

**AmeriCorps Organizational Networks
on the Ground**

**Six Case Studies
of
Indiana AmeriCorps Programs**

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Corporation for National Service

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AmeriCorps Organizational Networks on the Ground: Six Case Studies of Indiana AmeriCorps Programs

Focus of Project

A growing body of multi-disciplinary research suggests that we live in an increasingly “networked” world in which policy making and implementation occur through a variety of institutional arrangements other than traditional bureaucracies or private sector organizations (Alter and Hage, 1993; Kettl, 1996; O’Toole, 1997a, 1997b; Provan and Milward, 1995; Milward, 1996; Sagawa and Segal, 1998). Devolution, the reinventing government movement, increasingly rapid changes in technology, and scarce resources are only some of the factors identified by scholars to “explain” the emergence of these new kinds of organizational arrangements among the public, for-profit, and non-profit sectors to meet community needs.

Inter-sectoral arrangements are not new to national service policy implementation. “Service programs,” according to the Corporation for National Service, “by their very nature, must collaborate and form partnerships with a wide variety of organizations and individuals (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. 53.) This is empirically demonstrated by the extraordinary variety of arrangements organizations have developed to implement national service programs across America. Many of these arrangements occur in what scholars increasingly call networks (Powell, 1990, O’Toole, 1997a; Bardach, 1998; Radin et al., 1996; Milward, 1996; Nohria and Eccles, 1992). Networks of organizations that come together to achieve some purpose may hold the potential to create new inter-organizational ties to better meet community needs.

This paper is an extension of research conducted in 1995-96 at Indiana University, Bloomington (Perry and Thomson, 1996; Thomson and Perry, 1998). It is driven by an interest in the potential national service programs hold for building communities by strengthening inter-organizational relationships through service. I am especially interested in how *groups of organizations* work together to achieve national service goals at the community level.

Project Background

This is a qualitative exploratory multi-case study analysis of six Indiana AmeriCorps* State/National and VISTA programs. The approach is deliberately bottom-up, focusing on what these organizational networks “look like” at the community level of national service policy implementation. A network perspective underlies the logic of this paper. AmeriCorps programs are viewed as groups of organizations (not single programs) embedded in a system of social relationships. The analysis focuses on understanding the nature of these organizational relationships and the processes that emerge through those relationships (Nohria, 1992, p. 4). This perspective corresponds to the “realities” of national service policy implementation where most national service outcomes occur through “a complex series of partnerships [and] operate through third parties, including

non-profit organizations, states, and local governments” (Corporation for National Service, 1998, p. 29).

Two questions drive my research:

1. What is the nature of AmeriCorps organizational networks on the ground?
2. What factors affect how AmeriCorps organizational networks evolve over time?

I rely on three primary methods for data collection:

1. Review of the theoretical and practitioner-based literature on inter-organizational relationships and collaboration, supplemented by face-to-face interviews with experts in the national service and collaboration fields,
2. Case study research that includes:
 - Participant observation during field visits to a sample of six AmeriCorps program sites drawn from the population of Indiana AmeriCorps* State /National and VISTA programs,
 - Face-to-face and phone interviews with national, state, and local level stakeholders, including program staff, directors, partner organization staff, board members, and AmeriCorps members, and
 - Content analysis of four years of program documents from each of the 6 cases in my sample, and
3. Survey research that includes:
 - A mailed survey of all directors of Indiana AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA programs.

I also conducted two focus groups: one with AmeriCorps program directors at a training retreat hosted by the Commission, and the other with Indiana’s newly formed Inter-Corps Council at the Indiana AmeriCorps 1999 Winter Retreat.

Literature Review

In general, the theoretical literature on networks is vast, multi-disciplinary and primarily concerned with the structural properties of networks, properties such as size and task complexity. The practitioner-based literature, equally vast, tends to focus on how participants in networks interact. Rather than focusing on structural properties, practitioner-based research focuses on processes, using terms like collaboration, partnering, and cooperation.

My definition of AmeriCorps organizational networks derives primarily from the collaboration and practitioner-based literature. In this paper, I define an AmeriCorps organizational network as:

A voluntary joint arrangement among a group of autonomous organizations that interact with one another to achieve some specified, though not always mutually agreed upon, purpose related to national service policy implementation.

A review of the theoretical and practitioner-based literature yields a number of typologies of networks and network processes. These typologies are usually conceived in terms of a continuum with low levels of interaction and complexity on one end of the scale and high levels of interaction and complexity on the other end. Nearly all of them share a normative bias towards organizational networks that fall on the higher end of the continuum. Most of them also assume a linear process that is developmental and sequential. In order to move successfully from low levels of interaction and complexity to higher levels, organizations must be able to achieve certain outcomes before evolving to a “higher” state of working together.

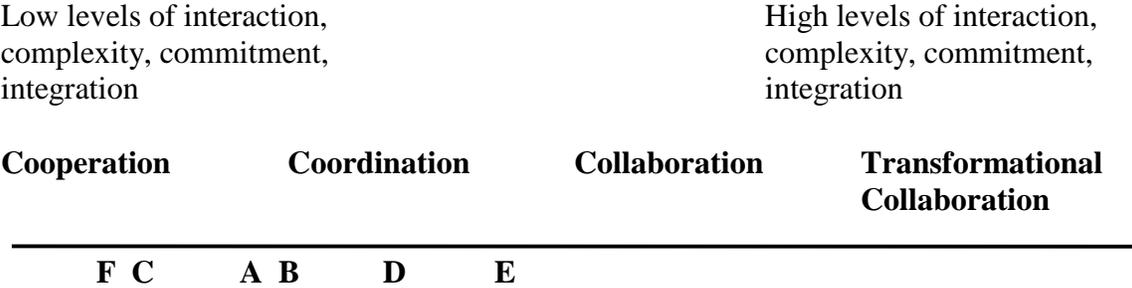
From this literature I develop a framework for studying AmeriCorps organizational networks that classifies network processes into four types: cooperative, coordinative, collaborative, and transformational depending on how they vary along eight dimensions. These dimensions range from motivation for working together to network management and governance. Table One in the paper provides definitions of each process by dimension (pp. 19 – 22).

Key Findings

What Do AmeriCorps Organizational Networks Look Like?

Case-by-Case Analysis

The six cases in my sample (Programs A – F) vary in size, service model, geographical scope, funding, area of service, and age. I deliberately chose a sample of cases with programs that had been in existence for at least four years in order to assess the developmental assumptions found in the literature. Section three of the paper includes detailed descriptions and an analysis of each program across the eight dimensions in my framework. The figure below illustrates where each program falls on a continuum from low to high levels of interaction, complexity, commitment and integration.



My findings suggest that AmeriCorps organizational networks exhibit a rich variety in how they look and a fluidity in network processes not captured in my review of the literature. Although the six cases in my sample demonstrate primarily cooperative and coordinative network processes more than they do collaborative ones, most of them demonstrate moments of collaboration and, in some cases, even hints of transformational processes.

Cross-Case Analysis

Overall, service model, length of time in existence, and whether or not a program is funded may be important variables that affect network processes. Decentralization, the norm of organizational autonomy, and project-based goals tend to be more important than geographical scope for determining how organizations work together to achieve national service goals.

Program Director Survey and Focus Group

A mail survey of all AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA program directors supports most of the findings of the case-by-case and cross-case analyses. Primary new findings are summarized below (for exact percentages, see p. 67).

- When asked to prioritize among five goals on a scale of most important (one) to least important (five), the most important goal for both AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA directors was “providing direct service to those in need.” The least important goal was “bringing a group of organizations together that share a belief in the value of national service as a mutually beneficial way to meet community needs.”
- When asked whether the perceived benefits of working together with other organizations to achieve AmeriCorps goals outweighed the costs, both groups of directors agreed, though AmeriCorps VISTA directors felt more strongly about this than did AmeriCorps*State/National directors.
- When asked to rank factors most important for organizations to successfully work together, program directors in both groups identified communication as one of the most important factors. Having a common vision that national service can meet community needs also proved to be an important factor for AmeriCorps*VISTA directors.

Findings from the program director focus group yield important information about decision-making and power distribution in AmeriCorps organizational networks. While the majority of directors that filled out the focus group questionnaire indicate local level programs have a fair amount of discretion to make local programmatic decisions, 94% of them indicate some organizations in their network are more powerful than other organizations. When asked whether organizations in the network to which they belong have an equal say in how to achieve network goals, 44% of those that filled out the questionnaire indicate “yes”, 56% indicate “no”. Reasons given for why some organizations have more power than others range from resources (whoever has the most

money) to community legitimacy, “big picture thinking”, passion and level of commitment to achieving network goals.

Key Findings

What Factors Affect How AmeriCorps Organizational Networks Evolve Over Time?

The AmeriCorps organizational networks in my sample tend to move back and forth between network processes rather than evolve in a developmental pattern from lower levels of complexity and integration to higher forms of organizing. Organizations in the networks I examined do not deliberately consider how movement from one network process to another might affect their performance and capacity to get things done, but stakeholders in these networks were quick to provide numerous examples of barriers they face when trying to work together.

Seven factors emerge as important for determining how AmeriCorps organizational networks evolve over time. These are:

- Multiple organizational perspectives,
- The need for early successes,
- Limits of human nature,
- Resources,
- Type of AmeriCorps member recruited,
- Meaningfulness of communication, and
- Management style and infrastructure.

These seven factors suggest that on the ground AmeriCorps organizational networks face multiple challenges trying to achieve national service goals and may explain the overall lack of evidence in my sample for sustained collaborative activities. My findings suggest that the normative bias for collaboration in the literature and among practitioners may need reconsideration. National service program stakeholders need to avoid the assumption that collaborative processes are always better than cooperative or coordinative ones. Rather than focus on trying to mandate collaboration -- which is costly -- a more fruitful approach may be to help partners in AmeriCorps organizational networks identify the trade-offs they face when they collectively engage in one network process over another. A discussion of the trade-offs can be found in section four of this paper (pp. 83 – 86).

Implications of Findings and Recommendations for National Service Practice

Overall, my findings suggest that the trade-offs of staying in cooperative and project-based networks with coordinative processes are not serious enough to induce partner organizations to deliberately pursue collaborative network processes. The primary motivation for organizations to work together in the networks in my sample is to achieve

their own organizational missions. Where those missions overlap, organizations find enough “glue” to hold their network together. Organizations are savvy enough to know that they need each other sometimes to meet their own needs, but they are not generally willing to give up their own interests to achieve a comprehensive vision for community change.

Implications for National Service Practice

The results of my research suggest that the Corporation for National Service may want to re-evaluate four areas as it considers how to improve national service policy implementation in local communities. These four areas are:

- Re-evaluating the meaning of collaboration.

In its strategic plan, the Corporation for National Service indicates the intention to “increasingly [enter] into collaborative ventures where Corporation funds are a much reduced, even minor, part of the investment pool supporting service opportunities” (Corporation for National Service, 1997, p. 35). My findings suggest (and the literature supports) collaborative ventures, if they are to be successful, require an increase, not a decrease in organizational resources. Though financial resources are important, other resources such as commitment, time, energy, and collaboration training are equally important. Given the costliness of collaborative processes, a more useful approach may be to consider when fostering collaboration is appropriate and feasible and when it is not.

- Approaching national service policy implementation from a network perspective.

A network perspective is consistent with what the Corporation already knows, that “the results of national service [come] through a complex series of partnerships (Corporation for National Service, 1998, p. 29). The problem is, most policy makers and program implementers still think in programmatic terms that focus on achieving individual program goals, despite the reality that most policy implementation today is multi-organizational and occurs through networks. Program directors find themselves trying to meet and monitor compliance to program rules and federal standards at the expense of building inter-organizational relationships. A network perspective forces researchers and practitioners to think in broader terms and encourages program directors to focus on developing negotiation, problem-solving, and team-building skills.

- Reconsidering the value of AmeriCorps members for building inter-organizational relationships.

If the Corporation intends to foster collaborative ventures, then it may wish to re-evaluate the role of corps members in that endeavor. My findings suggest mixed opinions on the appropriateness and feasibility of corps members acting as organizational bridge-builders. One national service expert insisted corps

members hold great potential for acting as “glue” people (Interview, national service expert, 11/15/98). Most of the program directors with whom I spoke agreed. AmeriCorps members vary in their responses. AmeriCorps*VISTA members demonstrate greater understanding of this role than do AmeriCorps*State/National corps members. This is not surprising given their different orientations and training.

- Examining cross-stream service initiatives and the value of the AmeriCorps Leaders program for strengthening network performance.

