mail. Because of the varied types of research and subject areas represented, scholars and experts in many fields are called upon to review

⁴ Application forms, instructions, and additional information may be obtained by writing to Research Grants Specialist, Division of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20201, or to Chief, Research Grants Branch, Division of Research, Welfare Administration, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20201—both in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

projects. Most projects are reviewed by several experts outside the Federal Government to assure evaluation from different points of view. The comments of the experts are, of course, confidential and are seen only by the staff administering the program and the overall advisory panel described below. When appropriate, other staff within the Social Security Administration or in other Federal agencies may also be called upon for expert advice.

Final decision on the projects to receive support is made by the Commissioner of Social Security and the Commissioner of Welfare, on the recommendation of the advisory panel set up for this purpose. The panel has 12 members; eight of them are designated by the Welfare Administration and four by the Social Security Administration. They meet three times a year—ordinarily in January, April, and September—to consider proposals and to make recommendations to the Commissioners. Applications should be received approximately 3 months in advance of the meetings. Panel members for the fiscal year 1964-65 are listed below; an asterisk is used to indicate those that were designated by the Social Security Administration.

Edgar F. Borgatta, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, chairman

*Otis Dudley Duncan, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan

*Hugh W. Folk, Department of Economics, Washington University (St. Louis)

*C. Harry Kahn, Department of Economics, Rutgers University

Eugene Litwak, School of Social Work, University of Michigan

Henry S. Maas, School of Social Welfare, University of California (Berkeley)

Robert Morris, the Florence Heller Graduate School of Advanced Studies in Social Work, Brandeis University

*Saad Z. Nagi, Department of Sociology, Ohio State University

Robert Rapoport, Institute of Human Relations, Boston College

Herman D. Stein, School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University

Marvin D. Sussman, Department of Sociology, Western Reserve University

Robin M. Williams, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Cornell University

CONTRACTS AND COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

The statutory authorization for the cooperative research program provides for contracts and cooperative arrangements, as well as grants. A grant is ordinarily made in support of a project proposed by the applicant. The applicant is entirely responsible for the project's development and execution, for the analysis of the findings and conclusions, and usually for their publication. A contract may give almost as much freedom to the investigator, but usually the subject field is selected by the supporting agency. That agency may seek a particular group to carry out the research and may indicate with some precision the questions to which answers are sought. A cooperative arrangement would involve staff of the Social Security Administration in continuing participation in a project, through part-time or full-time assignment of personnel, frequent review, or agreed-upon division of the work. To date, funds have been used only for grants. It is anticipated that the other two arrangements will be used in the future but the grants will probably remain the predominant method used in supporting outside research.

Program Operations

Two hundred and twenty-eight grant proposals were processed and considered by the advisory panel from March 1, 1961, to October 31, 1964.⁵ Of these applications, 72 have resulted in grant awards.

Applications to the Social Security Administration come primarily from universities and research bureaus or institutes but may also come from private foundations and public and private agencies. The projects themselves deal with many different problems and subjects and may be categorized in several ways. Generally, however, they fall into eight subject areas: social and economic aspects of retirement; medical care costs and needs; studies of economic status, education, and employment; consumer spending and saving practices; income and poverty; housing policy; geographic mobility; and OASDI coverage in special population groups.

⁵ For a listing of completed and ongoing projects of typical interest and concern to the Social Security Administration, see page 46.

Congress appropriated \$700,000 for the support of the research projects during the fiscal year 1961-62, and since then the budget has been increased by \$350,000-\$400,000 annually. For operations during the fiscal year 1964-65, Congress voted \$1.7 million. Approximately \$1 million will be used to support projects continued from earlier years—about one-fourth of it for projects of interest to the Social Security Administration. Of the balance, about \$250,000 will be available to the Administration for new projects.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the experience gained thus far, it is evident that there is a continuing interest in researchable problems in the social science field and that there are many valuable research ideas waiting to be developed. Certain kinds of research projects may be more effectively carried out by nongovernment agencies than by the Government acting directly. But there are still other advantages that may flow from Federal support of research carried on outside Government. By committing themselves to doing or helping to support research in the social and economic security field, many teachers, scholars, research centers, and community groups throughout the country, who now have only a general knowledge of social security problems or programs, will become better informed. The boundaries of social science will be stretched to include more of the current questions of social policy.

The cooperative research program is viewed as a valuable extension of the research program carried on by the Social Security Administration. It is hoped that this cooperative effort with the academic and research talent in non-Federal agencies will point Administration studies in new directions, permit the testing of present concepts and assumptions, and thereby promote a forward movement in social policy and goals.

