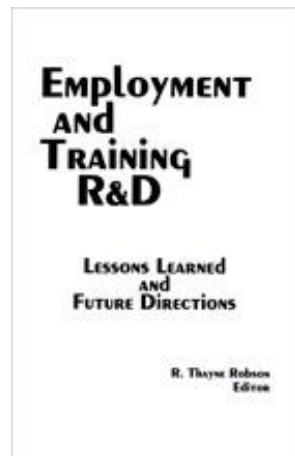

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An Administrator's Reflections

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An Administrator's Reflections

Howard Rosen

Few former federal career employees are even invited to come out of the closet of bureaucratic anonymity to reflect on programs they have administered. I immodestly accepted this invitation to discuss what I experienced and learned as the Director of the Office of Research and Development in the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration between 1962 and 1980 because I believe that my observations might be of interest not only to labor economists but also to students of public administration.

Let me begin by making some general comments about important differences controlling administration in the public and private sectors. Public administrators are controlled by a law, many laws or regulations. Legalism in general, and laws in particular, tend to circumscribe and influence the operation of publicly administered programs more so than in the private sector. Administrators of private programs are told by law what they cannot do. The law tells the administrators of public programs what they can do. This is a subtle but important difference affecting decisions and freedom to act.

A second important difference is the goldfish bowl environment of life in Washington. In addition to perpetual scrutiny, public administrators are held to far higher ethical

and moral standards than those found in the private sector. On top of these restraints, career public administrators must maintain a neutrality and professionalism not often required in private industry.

In spite of the laws, regulations and ethical standards, public administrators are expected to be effective and perform assignments. It is my belief that administrators of government programs must be more creative, imaginative and resourceful than their counterparts in private industry if they are to achieve program objectives.

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) program was conducted during 18 years of turmoil, change and national unrest. During the 1962-80 period the country was involved in two military wars and one massive social and economic war against poverty. The Research and Development program was conducted through recessions, inflation, race riots, and active civil rights movement leading to growth in minority power and oil price shocks.

The economy changed and required new and different skills from our workforce. The share of manufacturing jobs declined from about 30 to 20 percent of total employment. Service industry employment rose from 14 to 20 percent of all jobs and the proportion of employees working for state and local governments increased from 12 to 15 percent of total employment. Despite the unprecedented entry of increasing numbers of young workers into the labor force and a 50 percent increase in our workforce, the country suffered no massive unemployment.

A social revolution was also changing the labor force participation of women. While the participation rate for men declined in every age group between the ages of 20 to 64, the rates for women increased in every age cohort. Child rearing no longer forced most women out of the labor force. Be-

tween 1962 and 1980, the labor force participation rate for women with children under the age of six more than doubled and the number of families headed by women also rose from 4.5 to 9.0 million.

The ETA social science research program was established under Title I of the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) of 1962, continued under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, and extended under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1982. The Manpower Act was passed primarily in order to offset the displacement effects of automation and technological changes in workers. During the 1960 presidential campaign, Senator Kennedy was exposed to the large number of unemployed West Virginia coal miners who had lost their jobs because of the shifts to diesel locomotives and the greater use of oil and other sources of energy than coal. He promised the people of West Virginia that, if elected president, he would try to assist them. He carried out his promise with manpower legislation which proposed to train and retrain workers who were unemployed because of automation and technological changes.

Those of us who participated in writing some sections of what eventually became the Manpower Act experienced the wondrous and mysterious ways of how legislation is prepared. At first, there was a period of intense and furious work. Our respective contributions were then collected and we never saw what the legislation looked like until it surfaced as the proposed Manpower Act. We never heard about, nor were we a party to, the negotiations as the proposed legislation drifted through the various agencies which were to participate in its implementation. Once the bill appeared on the Hill we were reactivated again to write speeches for cabinet officers and legislators during the hearings and congressional debates.

Before and after the Manpower Act was passed there was considerable contact with Swedish government officials who described their "active manpower policy" to U.S. policymakers. Under this philosophy, the Swedish government was no longer a neutral observer of developments affecting its workforce. Unemployment, industrial shifts and labor market operations were now a concern of the government. Some, but not all, of the Swedish thinking was adopted by those involved in the development of a U.S. manpower policy during the early 1960s.

Title I of the Manpower Act called for a research program that differed quite radically from those then being conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and other components of the Department of Labor. For decades, BLS had collected information contributing to our fund of knowledge about the employment and unemployment of American workers. It also collected data on wages, prices and productivity. The Bureau was not expected to be concerned with policy-oriented research. Under the Manpower Act, the Department was now directed to collect information that could shape policy and programs. We were also given the opportunity to develop and test, in operational situations, ways in which manpower programs might more effectively meet significant manpower problems.

The new legislation called for a research program that contributed to policies that would result in solutions of the problems created by ". . . changes in the structure of production and demand in the use of the Nation's human resources."¹ The research office, which was created under Title I of MDTA, was allocated \$2.8 million per year between 1962 and 1970 to study, in addition to automation, the practices of employers and unions which impede the mobility of workers, appraise the adequacy of the nation's manpower development efforts and recommend programs for untrained and inexperienced youth. Armed with the imprecise and am-

biguous language of the Manpower Act, we marched off to war to do away with unemployment and its causes.