The Corporation’s cross-stream service initiative and its AmeriCorps Leaders program both demonstrate new approaches to fostering collaborative network processes among national service programs. One interviewee described it as “building bridges from the bottom up” (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98). My findings give anecdotal evidence that partners in the cross-stream service initiative face similar limitations that on the ground AmeriCorps organizational networks face trying to work together. A more direct approach -- using AmeriCorps Leaders as ambassadors among partner organizations and as trainers for corps members -- may prove more effective, at least in the short-run. Participants in both initiatives could benefit from collaboration training that teaches skills like negotiating, problem-solving, brain-storming, and team-based management.

Recommendations for National Service Practice

The Corporation may wish to re-evaluate its perspective on collaboration by identifying when collaborative ventures are appropriate and feasible and when they are not. Examining the trade-offs implicit in different network processes will help program stakeholders identify the costs and benefits they face pursuing one process over another.

When the costs of pursuing collaboration are deemed inappropriate and infeasible, AmeriCorps organizational networks with coordinative network processes hold great potential for “getting things done” in local communities. Strengthening these processes will require:

- Helping partner organizations in these networks clarify their roles and responsibilities, develop *meaningful* memorandums of agreement, and identify concrete, short-term, achievable national service goals,
- Fostering project-based networks with high potential for successful achievement of project goals,
- Appealing to the self-interest of each partner organization, and
- Linking evaluation of effective network performance to achievement of project-goals, not sustainable collaborative structures.

When the costs of pursuing collaboration are deemed appropriate and feasible, targeting resources to more deliberately cover the costs of collaboration might increase the likelihood that such ventures will be successful. Strengthening collaborative network processes will require:

- Awareness of the costs involved and willingness of partners to share those costs,
- Fostering what one VISTA member called a “bigger picture approach” that broadens partner organizations’ perspectives. The Corporation and state commissions should consider cross-partner organization training by hosting conferences and network meetings that include all partner organizations, not just program directors. Incentives could be developed to encourage partner organization stakeholders to participate in both state and national level training and conferences. Examples of some incentives are: personal phone calls by state commission or even Corporation staff to invite partner organizations to meetings and trainings, reimbursement for travel costs such as providing group rates, and identifying leaders in partner organizations for state and/or national recognition,
- Targeting resources for collaboration training of all partners in the network (including partner organization directors, not just AmeriCorps program directors),
- Developing a network management infrastructure that focuses on sustaining the AmeriCorps network, not the AmeriCorps program,
- Hiring relationship managers (Sagawa and Segal, 1998) whose primary responsibilities lie in the day-to-day building of inter-organizational relationships,
- Linking evaluation of network performance to the development of sustainable inter-organizational ties that better meet community needs.

Implications of Findings and Recommendations for National Service Research

Viewing collaboration as only one of several processes available to achieve national service goals suggests that different processes yield different outcomes. This means we need different performance measures for different AmeriCorps organizational networks. Performance measures for coordinative network processes, for example, need to focus on the achievement of a specific goal, not on building a sustainable network capable of a more comprehensive response to community problems. Holding networks accountable for outcomes that do not match processes may be problematic.

Clearly, these findings need further empirical and theoretical research and should be treated as hypotheses. Examining the relationship between network processes and network performance is one of the most important areas for research because of the implications for national service outcomes. We also need more research on local perceptions of end outcomes. The Corporation’s program logic models, though they are

helpful for thinking through policy implementation from the top down, do not adequately take into account the link between network processes and network outcomes from the bottom-up. The Corporation admits the models take a national perspective. More research from the bottom-up could increase the value and relevance of these models for program evaluation.

Harris Wofford is correct in characterizing the national service field as a “kind of R&D experiment” (Wofford, 1997, p. 108). A network perspective is an increasingly relevant perspective for studying national service policy implementation. Making the network, rather than the program, the unit of analysis forces researchers and practitioners to acknowledge the complexity inherent in multi-organizational policy implementation. Moving from a programmatic to a network perspective poses daunting problems for researchers, but ignoring the complexities may result in irrelevant theories and ineffective practices. Research on the processes that emerge as participants in AmeriCorps organizational networks interact is not only timely. It is important for understanding how such networks yield effective national service outcomes.

I believe all research is a work in progress and a shared responsibility. This paper is certainly an example of both. Many people joined me in this effort, sharing their stories, opinions, and thoughts about how organizations work together to achieve national service policy goals. Others donated their time and critical editing skills to help me clearly articulate the results of my research.

This executive summary cannot possibly capture the richness of detail embodied in this paper. I offer the paper to any and all readers as an opportunity for further discussion, research, and thought-provoking dialogue in order to strengthen the field of national service.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Program Profiles
Appendix B: Description of Data Sources

AmeriCorps Organizational Networks: Definition and Research Design

The theoretical literature on networks is vast, multi-disciplinary, and primarily concerned with the structural properties that characterize networks, properties such as:

- size
- centrality (closeness of stakeholders to each other)
- task complexity, and
- presence of environmental uncertainty.

The practitioner-based literature, equally vast, tends to focus primarily on the processes that characterize how people in organizations interact. Rather than the structural term, *network*, practitioner-based research focuses on process terms like collaboration, partnering, and cooperation.

AMERICORPS ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK DEFINED

My definition of AmeriCorps organizational networks derives primarily from the collaboration and practitioner-based literature, with its emphasis on process, rather than on structural properties. Barbara Gray's (1989, 1991, 1996) work on collaboration provides the primary rationale for the definition I propose because of its focus on how stakeholders in a collaborative effort interact. Together with Donna Wood, Gray develops the following definition for collaboration. Collaboration occurs when

A group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structure, to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Wood and Gray, 1991, p. 146).

This definition underscores one of the key properties that characterize most network processes -- participants have autonomy and typically participate in networks voluntarily. In the case of AmeriCorps organizational networks (hereafter referred to as AONs), this means that organizational partners may bring with them multiple (often conflicting) organizational interests

and goals. They may also have different perceptions of the nature of the problem they wish to collectively address. In such an environment, compliance to federal rules and standards is difficult to enforce and AmeriCorps program directors need to rely on persuasion and other negotiating skills to build commitment among partner organizations.

Catherine Alter and Jerald Hage (1993) add another perspective to the study of inter-organizational relations in networks. Instead of focusing on collaboration, they develop an evolutionary model of network development based on the type of interaction that occurs among participants of the network. They define a network as:

the basic social form that permits inter-organizational transactions of exchange, concerted effort, and [or] joint production (p. 46).

This definition is sufficiently broad to incorporate different forms of interaction among network participants. Some networks, for example, may have organizational partners that only engage in simple exchange transactions such as information sharing. Others, however, demonstrate more complex inter-organizational relationships where partners, in order to jointly produce a particular product, have to work together in more sophisticated ways. The value of Alter and Hage's definition lies in its emphasis on the dynamic nature of network forms of organizing, allowing for a range of different network types.

The Corporation for National Service perspective on collaboration also implies a developmental potential latent in AmeriCorps organizational networks, best illustrated in their distinction between partnership and collaboration. A partnership is:

A joint arrangement among a group of organizations eligible for Corporation assistance... [or] a nonprofit organization created or identified by such a group, whose purpose is to carry out common objectives that are specific and well-defined, and in which the responsibilities of each partner are clearly defined and mutually understood (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. A-62).

In contrast to this definition, collaboration is described as:

A linkage [among partners that exemplifies] mutual problem-solving, decision-making, and mutual respect (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. 53).

Both definitions incorporate elements of process in them. But partnership processes such as:

- carrying out common objectives,
- specifying and defining those objectives, and
- coming to a mutual understanding of partner responsibilities,

tend to require less commitment of time, energy, and other resources than do collaborative processes such as:

- mutual problem-solving,
- decision-making, and
- mutual respect.

Whether partnerships can evolve to collaboration depends on how partner organizations balance their own interests with their collective interests. In its *Principles for High Quality National Service Programs* (1994), the Corporation seems to imply that partnerships may evolve to collaboration by following certain key principles such as:

- identifying mutual needs and interests;
- developing a commitment among partners to invest resources including money, time, energy, and willingness to engage in “group process”; and
- demonstrating openness to partners and a willingness to share ownership of the collective effort (pp. 53-54).

A review of the literature on collaboration and how organizations interact in networks supports a definition of an AON broad enough to accommodate the dynamic and fluid nature of inter-organizational interactions. This dynamic nature suggests the potential for AONs to demonstrate a wide array of different types of network processes in the field. My definition of the subject under study derives its rationale from Gray and Wood’s work. It also incorporates

the potential for evolution implicit in Alter and Hage and the Corporation's perspectives on how organizations interact to accomplish some purpose.

In this paper, I define an AmeriCorps organizational network as:

A voluntary joint arrangement among a group of autonomous organizations that interact with one another to achieve some specified, though not always mutually agreed upon, purpose related to national service policy implementation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a qualitative exploratory multi-case study analysis of six Indiana AmeriCorps* State/National and VISTA programs and the organizational networks to which they belong.¹ A network perspective informs the research design and the two questions driving my research:

1. What do AmeriCorps organizational networks look like?
2. What factors affect how AmeriCorps organizational networks evolve over time?

A network perspective focuses analysis on embedded social relationships and processes among components of a network (in this case, organizations). This perspective is appropriate given my interest in the processes that characterize what AONs look like.

Focusing on network processes, however, poses daunting problems for research design, problems such as:

- difficulty controlling for multiple stakeholder perceptions,
- making sense of the wide variety of forms these networks take,
- finding ways to capture the richness and complexity of multiple organizational settings, and
- addressing the general lack of consensus about the meaning of fundamental terms like collaboration, cooperation, partnerships, and alliances.

¹. Appendix A includes profiles of each of the programs in my sample.

In situations like this, *qualitative* research is a valuable method because it allows the researcher to examine in greater detail the nature of a complex subject, detail that could be lost in large-scale quantitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Patton, 1990).

This study is an example of applied research that relies on a modified grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), an approach that moves back and forth between theory and fieldwork. My research begins with the theoretical literature to derive a framework for studying AONs, moves to the field for substantiation and clarification, and returns to the theoretical framework to modify and change the hypothesized relationships derived from the literature.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is an organizational network. Scholars disagree about whether only *people* can act to achieve purpose or whether *organizations* have the ability to act in their own interests (March and Olsen, 1983; Astley and Van de Ven, 1983; Weick, 1979; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). In this study, *organizations* in AONs are assumed to be actors in their own right. People in organizations are seen as representatives of the organizations in which they work. Although the character of organizational activity depends on how individuals behave, that behavior is constrained by organizational missions and culture, standard operating procedures, and sanctions for non-compliance to organizational rules (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Indeed, in his study of an AmeriCorps program in one state, Skolnik (1998) found that persons in the organizations that he studied tended to take on an “institutional personality” in which they actually thought of themselves as the organizations to which they belonged (p. 116).

Methods and Data Collection

This study relies on three primary methods for data collection:

- Review of the theoretical and practitioner-based literature on organizational networks and collaboration, supplemented by face-to-face interviews with experts in the national service and collaboration fields,
- Case study research² that includes:
 - Participant observation during field visits to the sample of six AmeriCorps program sites drawn from the population of Indiana AmeriCorps* State/National and VISTA programs,³
 - Face-to-face and phone interviews with national, state, and local level stakeholders, including program staff, directors, partner organization staff, board members, and AmeriCorps members,
 - Content analysis of four years of program documents from each of the six cases in my sample, and
- Survey research that includes:
 - A mailed survey distributed to all directors of Indiana AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA programs.

Several activities hosted by the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism presented unexpected opportunities for two other sources of data. Focus groups were held with AmeriCorps program directors at a training retreat and with AmeriCorps members who currently sit on Indiana's newly formed Inter-Corps Council⁴ at the Indiana AmeriCorps 1999 Winter Retreat. The annual winter retreat also allowed me to attend several workshops and listen to AmeriCorps members express a wide variety of perspectives about their experiences working throughout Indiana's communities.

² . Appendix B includes a description of my data sources.

³ . Due to unfavorable weather conditions, I was not able to make a site visit to Program B. In this case, I had to rely primarily on phone interviews and program documents.

⁴ . The Inter-Corps Council is designed to create leadership opportunities for AmeriCorps members, VISTA Volunteers, Senior Service Corps Volunteers, and Learn and Serve Youth Commissioners in Indiana. Corps members are involved in the planning and implementation of statewide events and activities unifying the streams of national service.

Literature Review: Toward a Framework for Studying AmeriCorps Organizational Networks

As with any new area of research on subjects characterized by complex processes and insufficient systematic empirical work, confusion over the meaning of concepts abounds. Currently, no general theory about organizational network processes exists. In their review of the literature on collaboration, for example, Wood and Gray (1991) identify a variety of theoretical perspectives, all of which are “partial -- but insufficient -- fuel for a general theory on collaboration” (p. 161). They identify a large gap in the literature on collaborative processes and call for more research especially in this area.