Some of the areas that the Social Security Administration considers appropriate for research grant proposals are indicated by the list of projects supported under the program that is shown below. The Administration's major interest in relation to the grant program will continue to be focused on studies relating generally to the determinants and characteristics of economic and social

insecurity and questions bearing on the adequacy and effectiveness of existing programs concerned with income maintenance and economic security, the impact of social security payments on the economy, and alternative methods of financing.

PROJECTS AWARDED GRANTS

Projects that have received support under the cooperative research grants program and that are typical of those in which the Social Security Administration has an interest are listed below.

COMPLETED PROJECTS (AS OF NOVEMBER 1964)

Credit Union Service to Low Income Groups. University of Notre Dame. Project Director: John Croteau.

Decision-Making Process Leading to Institutionalization of the Aged. North Texas State University. Project Director: Hiram Friedsam.

Design of an Evaluation Study of Consumer Education. Joint Settlement Committee (New York City). Project Director: Kenneth Lenihan.

Income Maintenance and Adjustment Programs in Relation to Needs. Northern Michigan College. Project Director: Jean Pearman.

Social Characteristics and Employment Experiences in School Drop-Outs. Syracuse University. Project Director: S. M. Miller.

A Study of Early Retirement and Programs of Preparation for Retirement. Cornell University. Project Director: John McConnell.

CURRENT PROJECTS (AS OF NOVEMBER 1964)

**The Aged, Family and Friends.* Western Reserve University. Project Director: Irving Rosow. Estimated ending date, October 31, 1964.^o

**Comparative Analysis of the Culture of Poverty in Puerto Rico and New York.* University of Illinois. Project Director: Oscar Lewis. Estimated ending date, February 28, 1966.

**Contribution of Community Development to the Prevention of Dependency.* Wisconsin Winnebago Business Committee. Project Directors: Nancy Lurie and Helen Miller. Estimated ending date, September 30, 1965.

Determinants of the Geographical Mobility of Labor. University of Michigan. Project Director: John Lansing and Eva Mueller. Estimated ending date, December 31, 1965.

* Projects jointly supported by the Welfare Administration and the Social Security Administration.

^o Project directors are given 6 months in which to submit a final report.

**Economic Functions of Kinship Structures in Low-Income Groups.* Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc. (D.C.). Project Director: Leonard Goodman. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1966.

Economic Status, Unemployment, and Family Growth. University of Michigan. Project Director: Ronald Freedman. Estimated ending date, June 30, 1965.

Educational Barriers to Economic Security in Large Cities. Teachers College, Columbia University. Project Director: Robert Dentler. Estimated ending date, September 30, 1964.^o

Effect of Income on Expenditures for and Use of Health Services. University of Chicago. Project Director: Margaret Reid. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1966.

Employment Opportunities of Negro and White Youth. Johns Hopkins University. Project Director: Bernard Levenson. Estimated ending date, October 31, 1965.

**Fatherless Families and Housing: A Study in Dependency.* Syracuse University. Project Directors: Louis Kriesberg and Seymour Bellin. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1965.

Influence of Old-Age Insurance and Private Pension Plans on Spending-Saving Behavior. Survey Research Center, University of Michigan. Project Director: George Katona. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1965.

Legal Interventions, Social Mobility, and Dependency—A Study of Public Housing. Oberlin College. Project Director: Kiyoshi Ikeda. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1966.

Longitudinal Study of Retirement. Cornell University. Project Director: Gordon Streib. Estimated ending date, January 31, 1965.

Nursing Home Patient Care Needs in Relation to Sources of Support and Admission. University of Michigan. Project Director: Kenton Winter. Estimated ending date, June 30, 1965.

Pilot Study of Nursing Home Costs. University of Michigan. Project Director: Kenton Winter. Estimated ending date, June 30, 1965.

Pilot Survey of Migratory Farm Labor in Wisconsin. University of Wisconsin. Project Director: Elizabeth Raushenbush. Estimated ending date, February 28, 1965.

Poverty and Aging as Factors in Social Isolation. Bureau of Social Science Research (D.C.). Project Director: George S. Rosenberg. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1966.

**Social Aspects of Urban Renewal.* The Menninger Foundation. Project Director: William Key. Estimated ending date, January 31, 1966.

Temporary Disability Insurance for Farm Workers. University of Michigan. Project Director: Philip Booth. Estimated ending date, May 31, 1965.

**Withdrawal from Active Occupational Roles by Certain Occupational Groups in Rural Iowa.* Iowa State University. Project Director: Jon Doerflinger. Estimated ending date, February 28, 1967.