Once the law was passed we discovered that it is far easier to write legislation than it is to translate legislative language into programs. An apprehensive group of federal employees met in Seymour Wolfbein's office on March 16, 1962, the day after President Kennedy signed the law.² To counter the perennial criticism of the underworked government employee, it should be documented that we worked an average of 10 to 12 hours a day for 7 days a week for a full year in order to launch the training and retraining programs. Substantive work was conducted on Saturdays and Sundays when the telephone switchboard was closed. The initial plans for a research program were developed in between hundreds of telephone calls and numerous speeches given around the country. The first year was a true test of our physical stamina and emotional stability.

In order to put a publicly administered research program in proper context, it may be helpful to discuss both the internal and external environment which influenced and affected some of our decisions and programs.

Internal Environment

Much has been written about the relationship between political appointees and career government employees. Each president can bring in to his administration 2,500 new appointees. The job qualifications of these policymakers and knowledge of the programs they administer may vary considerably. There is always an uncomfortable period of testing that goes on between political appointees and career employees until mutual respect and trust is developed. The research office seems to have survived a succession of policymakers by demonstrating its ability to contribute its knowledge to the needs of a variety of policymakers.

The management staff of ETA, consisting of career federal employees, was a problem of another sort. The budget responsibilities and oversight authority of the procurement process of the management personnel enabled them to exert considerable power over our activities. We had frequent disputes with the management people because of their lack of understanding of social science research and their distrust of social scientists. Most of the previous experience of the management staff had been limited to the purchase of desks, chairs and other supplies and equipment. We sought a flexibility in our work with social researchers that was foreign to their way of thinking. Until we demonstrated our usefulness to the political appointees and the operating managers of ETA's programs, our research budget was considered fair game for purposes other than research by the management personnel

Another group which contributed to a hostile environment for a research program in a mission-oriented agency was the administrators of programs such as Unemployment Insurance, the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) and the operators of training and retraining activities.

Our challenge was to persuade some of these administrators that a research program could be useful to them. We needed their cooperation because their programs were relevant to our mission. Furthermore, if they participated in decisions on research projects they might be more inclined to utilize our findings in their programs.

We finally worked out a strategy that proved most effective. After our annual budget increased from \$2.8 to \$13.0 million in 1970, we set aside a fixed sum of money that was to be used for research and development purposes for each operating component of the Employment and Training Administration. We used committees, consisting of representatives of the research office and operating agencies, to

review and make decisions about research projects relevant to their missions. We learned that money is an effective tool for winning friends in the public sector of the economy.

Some examples of committee-sponsored research included an assessment of the counseling service of the Employment Service and a study of how the productivity of local employment offices could be improved. The committee also sponsored an examination of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* to determine its usefulness and its users. Although money was effective in reducing some of the hostility to research, we had recurrent problems in trying to persuade our peers that we were not about to invade their jurisdictions.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics was another organization that had to be assured that we were not taking over their functions. Again, money and strategy helped to ease tensions. As indicated earlier, the Manpower Act directed us to appraise the adequacy of the nation's manpower development efforts to meet foreseeable needs for workers. We asked the Bureau of Labor Statistics to conduct a pioneering survey of how American workers acquired training for their jobs.³ This study both eased our relations with BLS and gave the country its first view of the extent of job training in the U.S.

Our one major conflict with BLS took place over their reluctance to reassess their data collection system in urban centers. We had supported the work of anthropologists who lived in ghetto areas. They reported that many minority workers had become discouraged and dropped out of the labor market. In their view, BLS surveys did not correctly measure the extent of unemployment in ghetto areas. Eventually, BLS was persuaded to examine the problem of undercounting which led to a new data series on unemployment in central cities.

The final point about our internal environment concerns our experience with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. In reviewing our mandate to collect information about the training of American workers, it became obvious that although the apprenticeship system trained a relatively small number of craftsmen, it played a significant role in preparing some of the country's most skilled workers. The close relations of the personnel of BAT with the unions made it difficult to conduct any research that might appear in any way to loosen the trade unions' control of a training system that affected the supply of workers.

In order to learn more about the apprenticeship system and to conduct studies to modernize it we devised a strategy that would avoid a confrontation with either BAT personnel or the unions. Our plan called for the development of a model apprenticeship program that could be used as a comparison by unions and employers now conducting programs. We proposed a new system for realistically determining the number of hours required for learning the plumber and pipefitter trade.

We asked Dr. John Dunlop of Harvard, who was trusted and respected by union leaders, to review our plan and, if it proved acceptable to him, to use his negotiating skills to persuade the unions to go along with our proposed study. After he approved our approach, he encouraged trade union leaders to participate in the preparation of a model apprenticeship program which was developed at Purdue University. The results of the study were published in a series of monographs which were widely distributed and contributed to the modernization of some apprenticeship programs.

To sum up our internal environment problems, we succeeded in having research and development accepted in a mission-oriented agency only after we demonstrated the usefulness of our findings. Research could be conducted if

we avoided face-to-face confrontations and developed strategies that would not directly challenge programs or jurisdictions. Money was helpful, but the committee system which involved the potential users of research was also effective in developing cooperative working relationships. Finally, knowledge of institutional politics and access to persons who could help us to achieve our objectives proved to be of inestimable value.