Scholars and practitioners may not yet agree on the meaning of foundational concepts of organizational network processes (like collaboration), but they do tend to agree that policy implementation is radically different today than it was when bureaucracy represented the dominant means to accomplish policy goals. In his important essay, *Governing at the Millenium*, Donal Kettl (1996) argues, “the most important change in administrative function over the last century, in both the public and private sectors, has been the dramatic rise in organizational interdependence” (p. 9). Larry O’Toole (1997 b) agrees, arguing that

increasingly, a crucial institutional arrangement for the successful operation of government in action is some version of the network (especially networked organizational units), rather than [bureaucratic agencies] in isolation (p. 445).

Typically, this means public administrators have to rely on informal means to encourage compliance to rules, means such as: leadership, negotiation, persuasion, and team building. Barbara Crosby (1996) describes the current environment of policy-making and implementation as a “shared-power world” where old command and control models of leadership are no long

relevant (p. 613). She argues that a shared-power world requires developing new forms of collective leadership that can inspire and motivate collective action rather than individual action.

National service programs are not exempt from these new forms of organizing especially given the decentralized nature of AmeriCorps. State commissions and Corporation state offices are responsible for most of the administration of the program at the state level, but typically, AmeriCorps programs on the ground have their own decentralized structure. A lead agency (that acts as the fiscal agent and sometimes houses AmeriCorps staff) and multiple organizational partners in which corps members work compose the primary units of AmeriCorps organizational networks. Research on the processes these organizational partners engage in is not only timely but important for understanding how such networks yield effective national service outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on network processes and collaboration suggests organizational networks are fluid and dynamic. Typologies are beginning to re-emerge in the theoretical and practitioner-based literature as a way of imposing some structure to a potentially unmanageable subject. These typologies are usually conceived in terms of a continuum with low levels of interaction and complexity on one end of the scale and high levels of interaction and complexity on the other end. Examples include:

- Gray's (1996) process descriptors: appreciative planning, dialogues, collective strategies, and negotiated agreements (p. 61),
- Alter and Hage's (1993) evolutionary theory of networks that includes movement from obligational to promotional to systemic networks over time (p. 74).
- Mattessich and Monsey's (1992) categories of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (p. 40), and
- Himmelman's (1996) distinctions between networking, coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and transformational collaboration (pp. 27 – 34).

Figures 2.1 – 2.3 summarize the first three typologies using a developmental continuum that implies the potential for groups of organizations to engage in different collective processes that build on one another and enable them to evolve from lower to higher forms of interaction. As is usually the case with classification, distinctions among categories are made according to key dimensions. Each of these typologies uses different dimensions for classification, though they are consistent in their developmental assumptions.

Gray’s (1996) framework for classifying “collaborations”, for example, rests on two dimensions:

- Expected outcome of the collaborative effort, and
- Factors that motivate participants to collaborate in the first place.

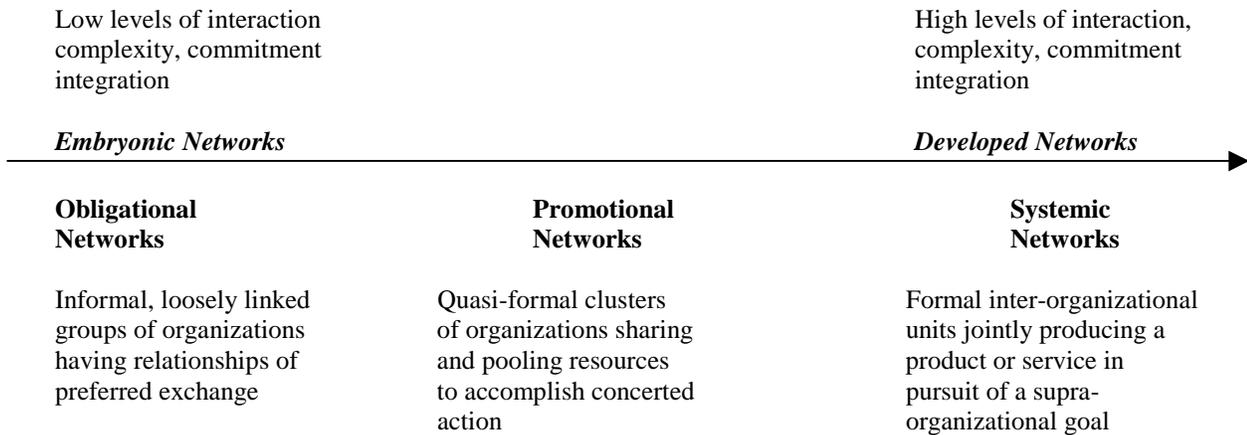
Variation across these two dimensions yields four types of collaborative institutional designs (Gray, 1996, pp. 65-66). In her 1996 article, Gray does not explicitly state these four types fall on a continuum, but her earlier work suggests support for a developmental perspective (Gray 1989, pp. 15 – 16). Figure 2.1 adapts her typology by placing the four types on a continuum from low to high levels of interaction, complexity, commitment, and integration.

Figure 2.1



Alter and Hage (1993), on the other hand, explicitly develop a three-stage model of network development where successful outcomes depend on organizations collectively accomplishing the tasks of one stage before moving to the next stage (pp. 73-74). Figure 2.2 depicts this evolutionary model of network development:

Figure 2.2



Mattessich and Monsey's (1992) typology is especially helpful because of the comprehensive nature of the dimensions used for classification. These include:

- Vision and relationships,
- Structure, responsibilities, and communication
- Authority and accountability, and
- Resources and rewards (p. 40).

Using these four dimensions, Mattessich and Monsey distinguish among three types of processes: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (1992, p. 40). Like Gray, Mattessich and Monsey do not explicitly state these types are sequential, but like the other typologies listed above, their definitions imply a movement from low to high levels of complexity and integration as depicted below:

Figure 2.3

Low levels of interaction
complexity, commitment
integration

High levels of interaction,
complexity, commitment
integration

Cooperation

Organizational interaction occurs as needed; each organization functions independently with no joint planning, resources remain separate

Coordination

Organizational interaction usually occurs around a specific project with some joint planning and clear roles assigned; resources are shared for a specific project

Collaboration

Organizational interaction occurs over a longer period of time with the development of a new mission and goals for the group; requires more comprehensive joint planning, shared leadership and control; resources are pooled

Himmelman's (1996) primary contribution to this discussion lies in his introduction of a new concept -- *transformational collaboration*. For Himmelman, transformational collaboration results in a move from "social service to social justice" that transforms power relationships and shifts the purpose of collaboration from "community betterment" to "community empowerment" (pp. 25-31). He explicitly admits that this type of process requires a fundamental shift in how scholars conceive of human and organizational action. A more thorough discussion of this concept follows.

Transformational Collaboration

In both the theoretical and practitioner-based literature, scholars besides Himmelman describe a similar transformational process. Sagawa and Segal (1998), for example, claim evidence for the creation of *new value partnerships*: "long-term, high-yielding alliances between businesses and social sector organizations that implies a kind of intimacy" among partners (p. 10-1); Huxham (1996) describes it as *collaborative advantage*, where a synergy is produced among collaborating organizations (p. 14); Bardach (1998) describes something called *interagency collaborative capacity*: a developmental process that allows organizations to

“jointly increase public value” (p. 8); and Pasquero (1991) refers to *supra-organizational collaboration* where organizations come together to solve “metaproblems” (p. 38).

Like the typologies described above, scholars tend to conceptualize this process differently, but they all agree that a process of this sort:

- generates “new value” (Bardach, 1998; Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Cropper, 1996) for participating organizations such as: the development of new capacities (Sagawa and Segal 1998), a more comprehensive approach to community problems (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992), advocacy and community empowerment (Himmelman, 1996), sustainable inter-organizational relationships (Cropper, 1996), or the creation of a new kind of “transformational organization” where participating organizations are driven more by concern for the problem than their own individual interests (Finn, 1996),
- represents a highly sophisticated form of interaction that involves a paradigm shift in thinking about how to solve community problems rather than how to meet individual organizational missions (Himmelman, 1996; Pasquero, 1991, Selsky, 1991), and
- is costly because it requires significant amounts of time, energy, commitment, and willingness to risk loss of individual autonomy (Huxham, 1996).

Clearly, this particular form of collaborative effort among organizations is problematic and risks being dismissed as utopian. Yet, Sagawa and Segal’s (1998) research on business and social service partnerships suggests anecdotal evidence that new value partnerships can occur. Ostrom (1990) demonstrates empirical support for “self-governing” institutions in her research on how individuals organize to manage common pool resources. And Pasquero’s (1991) case study of the Canadian initiative to create a new environmental policy provides evidence that successful supra-organizational collaboration can occur when problems are “multi-layered” and cut across entire societies (p. 38).

The primary rationale for this kind of process rests in its supposed potential to create value, not only for individual organizational partners, but for the broader society as well (Bardach, 1998; Huxham, 1996; Sagawa and Segal, 1998, Cropper, 1996; Finn, 1996). Admittedly, defining “value” poses problems for each of these scholars. Huxham (1996) develops a

framework for defining the value that emerges from this type of process (pp. 8 – 14), but his framework is too complex to be useful as a tool for studying network processes.

A less formal and complex way of thinking about the meaning of transformational collaboration derives from a community development perspective. From this perspective, transformational collaboration needs to be understood within the broader context of community and / or national development, what Selsky (1991) calls, a community approach. This approach draws attention to the multitude of inter-organizational associations that overlies and interpenetrate one another, thus constituting an intricate, functionally integrated network of vital relationships (p. 93).

In an action research project, Selsky examined twelve collaborative projects involving 148 small non-profit organizations in the Philadelphia area. He found that mobilizing “a network of resource exchange relations among the managers of these organizations” to form the Delaware Valley Council of Agencies resulted in a “more developed organizational community” (Selsky, 1991, p. 91). He implies that collaboration among these agencies resulted in a transformation of the community in which these organizations reside.

Pasquero’s (1991) study of a Canadian initiative to develop a national environmental policy suggests collaboration can also assist national development. Achieving the “supra-organizational” goal of a credible national environmental policy, he argues, can occur when people and organizations demonstrate a deeper appreciation for the inter-connected nature of the problems of environmental pollution. Instead of blaming particular partners (especially polluters), Pasquero found that the stakeholders he studied began to adopt collective responsibility for the problems they faced. This allowed them to focus directly on how to address the problem rather than on how to assign individual responsibility. A shared vision and commitment to a supra-organizational goal allowed them to move towards problem solving

rather than problem blaming. Himmelman (1996) is quick to point out, however, that although this process may prove a more effective way to address community and national development, it is not without costs because it implies transformation of people's world-views and existing power relationships within and across communities.

Regardless of the costs, some scholars are beginning to write, with some urgency, about the need for a paradigm shift in thinking (Coleman, 1990; Wolfe, 1989, Metcalfe, 1978). If we are to survive in an increasingly interdependent world, a transformational collaborative process may need to be deliberately and consciously constructed (Metcalf, 1978; Crosby, 1996; Alter and Hage, 1993). This remains an empirical question, but as a theoretical concept, transformational collaboration offers an interesting and new way to think about the purpose of organizational networks. It should certainly be viewed as an innovation in the literature and be the subject of more theoretical and empirical research.

Transformational Collaboration and the Logic of National Service

The logic of national service is not unlike the logic of transformational collaboration. The frequent link made between national service and participative democracy, for example, suggests the potential for *individual transformation*. AmeriCorps provides young people an opportunity to learn civic values as they work in organizational networks across the country. The original vision of placing AmeriCorps members in local community-based organizations also suggests that national service programs may hold the potential for transforming inter-organizational relationships by bringing organizations together in new ways to accomplish national service goals (Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Corporation for National Service, 1994).

This accords with President Clinton's vision that national service represents "one of the few remaining remedies [left] for the fragmentation and polarization that threaten our country"

(Waldman, 1995, p.11). In its 1993 report, the Commission on National and Community Service describes a vision for institutional transformation. “The Commission’s vision for America,” the authors write, “is for every institution in every community to incorporate service into its daily activities” (Corporation for National Service, 1993, p. 115). They are quick to point out that transformation of this kind does not occur spontaneously but requires commitment and deliberation. “[C]ommunity service networks,” the authors write, “don’t appear by magic; people and organizations work constantly to build them” (p. 115).

In its Principles for High Quality National Service Programs, the Corporation for National Service (1994) broadens this assertion by listing the key principles for high quality collaborative endeavors. Some of these are:

- a common vision that national service can meet critical community needs and have mutual benefits for all partners,
- a commitment from staff members and partnering organizations who understand this vision and support it by committing real time, money, talent, and a willingness to share resources,
- a structure that is conducive to planning, consensus building, conflict resolution, and evaluation, and
- an understanding that collaboration requires high levels of trust, creativity, and above all, time (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. 53-54).