The External Environment

The most important component of our external environment was the research community. We were launching a program that required researchers who were interested in problems of unemployment, underemployment, labor market operations, discrimination, skill training and the special difficulties faced by the "economically disadvantaged" of our society. In surveying the literature of the early and mid-1960s, we were struck by the small number of scholars who were studying the problems specified by MDTA and its amendments. Most of the social scientists whose backgrounds and experience were remotely related to our subjects of interest were studying unions, collective bargaining, wages, etc. Columbia University's Conservation of Human Resources, under Dr. Eli Ginzberg's direction, was the only on-going institution concerned with labor market issues relevant to our mission.

In examining the early proposals submitted to our office we concluded that we were suffering from a "tired blood" syndrome in that so few young researchers appeared to be interested in studying the issues which concerned us. In an effort to attract new researchers we first broadcast, through a variety of channels, our interest in supporting research on a specified list of employment and training problems. We were overwhelmed with proposals that seemed to come primarily

from persons or organizations with little or no research background.

Dr. Ginzberg, in discussing our experience with us, suggested that we produce our own experts. This led us to start a doctoral dissertation program which proved to be one of our most significant long term accomplishments. Many of the country's leading social scientists now working on employment and training issues were able to get their Ph.D.s through this program.⁴

During the early years we primarily used unsolicited proposals and sole source awards in order to secure research performers. We often sought out specialists who were studying subjects relevant to our program needs. Once our budget increased and we could be involved in more costly research and development efforts, we made greater use of Requests for Proposals (RFPs). We tried, however, to maintain a balance between unsolicited proposals and RFPs because we always wanted to have access to the talents of the academic community. RFP procurements appeared to attract few college professors because they were not able to match the grantsmanship capability of the consulting firms.

About two-thirds of the proposals submitted were rejected. Ninety percent of the unsolicited proposals were turned down. We were constantly winnowing not only the proposals but also the researchers. We had to distinguish between scholars who appeared to be only concerned with furthering their disciplines and those who were genuinely interested in social and economic problems. Many of the researchers who were caught in the publish or perish syndrome submitted proposals that were more directed toward furthering their reputations than in making contributions to our knowledge about the social and economic issues identified in MDTA. We found very few scholars or consulting organizations able to assist us in getting research findings

utilized or interested in following through in having their studies used for policy decisions.

There was, and still is, a real shortage of social scientists capable of combining their research background with the very practical real world problems of organizing and conducting experimental and demonstration projects with rigorous research designs. Few, if any, of our training institutions appear to have recognized the need for researchers who can both apply scientific research methods and carry out the necessary nitty-gritty chores required for establishing small-scale experimental and demonstration projects which can tell policymakers whether large-scale programs are feasible or desirable.

One of the key factors affecting the success or failure of a research and development program is the review process. Before we made a decision on which review method to use, we consulted with several research offices in federal agencies. After prolonged and frank discussions with some of the administrators who established the National Institutes of Health (NIH) we decided *not* to use peer review of proposals by nongovernmental panels of experts. Although this system was in use at NIH, we were advised that if they were starting all over again, some of these administrators would no longer use this system. Their view was that peer review too often ends up in an "old boy" system of mutual back-scratching. They also believed that new young researchers and innovators found it more difficult to break into the funding circle controlled by more established scientists. We settled on a review system which included staff assessment and extensive examination by specialists in the federal government as well as by nongovernmental experts.

No honest account of a research and development administrator's reflections could possibly exclude reference to the real world of political pressures that pervade the very air of Washington. Let me start with the flat assertion that I was

always surprised by how little pressure was exerted on us to fund performers who came through the political route. Ninety-nine percent of the products we funded were based on our decisions rather than those imposed by political appointees. If there is credit or blame to be given for success or failure of this particular research and development effort, it should be directed to the career staff who administered the program.

This does not say that efforts were not made to secure funding through the political route. Most of these proposals were fended off by our normal review process. Remember that our office rejected at least 90 percent of unsolicited proposals. Upon occasion, in order to take heat off career employees, we would convene ad hoc panels of well-known social scientists to review a proposal in which either the White House or a congressman had indicated more than casual interest. After this review, we were usually able to inform the applicants and their sponsors how a panel of nationally known experts had voted.

There seemed to be little difference in the amount of pressure exerted by either of the two major parties. We learned that, for the most part, bona fide researchers did not apply for funding through the political route. We identified pressure as proposals forwarded by the White House or sent to us by senators or representatives. It was relatively easy to distinguish between proposals that were transmitted as a matter of routine courtesy to constituents from those in which there was a genuine interest.

Congressional oversight of our program was minimal. The Office of Management and Budget's annual review was primarily an educational activity to apprise the examiners and analysts of our findings and major funding. We had two experiences with the General Accounting Office (GAO). In the first instance we were advised that GAO was prepared to launch a major study of how we used our research products.

After spending two hours explaining that we had established a separate division just to concentrate on the utilization of research and development findings and specifying how this activity was being conducted, the representatives of GAO quietly left and never returned. We were visited a second time by the GAO for an examination of our procurement activities. After an exhaustive survey they tapped us on the wrist by pointing out that some of our files were incomplete in that all necessary documents were not immediately available.

We had one experience with the donor of the Golden Fleece Award. For several years we had been conducting a series of studies and small-scale research demonstration projects to determine whether income assistance might reduce recidivism among ex-offenders. We were interested in the employment experience of ex-offenders because one out of two clients in the manpower programs had either arrest or incarceration records. Local, state and federal correctional institutions were releasing prisoners to the outside world with sums of money that varied from 25 cents to \$50 or just a suit of clothes. Our earliest research indicated that most ex-offenders would have to depend on the weak reed of friends or relatives for income support after they left prison.

After years of careful documentation and review of our initial review and experimental and demonstration efforts by a panel of penologists, we decided to conduct an experiment in Georgia and Texas to determine whether unemployment insurance might reduce the recidivism rate of released prisoners. Shortly after the project began a Georgia newspaperman called Senator Proxmire's office to advise a member of his staff that the Department of Labor was funding a project which gave money to "pimps, rapists and murderers." We were immediately called and asked to submit a description of our project to the Senator.

We forwarded the requested material which described the experimental design, our years of study, and the rationale for the work. We also pointed out that Dr. Peter Rossi, former president of the American Sociological Association, was chief researcher and that the project was being supervised by the American Bar Association. We waited a few days before calling the Senator's assistant, who was most pleasant to us. He complimented us so highly on our rigorous design and professional research that I was moved to ask whether the Senator might want to consider the project for a Diamond Fleece Award as an exemplary government research project. I was told that I was overstepping my bounds and the conversation was abruptly terminated. That was the last I heard from this type of senatorial oversight.

To summarize our external environment, we created a research community of scholars interested in employment and training issues by launching a doctoral dissertation program which proved to be very helpful in encouraging young scholars to study labor market operations. We tried to maintain a balanced procurement process which left the door open so that we were exposed to new and innovative ideas and researchers. We were constantly searching for researchers who were concerned with the impact of their studies on policy issues. We found very few social scientists who could develop a good research design and translate it into a real world experimental or demonstration project. Apparently, our proposal review process effectively minimized political pressure on career employees.

Research Strategy

The primary motive for passage of the Manpower Act was to provide training and retraining in order to ameliorate the effects of automation and technological changes on unemployed workers who previously had a relatively strong attachment to the labor market. These were the white blue-

collar workers whom Senator Kennedy had seen during his presidential campaign in West Virginia. In addition to automation, the act directed us to discover why shortages of qualified personnel existed even during periods of high unemployment. We were also expected to identify areas of current and prospective manpower shortages and to report on occupations which promised reasonable expectations of employment and on-the-job training opportunities for trainees who participated in government sponsored training programs.

Shortly after the legislation was passed, students of labor market changes noted that despite all of the talk about automation, unemployment was declining and the number of employed workers was increasing. Between 1962 and 1965, the rate of unemployment dropped from 5.5 to 4.5 percent and employment rose by 4.3 million from 66.7 to 71.0 million. Other researchers also reported that the automation of the early and mid-1960s was not about to wipe out millions of jobs and leave us with mechanized factories that would displace millions of workers.

Some students of the American economy alerted the country to the growing number of unskilled and poorly educated workers who could benefit from training and retraining. Our office conducted a survey for President Kennedy's Task Force on Manpower Conservation which was published with the nostalgic title of *One-Third of a Nation*. This report documented that one-half of the young men called for preinduction examination under Selective Service were found unqualified for military service.⁵ Fully one-third of the age group did not meet the required standards of health and education. Our survey also showed that a major proportion of these young men were the products of poverty that they inherited from their parents and unless the skills of the rejectees were upgraded, these young men would face a lifetime of recurrent unemployment.

The labor force data, White House memoranda, popular articles and books on poverty, *One-Third of a Nation*, all contributed to a major shift in manpower policy from concentration on workers displaced by automation to economically disadvantaged workers and youths. By the end of the Kennedy Administration and the beginning of the Johnson presidency, manpower policy had moved to the war on poverty.

Developing a meaningful and coherent research strategy for a social science program in a federal agency proved to be a real challenge. Annual budgets, a constantly shifting group of political appointees, changes in priorities and the need of policymakers for immediate answers to complex issues made it difficult to plan for a long term program. We were acutely aware that social science research was more capable of providing information than solutions to complex and deep-rooted economic and social problems. For this reason, we could not over promise results to political managers who wanted clear cut unambiguous research findings which could be used for making decisions.

In order to survive, our research strategy called for two levels of projects. Realistically, we knew that a research organization in a mission-oriented federal agency must put aside a certain proportion of its resources for what can be described as "quick and dirty" research. This research was designed to give political appointees and other administrators information that could be used for making current policy decisions.

The second type of research, which we believed was more suitable to social science research capabilities, was directed toward the cumulative acquisition of information about major employment and training problems. One of the most important lessons we learned in administering the research and development programs is that ad hoc and unrelated projects do not, for the most part, have as great an impact as

cumulative research on major social and economic issues. Those of us who started ETA's research and development program soon came to the realization that social science research is more comparable to the slow, long term accumulation of information about cancer than the discovery and immediate application of the Salk vaccine leading to the sudden disappearance of infantile paralysis.