Each of these Principles underscores the deliberate nature of successful collaborative efforts and the need for participating organizations and their representatives to think carefully about what it costs to participate in an organizational network. These principles and the logic of national service also imply (though they do not name it transformational collaboration) a potential for national service to generate such a process in local communities.

Summary

This review of the literature and the introduction of new concepts like transformational collaboration are meant to demonstrate the complexities of and normative biases in our thinking about organizational network processes. Although a wide range of typologies exists in the literature, scholars' conceptualizations of the processes organizations undergo when they work together are more similar than they are different. Nearly all of them, for example, share a normative bias towards organizational networks that fall on the higher end of the continuum. Scholars such as Alter and Hage (1993) openly assert that systemic networks generate more effective long-term outcomes than obligational networks and enhance network survival over time.

Most of the typologies identified in this paper also assume a linear process that is developmental and sequential. In order to move successfully from low levels of interaction and complexity to higher levels, organizations must be able to achieve certain outcomes before moving to a "higher" state of working together. Outcomes such as creating rules with monitoring devices and credible sanctions for non-compliance can only occur through highly sophisticated interactions among organizational players where levels of commitment are high. Willingness to self-monitor and commit organizational resources (including autonomy) over a long period of time to achieve supra-organizational goals (e.g. community-wide goals) will probably not occur unless organizations trust one another and develop norms of reciprocity and mutual commitment to achieving collective goals. Norms such as these develop only after organizations work together in less complex ways over a period of time. Networks that do develop such norms, however, are assumed to be "better" than those that do not, though scholars often avoid clearly defining what "better" means.

AMERICORPS ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKS: A FRAMEWORK

The framework I develop and use to study AONs incorporates some of the assumptions that characterize typologies in the literature. I assume, for example, that organizations, when they interact, engage in some organizing process that falls on a continuum from low levels of complexity, interaction, and integration to higher forms of interaction. The framework allows for the *possibility* that organizations can even engage in transformational collaborative processes, though such processes seem to occur rarely.

The framework differs from these typologies in several ways:

- Network processes are not assumed to occur in a linear and sequential fashion. The dynamic and interactive nature of inter-organizational relationships suggests that, while organizational network processes may occur on a continuum, they do not necessarily have to occur *sequentially*. The uni-directional arrow of the continuum of previous typologies is deliberately left out in my framework.
- No normative bias is assumed to exist for moving from one organizational network process to another along the continuum.
- The framework is meant to be used only as a tool for studying organizational network processes, not as an explanation for why some organizational networks seem to perform more effectively than others, or why some survive and others do not.

Basics of the Framework

Mattessich and Monsey's (1992) classification provides the foundation for my framework because it is practitioner-based, the result of a comprehensive literature review, and it is simple yet comprehensive. The four dimensions used by the authors to classify organizational network processes are modified and expanded to incorporate aspects of other scholars' work. For example, the framework includes Gray's (1996) motivation and expected outcome dimensions. It also includes a management dimension that emerges as important from the practitioner-based literature (Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Winer and Ray, 1994; Mattessich and Monsey, 1992;

Melaville and Blank, 1994; Bruner, 1992) and from a recent study of an AmeriCorps program in one state (Skolnik, 1998).

Organizations interact in a variety of ways and that interaction yields different processes that vary depending on a multitude of internal and external factors. My framework classifies AON processes into four types: cooperative, coordinative, collaborative, and transformational depending on how they vary along eight dimensions. These dimensions are:

- Motivation for working together (Gray, 1996),
- Expected outcomes (Gray, 1996),
- Nature of interaction and communication mechanisms (Ostrom, 1998; Huxham, 1996; Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Corporation for National Service, 1994; Skolnik, 1998; Mattessich and Monsey, 1992),
- Organizational missions (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992; Skolnik, 1998; Bardach, 1998; Sagawa and Segal, 1998),
- Network management: clarity of roles, functions, responsibilities, management of inter-organizational relationships (Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Skolnik, 1998; Ostrom, 1990, 1998; Bardach, 1996; Van de Ven, Emmett, Loenig, 1975),
- Planning (Corporation for National Service, 1994; Mattessich and Monsey, 1992; Huxham, 1996; Alter and Hage, 1993; Selsky, 1996; Pasquero, 1991),
- Network governance – shared leadership, joint decision-making, joint problem-solving, developing rules and self-monitoring based on norms of trust, mutual obligation, commitment to the collective (Ostrom, 1990, 1998; Milward, 1998), and
- Use of resources (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992; Gray and Wood, 1991; Sagawa and Segal, 1998; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

Table One summarizes the four network processes by dimension and provides an example of each process.

Table One: Network Processes by Dimension

Dimension	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Coordination</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Transformational Collaboration</i>
<i>Motivation for working together</i>	Organizations remain entirely separate; work together only if participation will enhance individual organizational interests; may be mandated	Organizations remain separate but share a common short-term goal relating to a common need or vision; organizations coalesce around a particular short-term project to achieve a particular goal	Organizations remain separate but recognize they can achieve long-term goals better by working together than they can working alone; may also recognize that the nature of the problem or commitment to a target population requires longer-term commitment to working together sometimes at the expense of own mission	Organizations work together because of commitment to a supra-organizational goal such as community or national development or systemic change to meet community-wide needs in a comprehensive manner
<i>Expected outcomes</i>	Individual organizational interests are enhanced; organizations achieve strategic advantage or greater capacity to achieve own missions	Project completed; project goal achieved; may produce a greater awareness among participating organizations of what other organizations are doing in the community	Joint production of a good or service to a local community; enhanced ability to meet community needs in more comprehensive ways; increased individual organizational awareness of interdependence	Comprehensive service delivery system; systemic change that leads to shared power relationships; creation of a new kind of organization where partner organizations move beyond negotiation and strategic bargaining to a vision for community change

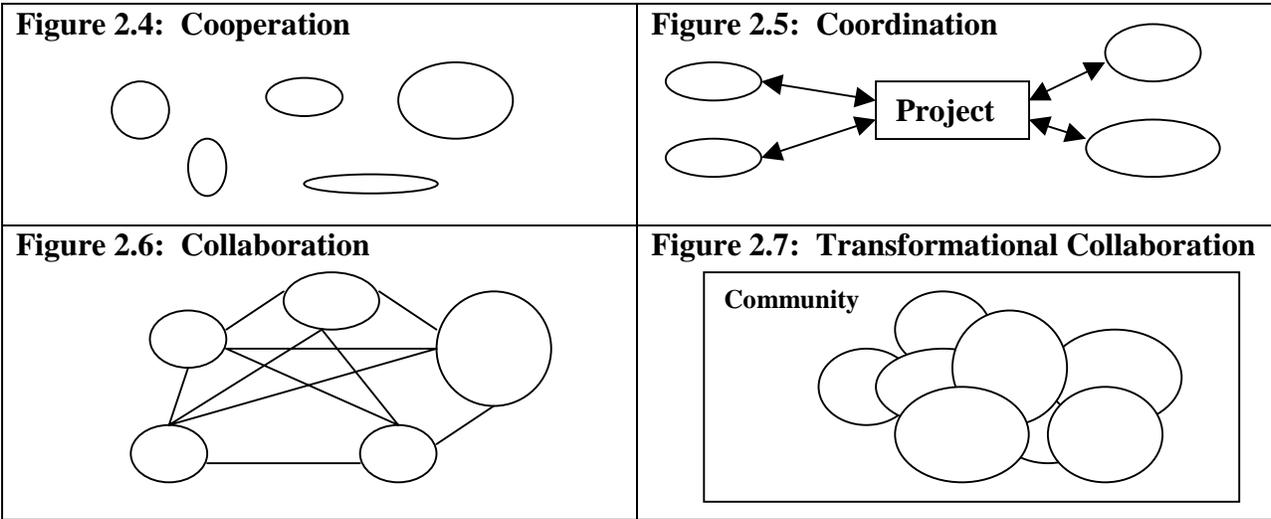
Dimension	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Coordination</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Transformational Collaboration</i>
<i>Nature of interaction and communication mechanisms</i>	Organizational interaction and communication temporary and informal; may be competitive, but usually non-threatening; may be face-to-face but not required	Interaction and communication is frequent, formal and informal, often intense and usually face-to-face for the duration of the project	Interaction and communication is frequent, face-to-face, formal and informal, and occurs regularly over long-period of time	Interaction and communication is frequent, face-to-face, formal and informal, multi-centered, and focused on <i>network</i> goals, not individual organizational goals
<i>Organizational missions</i>	Individual organizational missions dominate	Compatibility of organizational missions helpful but not required as long as organizations share similar vision for project goals	Shared vision for meeting a particular need in the community, serving a particular target population, or solving a particular local problem; organizational overlapping missions dominate	Individual organizational missions are re-envisioned within the context of the network and the broader needs of the community; shared vision for comprehensive community change dominates
<i>Network management</i>	No management infrastructure needed	Requires clarity of roles, responsibilities and some means of coordinating multiple organizational tasks until project is completed	Requires clarity of roles, responsibilities and a network manager to maintain inter-organizational relationships over time and assure achievement of network goals (sometimes at the expense of individual short-term goals)	Requires a different kind of management system altogether that implies shared responsibility for achievement of network goals; clarity of roles and tasks still important, but within context of network goals

Dimension	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Coordination</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Transformational Collaboration</i>
<i>Planning</i>	No joint planning needed	Joint planning required for short period of time to accomplish project	Requires joint planning to advance network goals which differ from individual organizational goals; both types of goals important and planning may be required as a way to negotiate between individual organizational goals and network goals	Requires joint planning within the context of shared responsibility for achievement of network goals; planning to achieve individual organizational goals occurs only when network goals are not threatened
<i>Network governance</i>	No governing structures needed	Joint decision making and monitoring compliance to project rules occurs only in relation to achievement of project goals; no lasting governing structures needed	Governance structures determined through formal memorandums of agreement and negotiation among organizational partners; norms of reciprocity, trust, and mutual obligation to the network process important for successful negotiation and collective efforts over time	Mechanisms institutionalized to maintain shared power relationships; partner organizations demonstrate willingness to self-monitor and uphold sanctions for non-compliance to network rules; norms of reciprocity, trust, mutual obligation, and commitment to a larger vision for addressing community needs provide the basis for governance arrangements

Dimension	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Coordination</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Transformational Collaboration</i>
<i>Use of resources</i>	Requires few resources; no shared resources; resources exchanged primarily informational; least costly form of organizing; corps members viewed as resources to meet own organizational missions	Requires willingness to share and invest costly resources such as time, energy, commitment, expertise, and money to achieve short-term project goal; costly form of organizing but only short-term; cross-partner organization sharing of corps members to achieve project goals	Resources are often pooled to achieve network goals over the long-term, though organizations negotiate and bargain over use of resources; costly form of organizing because of risk of loss of organizational autonomy and willingness to bear short-term costs for <i>expected</i> long-term benefits in the future; corps members seen as jointly “owned” by partners	Resources, including corps members shared by all partners in the network in order to meet network needs and goals; no negotiation necessary
<i>Examples</i>	Professionals in AONs attend conferences where they share ideas, information, expertise with other professionals to bring back to own organizations; presence of corps members in AON enhances individual	AmeriCorps signature projects that mobilize community based organizations for one day to serve a particular target population; Martin Luther King Day projects; joining resources to	Partner organizations in an AON meet regularly to problem-solve about ways to jointly achieve long-term goals for the community; corps members encouraged to take part in wider network activities such as Inter-Corps Council	AONs generate new systems of support for meeting critical community-wide needs; other empirical examples: self-governing common pool resource organizations (Ostrom, 1990); National Round Table on Environment and Economy

Dimension	Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration	Transformational Collaboration
Examples	organizational capacity	address an environmental crisis or plant closing	meetings and cross-stream service initiatives	(Pasquero, 1991)

Different processes yield different institutional designs. An AON characterized by cooperative processes will “look” different from one characterized by collaborative ones. Figures 2.4 – 2.8 provide another way to describe the four network processes in my framework. These figures are conceptual not empirical.



Competition as a Sub-Category of Cooperation

Competition can also be conceived as a joint effort by organizations to achieve particular goals. The business literature abounds with examples of joint ventures, even among competitors, when organizations see strategic advantage for themselves in doing so (Alter and Hage, 1993; Sagawa and Segal, 1998). Competition and cooperation may not be mutually exclusive processes.

Alter and Hage (1993) include the concept of “competitive cooperation” in their typology of networks, arguing that organizations competing within the same sector may gain competitive

advantage in larger markets by cooperating. In the automobile and aircraft industries, for example, they argue “the costs and risks of production are so high that competitors are forced to cooperate” (p. 57). They cite the joint venture between General Motors and Toyota as an example, where Toyota “needed General Motors to lobby Congress and the administration to block import quotas, and General Motors needed Toyota’s lean production technologies” (p. 57).

The distinguishing characteristic in competitive cooperation, as this example shows, lies not in shared vision but in self-interest. Both Toyota and General Motors acted opportunistically in cooperating to achieve their own goals. For this reason, competition may fall within the process type cooperation and maybe even coordination, but it would not easily fit with the conceptualization of the other two process types in this framework, where a shared vision of the problem domain drives organizations to work together.

This discussion about competition raises another issue -- product quality. Two philosophical perspectives of national service underlie this issue. One perspective holds that the goal of AmeriCorps is to produce a product that sells -- the best community service network in a local community (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98). From this perspective, competitive cooperation may serve as the best process for achieving that goal even if the competitive advantage of the AON results in a displacement of existing service provider networks. The bias of this perspective lies in the belief that competition will result in an increased overall benefit to the community – a quality service provider network.

This way of looking at national service stands in stark contrast to a perspective that sees national service programs as strengthening existing community based organizations by linking them together in new sustainable ways based on norms of trust and reciprocity. The bias of this perspective rests in the belief that communities bound together by these kinds of ties are stronger

in the long-run than those that rely on competing to produce quality services for the community.

The term, competitive cooperation, captures the paradox that competition and cooperation can co-exist within an organizational network. The tension embedded in this co-existence may create tensions for national service programs, especially those that seek to build a shared vision for national service among community based organizations. In my framework, competition is assumed to be a sub-category of cooperation because the focus remains on the strategic achievement of individual organizational goals, not on achievement of a common vision or a supra-organizational goal.

Summary

Frameworks, such as the one presented in this section, provide a simplified version of reality in order to give the researcher a way to systematically study complex processes. Organizational network processes pose daunting problems for researchers. AONs are no less daunting to study. My framework is meant to serve as a tool for studying how organizations in AONs interact. It identifies four different network processes that differ depending on how they vary along eight dimensions ranging from motivation for working together to structures for network management and governance. In reality, these processes are not so distinct as the framework suggests. The simplified framework is only a tool for describing network processes not for explaining why some AONs perform better than others or why AONs survive.

Sections three and four of this paper demonstrate how this tool can be used. In section three, the framework is used to characterize how AONs look on the ground. The section is primarily descriptive in nature. In section four, I present findings about the factors that affect movement from one network process to another and discuss the trade-offs implicit in moving along the network process continuum.

Findings:

What Do AmeriCorps Organizational Networks Look Like?

I organize this section into the following six parts:

- General description of an AON,
- Description of my sampling strategy and sample,
- Case-by-case description of the AONs in my sample,
- Cross-case analysis,
- Discussion of AmeriCorps program director survey and focus group results, and
- A conclusion.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AN AON

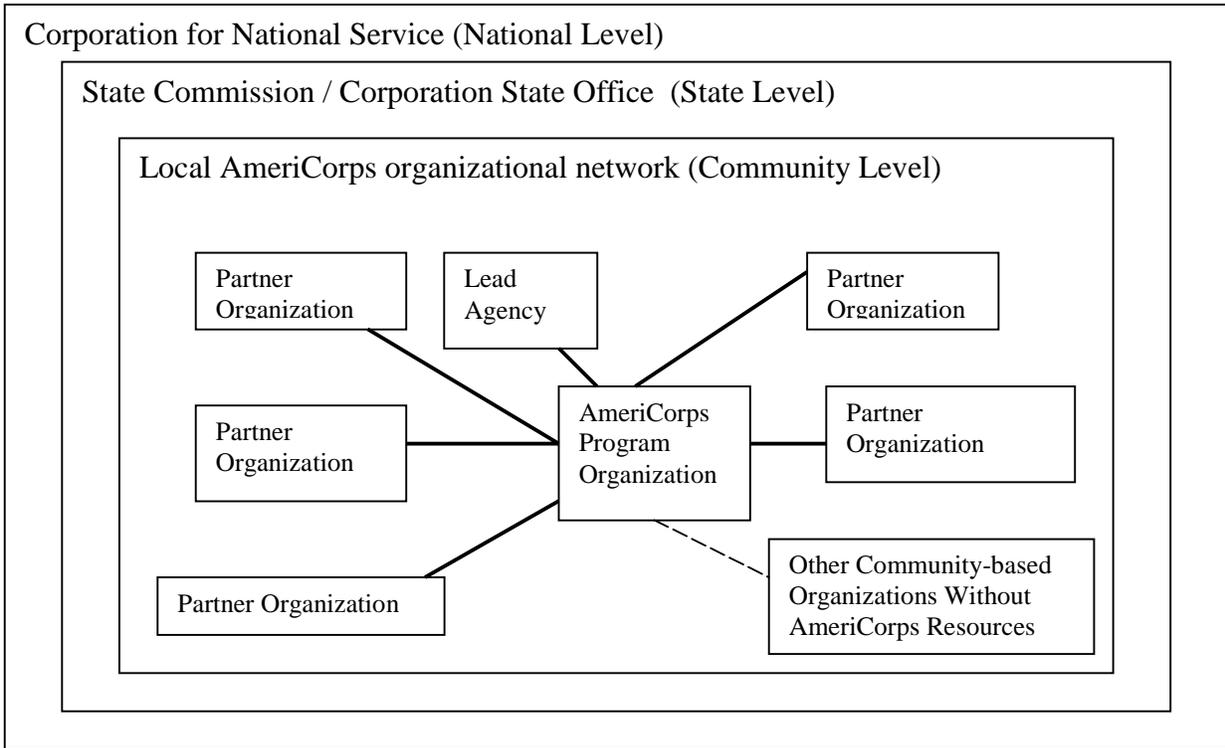
Typically, a group of organizations compose the AON at different levels. The Corporation for National Service, because of its authority and fiscal resources, is one partner in an AON, though it is significantly removed from the partners at the community level. State Commissions and Corporation State Offices are also partners and are much closer to the community level partners of an AON than the Corporation. Typically, though, they are not *intimately* involved in the day-to-day operations of the network except when problems arise or celebrations and trainings occur.

From a bottom-up perspective, the primary partners in an AON are:

- the AmeriCorps program itself (conceived as a partner organization in its own right with a director and/or coordinator, an operating budget, a staff (AmeriCorps members), and a facility (often the lead agency site),
- a lead agency (typically a community-based organization that hosts the AmeriCorps program in a local community and acts, at a minimum, as the fiscal agent for AmeriCorps monies), and
- community based-organizations (number vary significantly across programs and projects) in which corps members work.

Partners at each level (national, state, and local) belong to a number of other organizational networks outside the AON such that an AON may be nested in a system of organizational networks at several different levels. Furthermore, other community-based organizations that do *not* use AmeriCorps resources may also compose the AON on the ground, organizations that either sporadically or more regularly work with the AON to accomplish specific projects like a Martin Luther King Day celebration. Figure 3.1 presents a hypothetical view of what an AON might look like. In order to capture the nested nature of this AON, the picture places the different partners at their different levels with the largest box representing national level partners.

Figure 3.1: Partner Organizations in an AON



This study focuses on partner organizations in the *center* box, though it is important to acknowledge that national and state level partners, because of their control over resources

(including money, authority, expertise, information, and technical assistance), both constrain and enhance how community level AONs work. Incentives created by national and state level partners, for example, could stimulate partner organizations to develop either tightly or loosely-knit networks. Fostering cross-stream service collaboration among AmeriCorps members in local communities represents one way national partners can strengthen the ties that hold an AON together.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLING STRATEGY AND SAMPLE

Six Indiana AmeriCorps programs serve as the focus of my research this year. I use a two-stage sampling strategy to identify cases for my sample. The strategy is described below.

Stage One: A purposeful stratified sample was drawn from the total number of Indiana AmeriCorps* State/National and VISTA programs. I limited my cases to programs in existence for 4 or more years in order to assess the theoretical assumption that network processes are developmental in nature. I chose the four year cut-off because AmeriCorps*State/National programs have only been in existence since 1994.

Stage Two: Because this research is exploratory, I used a maximum variation sampling technique. From the stratified sample obtained in stage one, six information-rich cases were identified (three AmeriCorps*State/National and three AmeriCorps*VISTA) that varied in several ways: size (defined as number of AmeriCorps members / annual budget), service model, geographical scope, area of service, and funding.⁵

Table Two offers a brief description of each of the cases in my sample. Letters A – F represent these six cases.

⁵ . The variation in the stratified sample was not as great as I had hoped (especially with VISTA programs) so my choice of cases depended on the balance between degree of variation and degree of richness of information. Hence, programs varied less on size and mandated focus area than I had at first expected. Programs did vary on funding. Three of the six cases represent programs no longer funded (two VISTA, one AmeriCorps*State/National). Of the two VISTA programs, one voluntarily terminated its project in April 1997, the other lost its funding for 1998-99 because it did not meet State Corporation for National Service criteria. The lead agency for the AmeriCorps*State/National program decided not to participate in 1998-99 after an internal evaluation of the program.

Table Two: Description of Sample

	AmeriCorps*State/National			AmeriCorps*VISTA		
	Program A	Program B	Program C	Program D	Program E	Program F
Size: Number of FTE AmeriCorps Members	105	23	12	Average of 5-6	8	Average of 5-7
Annual Budget (\$\$)	1,686,939 (1998-99)	239,973 (1998-99)	238,012 (1997-98)	Not available	27,800 (1998-99)	16,754 (1998-99)
Service Model	Getting things done	Getting things done	Getting things done	Building organizational capacity	Building organizational capacity	Building organizational capacity
Area of Service	Education	Human Needs	Education	Public Safety / Human Needs	Human Needs	Public Safety / Human Needs
Number of years in existence	5 years	4 years	4 years	20 years	6 years	5 ½ years
Funding	Currently funded	Currently funded	No longer funded	Host site decided to terminate VISTA program April 1997	Currently funded	Funding not renewed for program year 1998 – 99
Geographical Scope	State-wide Lead agency with 16 host sites scattered across the state	City-wide (city small) Consortium of 8 partner organizations scattered across one small city	City-wide (city large) Lead agency with 6 partner organizations scattered across one large city	Neighborhood Lead agency; partner organizations vary depending on VISTA project	2 counties Lead agency; partner organizations vary depending on VISTA project	State-wide Lead-agency with 57 partner organizations scattered across the state

N = 6

CASE-BY-CASE DESCRIPTION

Each of the six programs demonstrates unique inter-organizational processes. After a brief program description of each case, I present a “snapshot” of the AON’s primary partners.⁶

⁶. It is important to note that the pictures of each program in Figures 3.2 – 3.9 represent a grossly simplified

A more in-depth analysis of each case follows using the framework developed in the previous section. I use this analysis to identify which type of network process each case exhibits.