The best example of an investment in basic and long term research was our support for a national longitudinal survey of 20,000 workers which began in the mid-1960s and is still continuing in 1984. The data of the labor market experience of 20,000 workers representing the American labor force in four broad age categories are collected by the Census Bureau. The National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) data include information on employment and unemployment experience, occupational training, aspirations, education, health, family backgrounds and exposure to counseling. The cumulative data base of the NLS is now one of the nation's most important sources of information on the work experience of American workers. The findings of the NLS have had an impact on legislation, programs and policy decisions. They have been analyzed and used by scholars in hundreds of articles, monographs and books.

Another example of long term support was the study of the effects of occupational licensing on the employment opportunities of nonprofessional workers.⁶ After a 1967 survey of state and local licensing laws which set the groundwork for further exploration, we embarked on a series of studies and action programs which continued through 1980. In order to remove the barriers of occupational licensing to employment, we funded the researcher to become a "change agent" to testify before local political leaders and state legislators so that they would know how to draw up more equitable licensing laws. He was consulted extensively by persons concerned with improving occupational licensing laws throughout the United States.

In addition to recognizing the benefits of cumulative research we also learned that the social and economic problems we studied rarely fit neatly into any single social science discipline. Cultural differences, motivation, education, training, health and discrimination were just some of the reasons workers experienced difficulty in the labor market. Our clients had problems which cut across several disciplines rather than any single one. For this reason, we made a deliberate effort to involve sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, demographers, political scientists, and other social scientists in our research program. We also sought out social scientists who were capable of interdisciplinary research.

In developing our research agenda we followed a practice of specifying major issues and problems. We then asked the research staff to articulate a number of researchable and integrated questions that could be explored and lead to a cumulative base of information. We then sought scholars who may have already started studying some of the issues or tried to persuade others to direct their research skills to the economic and social problems of concern to us. We often followed and supported these peripatetic scholars who were willing to make long term commitments to subjects of interest to the research and development program, as they moved from university to university.

As one would expect, we were originally inundated with proposals to study the effect of automation and technological changes on skill requirements and employment. We had the difficult task of separating charlatans from legitimate researchers. We discovered that there was a cadre of social scientists who were willing to devote their careers to following newspaper headlines in order to study "popular" subjects. Many of these researchers suffered from a reverse of the Midas principle. Wherever there was gold, they wanted to touch it.

After the shift in policy and priorities from automation to concentration on the problems of the economically disadvantaged, we decided that studies of labor market operations would be the basic foundation of our research strategy. We then went on to support research that examined institutional obstacles that some workers faced in entering and maneuvering through the labor market. In addition to studies of employers' hiring practices, occupational licensing and job market information, we supported research which examined the special employment problems of blacks, Hispanics, women, youth, older workers, ex-offenders and migrant workers.

In order to broaden the research strategy, some of the country's leading social scientists were first invited to join a committee to advise the research office on future program directions. Because members came from different disciplines, it was sometimes difficult to secure agreement on subjects for studies or research methodologies. Eventually, the committee was discontinued and greater dependence was placed on staff-originated proposals, unsolicited proposals and suggestions forwarded by the operating, planning and policy staffs.

As a result of the merger, in 1970, of the Office of Special Manpower Projects and the research office, the new annual research and development budget increased from \$2.8 to \$13.0 million. This larger budget enabled the office to now support experimental and demonstration projects in addition to conventional research. We hoped that these small scale experimental and demonstration projects could now be used to test the feasibility of new concepts and programs before moving to large national efforts.

The Office of Special Manpower Projects originally was assigned to support experimental and demonstration efforts during the 1960s. These projects were operated primarily as catalysts for social action, with the formal generation of in-

formation and insight regarding operational problems as an important, but subsidiary, concern. The new combined Office of Research and Development (ORD) adopted a policy that research had to be an integral component of all experimental and demonstration projects. The operators of experimental and demonstration projects who were primarily oriented to provide services to clients also had to be persuaded to cooperate with researchers who were studying their programs.

We soon discovered that "carrying out any social experiment successfully is a managerial tour de force. . . ." Our largest investment in a demonstration research project with a randomized experimental control group was *Supported Work* which was a 5-year effort to test whether individuals with severe employment problems could be made employable by exposing them to a controlled work experience. The demonstration research project proved most effective in preparing for employment a substantial number of women who had been on welfare (AFDC) for many years. The program also had an impact on a significant segment of the study's ex-addict population. There was only a marginal effect on ex-offenders who did not show less criminal behavior and whose rate of employment and earnings were only slightly better than a control group of ex-offenders. Neither was there any long term positive results for the youths in the demonstration project.

A second random experimental control project, which coincidentally also offered services to female heads of households in AFDC, involved an effort to move women on welfare from the secondary to the primary labor market so that they could become self-supporting. Welfare mothers were entered in selected training institutions that offered tightly structured instructional formats, remedial education and a proven record of placing graduates in expanding occupations with starting wages of more than \$9,000 per year. We learned that it was possible to make a certain proportion

of women on welfare self-supporting. The results indicated that a significant investment in training, remedial education and supportive services could overcome the destructiveness of poverty, poor education and discrimination for some women on AFDC.⁸

In summing up our experience in developing and maintaining a research strategy in a mission-oriented federal agency, it is worth noting that missions are subject to change even without new legislation. For example, the concept of "economically disadvantaged" was not articulated in the laws controlling our programs until the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973. The spillover of the war against poverty, which pervaded the government during the 1960s, contributed to the change of the direction of the employment and training program.