Case One: Program A

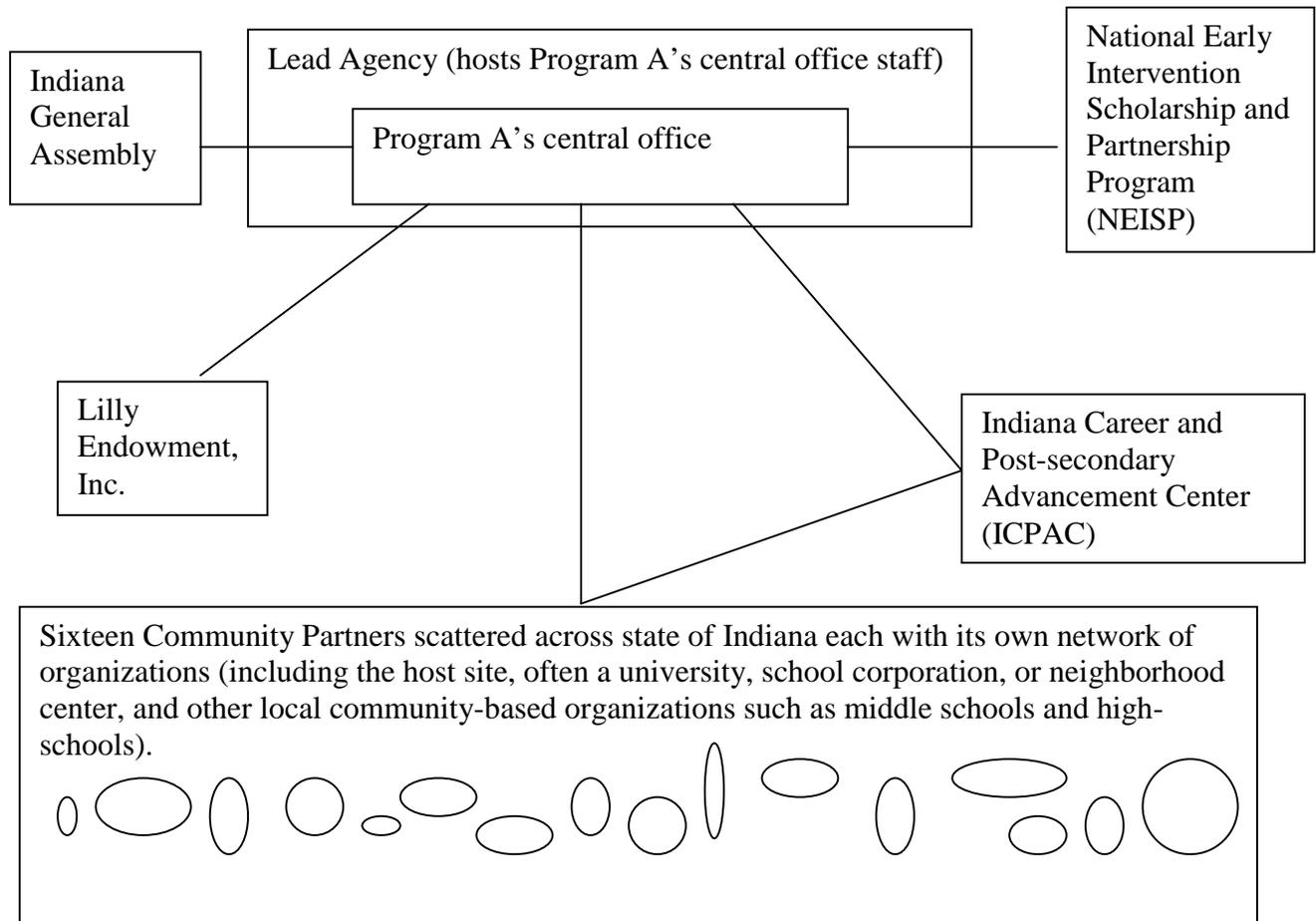
Program A is a large statewide competitive AmeriCorps*State/National program that has received AmeriCorps resources since 1994. It derives its primary mission from Governor Bayh's 1990 resolution to guarantee higher education opportunities for all Indiana youth. Program A's central office is located in Indianapolis, housed in a large state-funded education organization responsible for many different statewide education initiatives.

Program A's primary partner organizations are local community-based organizations scattered across the state that serve as host sites for the program. Early program documents name these sites as Community Partners. There are currently sixteen Community Partners and until this year these organizations were also responsible for hiring their own coordinator and AmeriCorps members. In 1999, to create a greater presence at community level sites, central office staff initiated the creation of a personnel board. Convened locally and consisting of one representative from the central office, the lead agency, and an AmeriCorps member from the site, the board hires local AmeriCorps program coordinators (Interview, central office staff, 11/19/98).

Figure 3.2 presents a simplified picture of Program A's AON.

version of actual organizational relationships and do not illustrate other important factors such as length of time working together, frequency of contact, and depth of relationship. They are meant merely to give the reader a

Figure 3.2: Program A's Primary Partners (1998-99)



This picture demonstrates a highly decentralized program. Central office staff members in Indianapolis try to achieve Program A's goals through sixteen autonomous Community Partner sites each with its own network of organizations. The other four partner organizations identified in the picture (the Indiana General Assembly, NEISP, ICPAC, and Lilly) primarily bring fiscal and technical resources to Program A's AON.

The sixteen Community Partners have these characteristics in common. They each:

- have a program coordinator (and sometimes an assistant),

snapshot view of the program and should not be interpreted otherwise.

- work with the same target population (at-risk low-income Indiana youth not likely to go to college),
- share the same central office staff (two co-directors and one AmeriCorps program manager all located in Indianapolis),
- attend monthly meetings via satellite (partners meet at the closest Indiana University or Ivy Tech community college sites for virtual classroom meetings) and periodic state-wide trainings hosted by the central office and / or the Indiana State Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism,
- work with students throughout middle and Jr./Sr. high-schools in seven-county regions (may include as many as sixty schools per community partner site), and
- have relationships with a wide variety of other community-based organizations besides the public schools in which they work.

Other than these similarities, Community Partner sites have their own unique “personality”, structure, and culture. No two Community Partner sites are the same (Interview, program manager, 11/25/98). Each has its own network of community based organizations in which corps member work and except for meetings hosted by the central office or the State Commission, most Community Partners work independently and have a significant amount of autonomy. The program’s day-to-day implementation rests almost entirely on local program coordinators.⁷

Table Three describes Program A’s AON using the framework developed in the previous section. The table represents the views primarily of AmeriCorps program staff, though whenever possible, other partner organizations’ perspectives are also included. I use the eight dimensions of the framework to help me identify which of the four network processes most accurately characterizes Program A’s AON.

⁷ . In order to gain a better understanding of what Program A’s Community Partners look like, I chose three of the sixteen Community Partner sites for field visits. Each of these sites began around the same time, were located within the same general regional area (central Indiana), and exhibited a kind of solidarity not found at other sites. This is evident in the nickname they used to describe themselves -- the “cool sites” (Interview, program directors, 11/19/98).

Table Three: Description of Program A’s AON by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivation for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different partners come to the network for different reasons but primary motivation is concern for same target population (1994-95 State Application, Interview, program directors, 11/19/98)
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children are not denied the opportunity of a college education (1994-95 State Application, p. 1) • Identify ways to “truly ‘hold hands’ with other programs so that we are all maximizing our efforts and affording youth, families, and communities, the best service possible.” (Third QR, 4/98 – 9/98, no page number noted)
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As program has grown in size and scope, communication structures have become more impersonal and infrequent (Interview, program director, 11/25/98) • Monthly trainings by satellite for AmeriCorps members • Annual Coordinator Retreat, daily e-mail or phone exchange as needed, currently trying to develop a program-wide newsletter (Interview, program directors, 11/19/98) • Periodic program director trainings organized and funded by the State Commission and /or central office staff
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety in organizational missions across partners but overlap in target population • Even when partner organizations have the same mission and type (e.g. public school), many still exhibit radically different organizational cultures (Interview, program coordinator, 1/19/99) • Type of Community Partners vary significantly and include: universities and colleges, neighborhood centers, school corporations, workforce development sites, Township Trustees offices, and Education and Career Centers
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly written host site agreement specifies roles and responsibilities of different partner organizations • At some community partner sites there is lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities (Interview, program directors, 11/19/98, program coordinators, 12/21/98) • Inability of central office to enforce Program A rules at
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local host sites make management difficult (Interview, program coordinators, 12/21/98) • Local AmeriCorps program coordinator primarily responsible for daily management without strong permanent infrastructure in place (Interviews, program directors, 11/19/98; 11/25/98; program coordinators, 12/21/98) • Resources for administration and management have not kept pace with program growth (Interviews, program director, 11/15/98, program coordinators, 12/21/98, 1/19/99)

Dimension	• Findings
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence for comprehensive community-wide planning across partner organizations to meet AON goals (Interviews, program coordinators, 1/19/99, 12/21/98) • Planning for regional training and corps member retreats does occur among certain Community Partner sites in same geographical area, like those planned by the “cool sites” but this is not typical (Interview, program coordinators, 12/21/98) • Central office attempts made to encourage the development of community advisory boards and steering committees but with limited success (2nd QR, 1/98-3/98) • Planning occurs primarily around projects like trainings and annual retreats
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very decentralized program poses significant difficulties bringing cohesion and joint decision making among all the partners. • “Our greatest energy has to do with just trying to build within-program collaboration. How do you get sixteen [different] sites to work together?” (Interview, program director, 11/25/98) • Personnel board and Member Enrichment Team initiatives represent ways to build joint decision making (Interview, program directors, 11/19/98) • Little evidence of norms of reciprocity, trust, self-monitoring, and joint decision-making; some evidence either for power struggles (Interview, program coordinator, 12/21/98) or frustration from central office staff concerning lack of influence on local host sites (Interviews, program directors, 11/19/9, 11/25/98, 2nd QR, 1/98-3/98)
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources partner organizations bring to the AON differ depending on roles and opportunities (e.g. lead agency: provides office space and technical support; NEISP and Indiana General Assembly: provide money); • Different levels of resources and commitment make it difficult to identify symmetry of resources
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources most shared at community level: expertise, information, time • Corps members view themselves and community partners view corps members as resources for individual Community • Partner sites not as resources for statewide program

Overall, Program A's AON primarily demonstrates cooperative processes with some evidence for coordinative activities and even collaborative ones. Partner organizations in Program A's AON do not jointly seek ways to more comprehensively meet the needs of at-risk low income Indiana youth to better equip them for college. This is not surprising given the highly decentralized nature of this program. Multiple factors limit this program's organizational network from forming network-governance structures, engaging in joint community-wide planning, and fostering network management skills necessary for collaborative network processes. Some of these factors are:

- inadequate resources to match program growth,
- decentralized nature of the program that makes it difficult for central office staff to engage in network management, develop meaningful face-to-face communication, and enforce compliance to program rules among multiple autonomous organizations,
- geographical scope that makes it difficult for community partners to build inter-organizational relationships among multiple organizations spread across seven counties, and
- a general sense of local independence and autonomy that undermines Program A's capacity to use the collective strength of its AON to develop a comprehensive approach to the higher education needs of low income at-risk eighth graders in Indiana.

This does not mean, however, that this AON does not demonstrate any evidence of collaborative activities. The sixteen Community Partners clearly share a commitment to the needs of their shared target population, as one program director indicated:

Operationally, there is a lot of independence [among host sites but] philosophically, in the bigger picture, everybody knows why they're there and what they're supposed to do and are committed to this particular population of kids (Interview, program director, 11/19/98).

Furthermore, at the Community Partner site level, some host sites and other community-based organizations frequently interact face-to-face and demonstrate evidence for norms of trust and

reciprocity. One host site in one community provided the AmeriCorps program organization significant support beyond its contractual agreement including classroom space, access to a computer lab, and opportunities for the local AmeriCorps coordinator to attend conferences (Interview, Community Partner site coordinator, 1/7/99).

Case Two: Program B

Compared to Program A, Program B's AON is small in size, scope, and number of partner organizations. Like Program A, however, the network is deliberately decentralized, such that each partner organization views itself as only peripherally part of the network of organizations that hosts AmeriCorps members. Partner organizations focus primarily on achieving their own missions, but they are held together by a shared commitment to the local homeless (or at-risk to be homeless) population in this city.

Partner organizations in this network are all of the same type (social service agencies) and have a history of working together prior to AmeriCorps. Program B's AON was originally designed to mirror a model for comprehensively meeting the needs of the homeless developed by one of its partner organizations. This model, described later in the paper, is a nationally recognized pilot project. Program B and its partners conceived AmeriCorps as one way to further their shared commitment to the city's at-risk population by hiring their own clients as corps members. AmeriCorps would provide them a stable working environment and would provide clients with job skills and increase their likelihood of becoming self-sufficient (1997-98 State Application).