As indicated earlier, administrators of federal research and development programs, if they are to survive, must be responsive to the immediate needs of political appointees and be prepared to support short term research that might be useful for current policy decisions. Although cumulative, long term information-building research seems to provide more valid findings than some ad hoc research, it is far more difficult to introduce and maintain in a federal environment oriented to annual budgets and quick and easy solutions of enormously complex problems.

The deep-rooted causes of unemployment, discrimination and other factors handicapping workers rarely match single social science research disciplines. For this reason, interdisciplinary research efforts and more cooperation among federal agencies are needed to explore social and economic problems assigned to the government. Finally, in spite of the difficulties in managing experimental and demonstration projects and their other limitations, greater effort should be made to test small scale exploratory projects before launching major national large scale programs.

Policy: The Evanescent Goal

Government decisions affecting policies or courses of action are generally not traceable to a clearly demarcated event. Instead, they are more likely to be part of a slow, inefficient and haphazard process. Unfortunately, research findings are rarely available at the exact moment they are needed in making policy decisions. Furthermore, many research studies produce ambiguous results at a time when a decision-maker seeks clear-cut findings. Because of timing and ambiguity problems, social science research can primarily contribute enlightenment rather than solutions to the policymaking process. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties associated with social research, administrators of federal research and development programs are regularly challenged by newly appointed political officeholders with the question, "What impact has your program had on policy?"

In assessing the effect of ETA's research and development program on policy decisions, it is well to keep in mind that between 1962 and 1980, the Department of Labor had eight secretaries and five assistant secretaries responsible for administering employment and training programs. One could reply to the previous question with another question, "Whose policy?" Not only did the top personnel change quite often, but so did the policy direction of the program. As noted earlier, program concentration shifted from workers affected by automation to economically disadvantaged workers. The system of delivery of services changed drastically between MDTA and CETA from centralized delivery to decentralization. New deliverers of service known as Prime Sponsors were introduced. In addition, public employment programs were introduced in the 1973 legislation and the responsibility for providing services to special target groups such as youth, offenders, persons of limited English-speaking ability and older workers was assigned to the federal government.

The combination of the number of political appointees, their rapid turnover and short term orientation as well as major shifts in priorities and philosophy compounded the job of a research administrator interested in developing a coherent, cumulative, long term program that could contribute to policy decisions. We soon learned that most political appointees are not interested in funding projects that will deliver findings long after they have left office.

Our experience in trying to introduce policy issues in the *President's Manpower Report* (also known as the *Employment and Training Report of the President*) is worth noting. We were constantly criticized because this report, which was our responsibility, was not used as a vehicle for introducing new significant policy issues. In response to this criticism, we attempted to introduce policy issues which we thought could be agreed upon by the review process. We discovered that unilaterally originated policy was shot down in the extensive interagency review process. Each reviewer refused to accept responsibility for approving a policy that had not been previously agreed upon by his political superior. It became obvious that this was the wrong way to introduce policy issues. In order to bring new employment and training policy issues to the fore it would have been first necessary to secure agreement from cabinet officers and then use the report route. We decided that it was not worth the time and effort and were content to let the report simply describe programs and provide data on labor force, employment and unemployment, hours, earnings and turnover.

In addition to a very active publishing program which produced dozens of monographs summarizing what we learned from research and development projects, we devised several tactics for bringing current research findings to the attention of policymakers so that they could be used in the decision-making process. One device which proved to be quite effective was to ask researchers to make personal presentations to people in policy positions. During the height of the U.S.

debate on the possible use of public service jobs in employment and training programs, one of our researchers reported to the Secretary of Labor on a study of the effect of public service programs on unemployment in several European countries. Another researcher discussed with an assistant secretary the findings of a study of the employment problems of black professional women in southern cities. A Secretary of Labor heard a detailed report on the results of a long term study of income assistance to ex-offenders. This procedure effectively kept policymakers current with the latest research findings.

Executive summaries of the results of research and development projects relevant to their work or interest were distributed regularly to policymakers in the Department of Labor, executives in other federal agencies, senators and representatives, and key staff members on the Hill. Interest groups and leaders of public opinion in the public and private sectors were sent selected research and development reports. Monographs and reports were sent to the research community. For example, Peter B. Doeringer and Michael J. Piore's work on the dual labor market theory was published as an ETA monograph and given wide distribution. In recognition of the cumulative nature of social science research, we published syntheses of several reports on the same general subject area.

The products of the research office probably had their greatest impact on legislation. We were able to directly trace the findings of research studies on amendments to the original Manpower Act. Reference to certain target groups and concepts introduced in the CETA legislation can be traced back to research and development findings. Our location in the Office of Policy, Evaluation and Research gave us easy access to staff members who were developing policy statements or preparing legislation. They used our research reports in developing new legislative proposals.