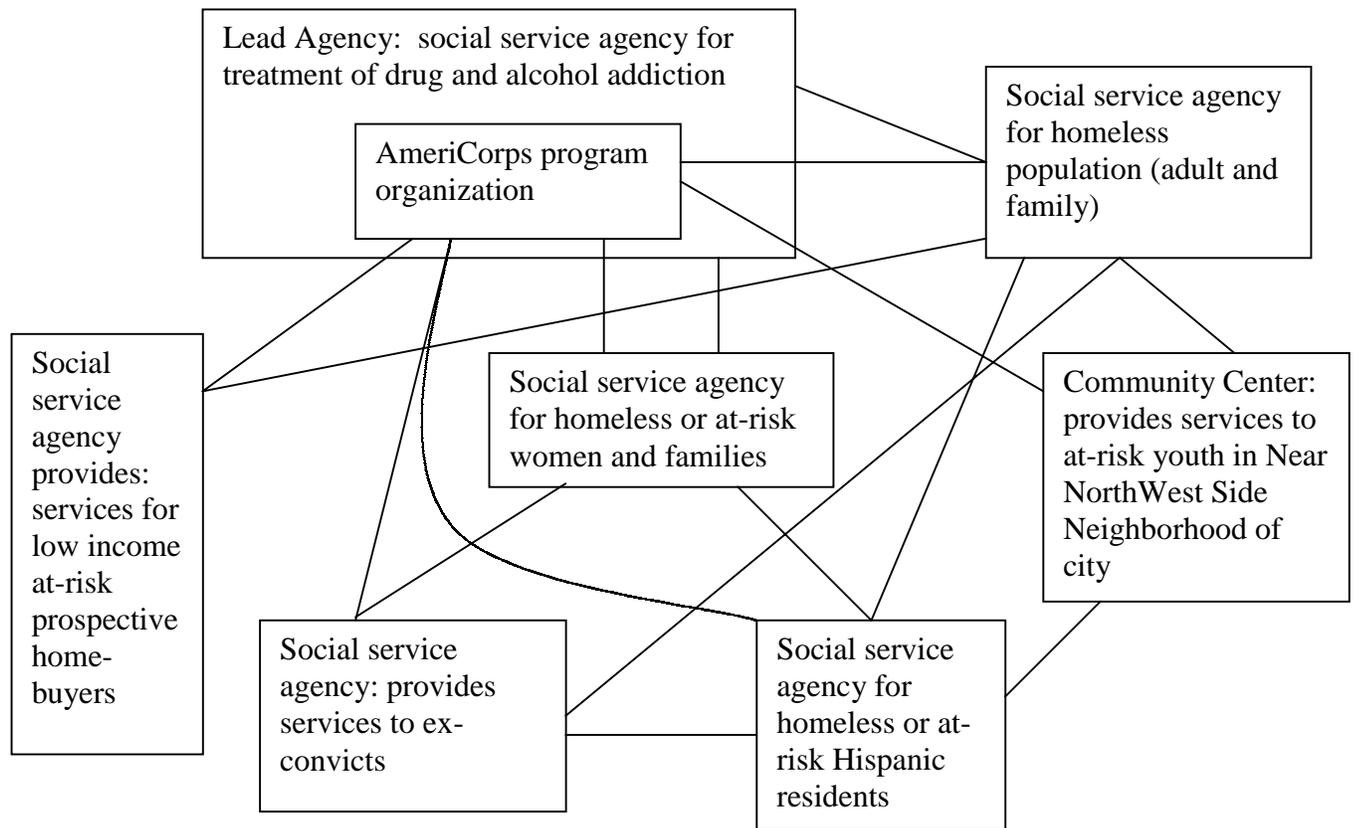
The history of this AON is especially revealing because it demonstrates how powerful commitment to target population can be. Joint funding from the Corporation for National Service and from HUD's Supported Housing Program created confusion about funding channels

and significantly delayed Program B from obtaining the money it needed to pay corps members who had already been hired by local partners. Not wanting to undermine their commitment to these clients/corps members, the original four partner organizations in this network actually “forked out [their own] money to support the AmeriCorps members” (Phone Interview, program coordinator, 11/20/98) at the cost of \$20,000 (1st quarterly report, 9/95-12/95, p.8).

Unfortunately, though they maintained support of their corps members, partner organizations were unable to avoid tensions among themselves (including local / state level tensions) created by the funding delays and confusion between the state commission and another federal funding source for the network. These impacts have had negative long-term effects on the AON’s management and governing structures (described later in the paper).

Figure 3.3 provides the reader with a picture of Program B’s current AON. The network has grown from an original membership of four organizations to a current membership of eight. The 1999-2000 State Application proposes expanding membership to seven new organizations for a fifteen-organization AON.

Figure 3.3: Program B's Primary Partners (1998 – 99)



Compared to Figure 3.2 (Program A's AON), this picture illustrates a more tightly-knit AON as evidenced by the multiple connections across all the partners. This is an AON where linkages across social service agencies rest primarily in differing areas of expertise. In order to “holistically address homeless issues in the region,” the AON uses the “continuum of care” model (1996-97 State Application, p. 3). Each partner organization starts with its own clients. After identifying the particular and immediate needs of a client, the partner organization will refer that person (or family) to any one of the other partners with the particular expertise to meet that particular immediate need. As each need is successfully met, the homeless adult (or family) will be successively referred to another agency with the expertise to meet the next need in hopes

of re-integrating the individual into the community even to the point of becoming a homeowner. This “continuum of care and service model” has been used as a national pilot demonstration for best practices to address the problem of homelessness in local communities.

The complexity of Figure 3.3, with its multiple organizational connections, is, however, somewhat deceiving. Examining the AON by the eight dimensions described earlier provides a more in-depth perspective. Table Four summarizes my findings.

Table Four: Description of Program B’s AON by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivation for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared vision for target population (1997-98 State Application, Phone interview, program director, 11/20/98) • Overlapping missions based on expertise (Phone interview, partner organization staff member, 1/14/99) • Previous experience working together (Phone interview, partner organization directors, 1/6/99, 1/17/99)
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Very simple. To serve and help to promote necessary tools for the disadvantaged to become self-sufficient” (Phone Interview, partner organization director, 1/17/99) • “Holistically address homeless issues” (1997-98 State Application, p. 3)
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly corps member meetings but sporadic attendance (Phone interview, partner organization staff, 1/7/99) • Monthly partner organization meetings but often do not occur as regularly planned (Phone interviews, program director, 11/20/98, partner organization staff, 1/7/99) • Phone tree communication with limited success (1st QR, 1/97-12/97, p. 11)
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missions differ but overlap (Phone interviews, program director, 11/20/98, partner organization staff, 1/14/99, 1/6/99) • Target populations for each organization are subsets of overall homeless or at-risk to be homeless population • Organizations are all social service agencies serving at risk low-income population
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very decentralized management with minimal formal infrastructure • Roles and responsibilities based on areas of expertise of each partner organization • Original design of program included a formal mechanism to address potential management problems -- the formation of a Planning Council comprised of a representative from each

Dimension	Findings
Network Management	<p>partner organization but no evidence found that this Council has been effective (1996 – 97 State Application, p. 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal meetings of the council have not occurred due to “meeting fatigue from the first year” (Phone interview, program coordinator, 11/20/98)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal evidence of joint planning except around specific projects such as between two partner organizations developing a data base system to track shared client population (Phone interview, partner organization staff, 1/14/99)
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal evidence of network governance structures despite overlapping missions and target population • Some evidence for lack of trust and a “that’s-your-client-not-ours” mentality (Phone interview, partner organization staff, 1/14/99)
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources shared are primarily expertise • Partner organizations do not have symmetrical resources, some have access to large sums of money, others have budgets that are small, some have recently suffered budget cuts (1997-98 State Application, p. 24) • In the case of two partner organizations, programs were competing for funds “but the relationship is back on good footing” (1997-98 State Application, p. 24) • Corps members view themselves and partner organizations view corps members as “belonging” to individual partners in which corps members work

Like Program A, Program B’s AON demonstrates a cooperative network process with some evidence for coordinative and collaborative activities. Despite the original continuum of care design, the deliberately decentralized nature of this service delivery network has tended to undermine the AON’s capacity to develop a network management system and structures for network governance.

Program B’s AON relies almost entirely on one program coordinator who is also responsible for a national direct AmeriCorps program and has multiple demands on his time. No formal communication patterns exist, although originally a planning council was developed to assist the coordinator in managing the network. Its primary purpose was to coordinate corps

member training, support partner organizations, and handle “problems that might arise [at] the management level so that AmeriCorps members could retain their positive feelings toward service” (1996-97 State Application, p.5). When asked about the communication patterns of the network, however, the program coordinator indicated that the “meeting fatigue” of the first year, when partner organizations “met all the time” without “accomplishing much,” partly explained the lack of a formal infrastructure (Phone interview, program coordinator, 11/20/98).

Other factors identified by partner organization directors such as:

- turf,
- a “that’s-your-client-not-mine” mentality, and
- different organizational philosophies towards the homeless population

have, together, limited this network’s capacity to formulate for itself governance structures and an adequate network management system to foster collaborative network processes (Phone interviews, partner organization directors, 1/7/99, 1/14/99).

Case Three: Program C

Program C began with an innovative vision and unique program design and ended without successfully achieving that vision because of numerous external and internal setbacks. This is a story about how grand visions, while they may provide the motivation for organizations to band together, are not sufficient to sustain an organizational network over time.

Implementation of this grand vision proved too difficult for this program.

The program’s design grew out of a vision for one “community-in-need” helping another “community-in-need.” Three different partner organizations agreed to work together to serve two target populations:

- at-risk low income under-prepared college students (from which AmeriCorps members would be recruited), and

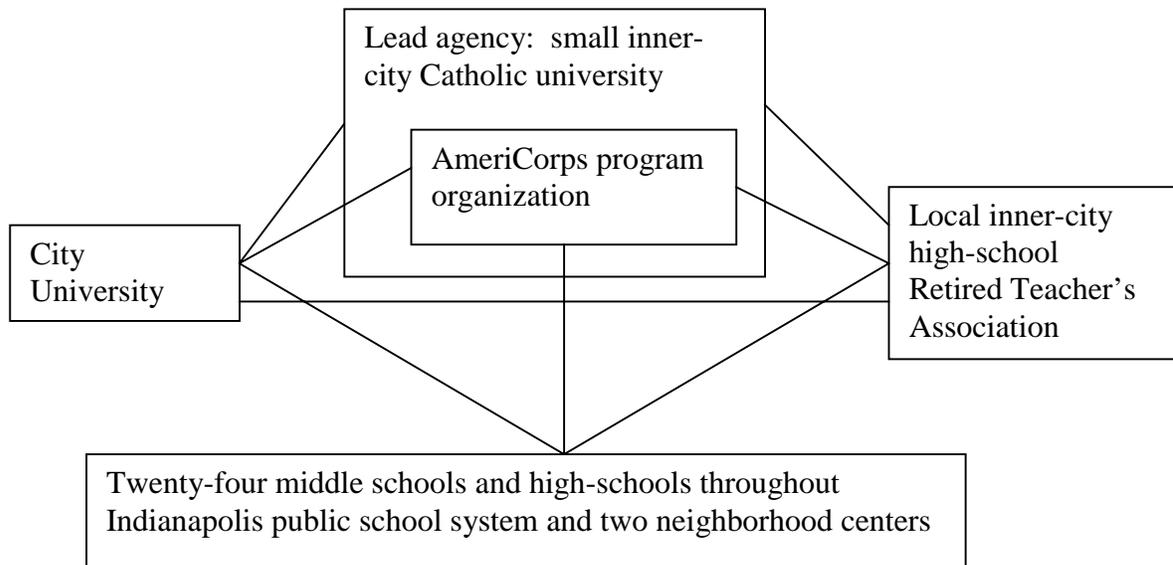
- at-risk low income eighth graders throughout the Indianapolis public school system.

Two inner-city universities and one retired teachers association composed the original AON.

Together, these three partners were supposed to provide the backbone of the program.

At-risk under-prepared college students, recruited from the student population of the two universities, were to be hired as AmeriCorps members where they would obtain specific tutoring and mentoring training. After receiving this training (originally designed to be a full semester of classes), corps members would span out into the community where they would work with eighth graders in inner-city public schools who were enrolled in the state-wide program administered by **Program A**. Members from the retired teachers association would serve as mentors to both corps members and the at-risk eighth graders, supporting each group through their skills, maturity, and experience developed over years of teaching in inner-city Indianapolis. Figure 3.4 depicts Program C's AON as it was envisioned in 1994.

Figure 3.4: Program C's Primary Partners (1994)

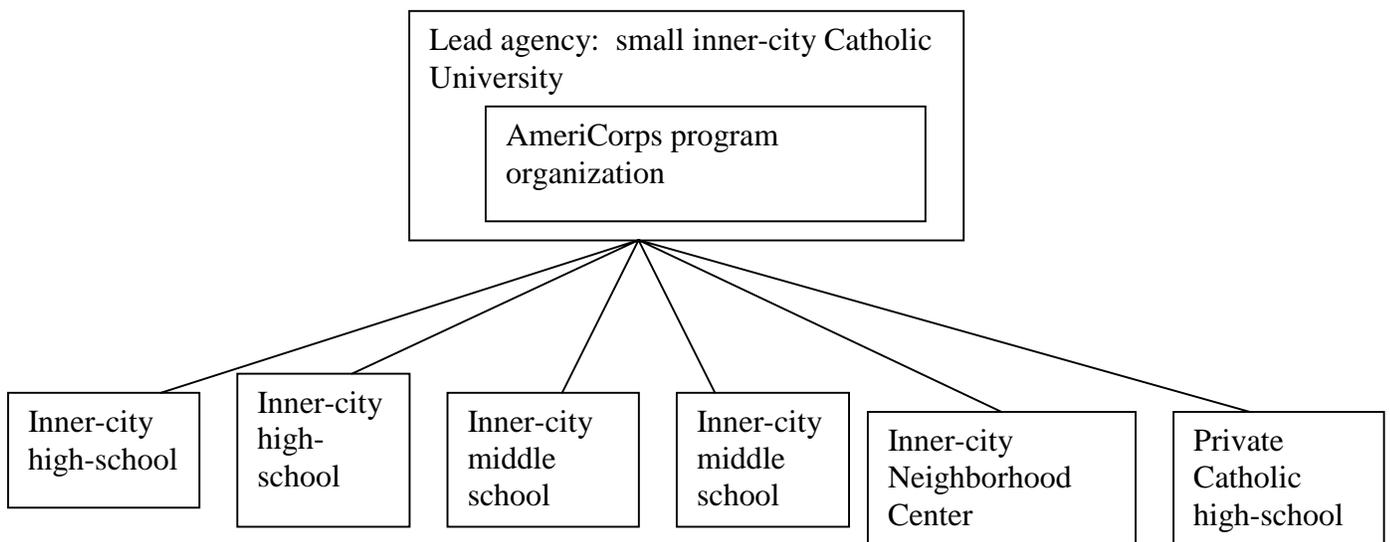


The vision underlying this program is unique because of its “self-help” philosophy.