As suggested earlier, it is almost impossible to determine which research results help to shape policy decisions. Nor is it possible to predict, in advance, what impact research findings will have on policy. The single research study funded by the Office of Research and Development, which probably had the greatest immediate and traceable impact on public and private policy was a modestly funded study of the reasons for the low level of black participation in apprenticeship programs.⁹

The findings of this study, which documented the reasons why so few blacks were in apprenticeship and described the methods used to bar their entry, resulted in a sharp and immediate redirection of the program of the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training and changed the apprenticeship selection system of unions and employers. The results were used by public agencies and private interest groups concerned with equal employment opportunities. Based on this study, the Department of Labor funded action programs designed to assist minorities in entering apprenticeship programs. The findings and their use in programs of this research project were probably the primary reason for the large increase of black participation in apprenticeship programs during the 1960s and 1970s.

Apparently, an unusual combination of factors contributed to the acceptance and immediate use of this study of the apprenticeship system. The right questions were evidently asked at a time in history when there was a receptive audience of public and private policymakers who were willing to act on the research findings. It coincided with a civil rights movement that was seeking targets. No one could have predicted in advance that this small research project would have had such a far-reaching impact on policy. Certainly, one cannot generalize about policy-oriented research based on this and hundreds of other projects. The combination of levels of funding, subjects studied, questions asked, the receptivity of policymakers, timing and the temper of the

times are not too helpful in anticipating the impact of research on policy.

When the research program was 10 years old, the Department of Labor asked the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council to establish a committee to review, assess and make recommendations regarding the manpower research and development program. Among the topics covered by the committee was the "relevance of the Department's R&D efforts to . . . influence . . . the development of national manpower and related policies and programs. . . ." ¹⁰ After analyzing a sample of almost 1,000 projects funded by the Office of Research and Development between 1963 and 1975, commissioning papers on specific aspects of the ORD program and conducting 375 interviews, the committee concluded that the "manpower R&D program has made a number of outstanding contributions to policy. . . ." ¹¹

The committee reported that ORD had been instrumental in identifying and exploring the complexities of manpower problems. It referred specifically to our work on job vacancies, projections of future manpower requirements, the nature and extent of occupational training of the nation's labor force, the spatial and occupational distribution of unemployment and underemployment and the employment experience of minority workers and the economically and socially disadvantaged. Studies of labor market deficiencies, including the adverse effects of occupational licensing, employment discrimination and the development of new theories to illuminate complexities of labor market operations were also cited as examples of research and development projects influencing policy and programs. The committee noted the realities of the research office's existence in an operationally oriented federal department subject to frequent shifts in policy. As a result of the committee's interviews, it found only scant acceptance among department officials "of the need for comprehensive, extended efforts aim-

ed at better understanding fundamental and persistent manpower problems.”¹²

To summarize our experience in policy-oriented research, we would conclude that the design of a social science research program which can be useful to policymakers in a mission-oriented agency is probably the greatest challenge faced by research administrators. The turnover of political appointees, many of whom take government positions with preconceived biases and special agendas, the general lack of interest in long term research and frequent changes in priorities and legislation all reduce the potential contribution of social research to the policymaking process. In spite of these difficulties, a research administrator must constantly explore ways of bringing valid research findings to the attention of decisionmakers.

Disappointments and Accomplishments

In reviewing 18 years of experience as an administrator of a federal research and development program, I should like to first comment on some of my disappointments. I fear that little can be done about my negative conclusions.

Let me again start with the caveat that my comments on political leadership apply to both political parties. The Department of Labor was quite fortunate in being administered by political appointees between 1962 and 1980 who, for the most part, if not interested in social science research at least tolerated it. Unfortunately, our political system often brings appointees into the government who not only know very little about the programs they are to administer but who are unable to use social science research findings in making policy decisions. Communicating the objective results of research findings to some political appointees was sometimes a futile exercise. I see little likelihood in the foreseeable future that presidents will ever make selections of political appointees on the basis of their program knowledge or their ability to use research findings.

My second major disappointment was with the social science research community. Most of the social scientists who applied for research funding to the Office of Research and Development seemed to be unaware that they were approaching a research organization in a mission-oriented agency. Many of them never took the time to read the law under which we operated.

Our graduate educational system seems to turn out too many researchers who are concerned with methodology, model building, and discipline-oriented research that is of little use to those concerned with the nation's economic and social problems. Our educational system seems to destroy whatever creativity or innovativeness students may have before they become researchers. Too many social scientists do not recognize that social research is cumulative and often requires long term commitment on the part of the researcher. Again, as with political appointees, I foresee little possibility in the near future of improvement in the training of social scientists. Graduate schools will continue to produce too many narrow discipline-oriented researchers, most of whom will have little interest in applying their research skills to real world problems.

What did we accomplish in 18 years of the research and development program?

In order to attempt to answer this question I refer to a 16-year compilation of research and development projects.¹³ I was first struck by the enormous diversity of our interests. Our projects covered almost every subject in the employment and training field. Second, although we made considerable investments in applied program research, we still managed to support basic research. Third, we funded a large number of assessment and evaluation projects which provided policymakers with objective data on the effectiveness of Department of Labor programs. If one wanted to get information to criticize DOL's work, one simply could turn to the research findings of projects funded by a neutral, profes-

sional social science research program conducted by a federal agency. Fourth, the true meaning of cumulative research became apparent in tracing projects that slowly built on previous research findings. Our studies of illegal immigrants, discrimination, occupational licensing, employment problems of ex-offenders, barriers to employment and other labor market operation projects were supported over 10-year periods. The continuity of support and the commitment of researchers to particular subject areas effectively build a bank of information on important social and economic problems. Fifth, our intensive concentration on certain issues is certainly impressive. For example, our early research predicted that important social and economic developments were changing the work pattern and life style of American women.

During the first 16 years of the program, some 128 projects were funded to examine the work and employment problems of women workers. The subjects studied ranged from women in nontraditional blue-collar jobs, maternity leave benefits, child care arrangements of working mothers, labor force mobility of women, the effects of marriage and divorce on labor force participation, fertility and career patterns, dual careers, minority women in white-collar jobs, female heads of families, marital status and occupational mobility of women, econometric analysis of the part-time labor market for women and career patterns of women physicians. These research studies combined with experimental and developmental projects designed to break new ground for women in the labor market can be considered a major accomplishment of the program.

As noted earlier, our research and development work contributed to a broader understanding of the employment problems of the economically disadvantaged of our society. Exploratory studies of unemployment in the ghetto changed the data collection system of BLS and the Census Bureau. A series of studies of the employment problems of ex-offenders

led to changes in questions on job application forms of state and local government about arrest records. Much of our work was translated into legislative amendments and the introduction of new concepts in legislation.

The development and continuing support of the National Longitudinal Surveys has provided the country with new information about the employment experience of our workforce, the effect of health on work and retirement, labor force participation of women, discrimination, attitudes toward work and the result of inadequate labor market knowledge on the earnings and careers of minority youth. The longitudinal nature of these surveys has given us, for the first time, predictive tools and a broader understanding of how social and cultural changes affect work patterns.

Our efforts to improve the methodologies used to assess social programs should provide more valid findings for the use of policymakers. In my view, the emphasis we placed on the use of random assignments, control groups, cost accounting, adequate samples and the professional management of experimental and demonstration projects contributed to the improvement of the state of art of experimental and demonstration projects. We believe that the Supported Work model established a landmark for future research demonstration projects.

The grant and institutional support programs played a central role in increasing the number and improving the quality of researchers active in the field of employment and training. Well over 500 recipients of grants completed their doctorates. The institutional grant program, which funded undergraduate study and self-directed faculty research helped increase academically-based research centers.

One final reflection: the management of a program involving thousands of projects and millions of dollars of federal funds is obviously not a one-person job. The quality and effectiveness of the research and development program

depended on the small number of career servants who conducted the day-to-day operations of soliciting, developing and reviewing proposals, handling the onerous details associated with government contracts and grants, monitoring projects and planning utilization strategy. These employees had to combine practical managerial skill with a professional knowledge of the social sciences. Praising government employees is not a popular pastime in Washington in 1984. But I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to the professionalism, conscientiousness and dedication of the federal employees who contributed to the success of the Employment and Training Administration's research and development program.

Washington is noted for the short term careers of political appointees who leave few lasting reminders of their ephemeral fame. In contrast, the civil servants who participated in ETA's research and development program can rest assured that they have left a lasting legacy of knowledge and information which has had and will continue to have an impact on some of this country's most complex social and economic problems.

NOTES

1. Public Law 87-415, *The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962*, 87th Congress, March 15, 1962, Title I, Section 102, p. 2.
2. The original group assigned to work on MDTA under Dr. Wolfbein, who was a deputy to the Secretary of Labor, consisted of Margaret Thomas, Joseph (Jerry) Zeisel, Earl Klein and the author of these reflections.
3. U.S. Department of Labor, *Formal Occupational Training of Adult Workers*, Manpower/Automation Research Monograph No. 2, 1964.
4. Some of the recipients of the doctoral awards still working on problems of employment and training include Robert J. Flanagan, Robert Taggart III, Sharon P. Smith, Leonard J. Hausman, Ronald L. Oaxaca,

James L. Medoff, Peter Doeringer, James J. Heckman, Collette H. Moser, Richard B. Freeman, Daniel Quinn Mills, Robert J. Lerman, Frank Mott, Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Kenneth I. Wolpin, Bennett Harrison, Thomas A. Barocci, Harriet Zellner and Francine O. Blau.

5. The President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, *One-Third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service*, January 1, 1964.

6. Benjamin Shonberg, Barbara F. Essen, and Daniel H. Kruger, *Occupational Licensing: Practices and Policies* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1972).

7. Alice M. Rivlin, "How Can Experiments Be More Useful?" *The American Economic Review* 64, No. 2 (May 1974), pp. 346-53.

8. Considerable credit for the excellent management of the Supported Work Project and the educational project for women on welfare should be given to Fritz Kramer and Gordon Berlin, two dedicated staff members of the Office of Research and Development, who shepherded the projects from origin to conclusion.

9. F. Ray Marshall and Vernon M. Briggs, Jr., *The Negro and Apprenticeship* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).

10. National Academy of Sciences, *Knowledge and Policy in Manpower* (Washington, DC, 1975), p. iv.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

13. U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, *Research and Development: A 16-Year Compendium (1963-78)*, Washington, DC, 1979.