Unfortunately, unstable funding at the onset of the program and inadequate time spent clarifying organizational partner roles and responsibilities created numerous problems for the AON. Two of the three partners pulled out before the program even got started. The original AON changed from the tightly-knit network depicted in Figure 3.4 to a hierarchical design with one lead agency and six partner organizations each focused on achieving its own goals through corps members.

Figure 3.5 depicts Program C’s AON in 1997.

Figure 3.5: Program C’s Primary Partners (1997)



The change in design illustrated in Figures 3.4 and 3.5 demonstrates the process this program underwent in its attempt to meet several unexpected problems. The program faced continuous problems with recruiting and retaining AmeriCorps members. A negative assessment by state commission staff during one site visit, and the questioned falsification of some corps members’ time sheets early on, also set the tone for the program coordinator’s management style that focused almost exclusively on monitoring and compliance to program rules and

requirements. Partner organizations tended to view participation in the AON as a way to obtain “free tutors” to help already over-worked teachers meet the needs of at-risk eighth graders and high school students (Program Evaluation, 1997-98, p. 15). Table Five provides a more in-depth summary of Program C’s AON in 1997 – 98.

Table Five: Description of Program C’s AON by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivation for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally, goodwill, “general willingness to help”, and a conceptual vision for one community in need to serve another community in need (Program Evaluation, 1995, pp. 4-5) • Later partner organizations motivated to join in order to obtain corps members as “free tutors” (Program Evaluation, 1997, p. 15)
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To instill feelings of self-worth and confidence in our youth [and] strengthen communities by uniting individuals from different backgrounds; to promote school success [and] to expand educational opportunities for our youth” (1997-98 State Application). • Outcomes conceptual, general, and grand without clear means of implementation
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal letters of agreement without follow-through (Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98) • Monthly AmeriCorps member meetings -- primarily “this-is-what-I-want-you-to-do” meetings (Phone Interview, corps member, 1/18/99) • Site visits (sometimes unannounced) to check up on corps members (Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98; Phone interview, corps member, 1/18/99) • Partner organization meetings twice a year (Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98)
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners share similar missions -- education • Partner organizations of same type (schools) except for one neighborhood center • Partner organizations have overlap in target population: schools’ target population: all its students, AmeriCorps program organization’s target population: at-risk eighth graders and high-school students (same target population as Program A’s AON)
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary focus of management: monitoring and collecting data to demonstrate results (Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98; phone interviews, corps members, 1/5/99, 1/18/99) • Lack of clarity about corps member responsibilities in schools

	<p>Phone interview, corps member, 1/5/99, 1/18/99; school counselor, 1/11/99)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear roles and responsibilities outlined in memorandums of agreement but no follow through after initial signing (Supplement to AmeriCorps member Handbook for site supervisors)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence for joint planning among partner organizations • AmeriCorps members planned service projects and college site visits on own; occasionally linked 2 or 3 other partner schools for these projects
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program coordinator made all decisions about program (Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98; corps members, phone interviews, 1/5/99, 1/18/99) • Memorandums of agreement lack credibility • No attempts made to build relationship with program A's AON despite shared mission and target population (Program evaluation, 1997, p. 13; Mid-year progress report from state commission site visit, Program Evaluation, 1995, p. 18)
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program plagued with resource problems from the start due to funding delays at state commission (1st QR, 10/94-12/94, p.10), and inadequate administrative resources (Program evaluation, 1997; Interview, program coordinator, 12/3/98) • Schools viewed corps members as "free employees" for them to use as they needed; corps members saw themselves as serving a particular sub-set of schools' students

A collaborative process characterizes the *original* design of this AON, but in implementation, a cooperative process clearly dominates Program C's network processes. The grand vision for the AON seemed doomed from the start because of:

- lack of joint planning among original partners,
- factors beyond the control of the program (like delays in funding from the state commission, poor timing of the initial award, and constant recruitment problems),
- no follow-through to assess partner organizations' understanding of their memorandums of agreement,
- a hierarchical management style that focused on monitoring and data collection, and
- an over-burdened AmeriCorps program staff.

Case Four: Program D

The next three cases (Programs D, E, and F) are VISTA projects and differ from AmeriCorps* State/National programs in several ways. Typically, VISTA members work on projects through a community-based organization that serves a low-income population. In contrast to AmeriCorps*State/National corps members (that “get things done” through direct service), VISTA volunteers “get things done” indirectly by helping to strengthen the organizational capacities of community based organizations in local communities. Programs D - F represent three different non-profit organizations in three different communities in Indiana within which VISTA members worked.

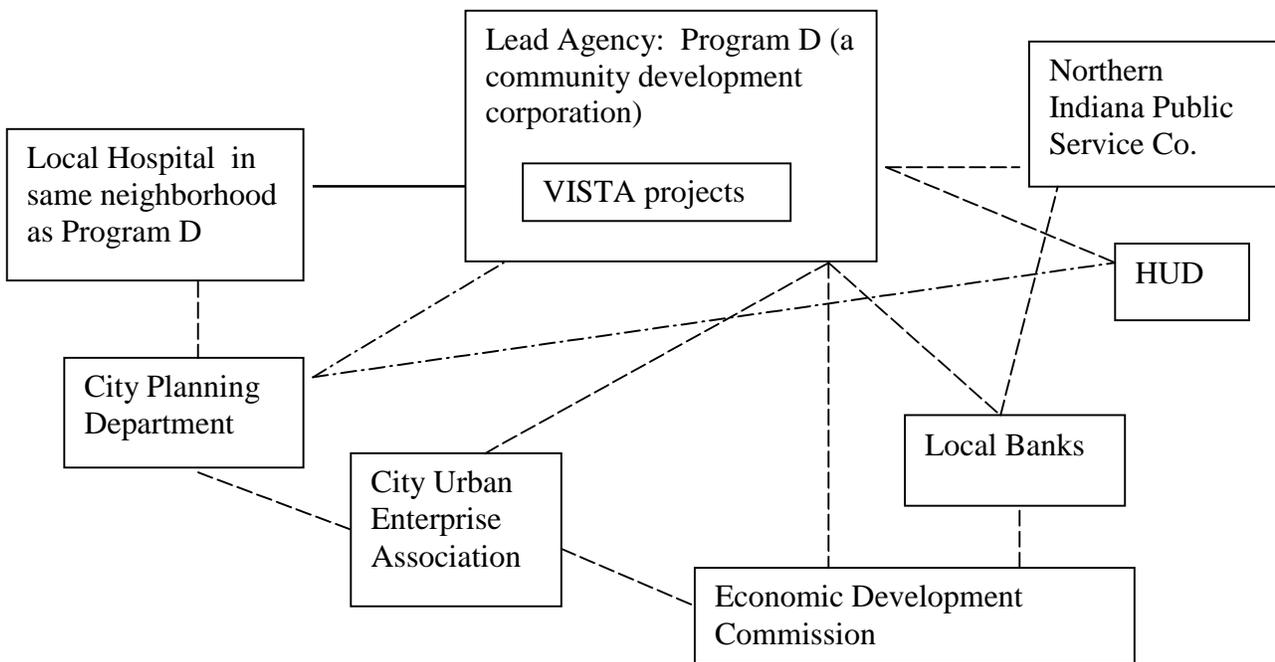
Program D began as a VISTA project in 1979 in a northern Indiana city marked by urban decay. VISTA volunteers, in response to a neighborhood crisis, conceived, organized, and created the non-profit organization that currently is Program D. Solidarity among community residents (in response to discrimination and red-lining of residents from insurance companies and banks) and a focused concrete mission (revitalization of one blighted neighborhood) distinguish this program from the three previous AmeriCorps programs in my sample.

Program D’s organizational network includes over twenty partner organizations that come and go as specific projects change. Most of the organizations in the network have different missions, target populations, and are of different types ranging from:

- banks,
- insurance companies,
- the city’s planning department,
- churches, and
- hospitals.

Though their missions vary significantly, each of these organizations find enough commonality to work together on specific projects that hold some promise for them to meet their own missions. Figure 3.6 depicts Program D’s primary partner organizations. Except for a long-standing relationship between Program D and a local hospital, the dotted lines between all the partner organizations represent the temporary nature of these relationships.

Figure 3.6: Program D’s Primary Partners (1997)



This picture does not adequately demonstrate the complexity of Program D’s fluid and sophisticated organizational relationships activated by specific projects and concrete short-term goals. Although an overall goal of revitalizing a decaying inner city drives Program D’s AON, the primary impetus for coming together lies in the individual interests of each partner organization and the unique expertise each has to offer to accomplish a specific goal.

Program D is a model for networks that exhibit coordinative processes as demonstrated in

Table Six below.

Table Six: Description of Program D's AONs by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivation for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original motivation: solidarity around feelings of victimization • To revitalize specific neighborhood in one city (Program Handout) • Current motivation: primarily expertise and self-interest to achieve specific project goals
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of specific goal around which organizations coalesce
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent and intense, formal, lots of bargaining and negotiating around individual partner interests (Interview, City Planning Dept. staff and Program D board member, 12/29/98; City Chief of Staff, 12/29/98) • Monthly board meetings open to all neighborhood residents
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations have different missions, target populations, and are of different types • Overlapping interests and expertise, more than missions, holds network together
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program D is small with only 4 –5 staff members; director is intimately involved in the day-to-day activities of the organization (Participant observation, site visit, 12/29/98) • Roles and responsibilities of partner organizations clear because related to individual organization's expertise • Management of the network changes depending on who takes charge of the project (Interviews, City Planning Dept. staff and board member 12/29/98, Program D staff and former VISTA volunteers, 12/29/98)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint planning occurs around specific projects (Phone interview, program director, 11/17/98, City Chief of Staff, 12/29/98) • Program D's monthly board meetings address issues specific to Program D's mission
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual organizations retain own autonomy, but joint decision making occurs around specific projects (Interview, City Chief of Staff, 12/29/98, program director, 12/29/98) • Decision-making based on negotiated interests and inability to accomplish goals without other partners • Self-interest and organizational legitimacy, not norms of trust or reciprocity, dominate decision making processes (phone interview, program director, 12/29/98)

	Findings
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared resources occur round specific projects (Interview, City Planning Dept. staff and Program D board member, 12/29/98) • In several cases, shared resources have resulted in leveraging other sources of income outside the AON (Interview, Mayoral Chief of Staff, 12/29/98)

Program D’s multiple AONs demonstrate nearly ideal depictions of coordinative processes though some evidence suggests that organizations in these AONs may consider more collaborative arrangements in the future. For example, partner organizations, over time, have begun to demonstrate increased knowledge of each other and develop reputations for trustworthiness (Interview, Mayoral Chief of Staff, 12/29/98). Networks that engage in coordinative activities over time may hold the potential for fostering more collaborative arrangements because the intensity of commitment required for achieving short-term goals may create norms of reciprocity and trust for longer-term relationships. Overall, though, Program D’s AONs are project-based networks. The program director summarized this underlying foundation of the networks to which Program D belongs in her comment:

We never let our partner [organizations] go. Sometimes we have more support [than other times], but [in the end] they need our eyes and ears and we need their money (Phone interview, program director, 11/17/98).

It is important to underscore that the partners in these networks are long-standing, well-established organizations in the community and that these relationships have existed for many years. Program D has been working with most of these organizations since it began in 1979. This does not mean, however, that an organization in an AON will continue a relationship with a partner when it perceives partnership with that organization a threat to its own mission. Program D’s relationship with AmeriCorps*VISTA demonstrates this. Program D, started by VISTA nearly twenty years ago, continued to apply for periodic VISTA project members over that

twenty year period. In its most recent partnership with AmeriCorps*VISTA, Program D decided to terminate its relationship earlier than expected because of management difficulties with one VISTA member in particular and differences in expectations between AmeriCorps and Program D's director (Phone interview, program director, 11/17/98).

The program director attributes these problems partly to the change in national focus that occurred in 1993. "When VISTA became [part of AmeriCorps]," she said,

things started to be problematic. [Before then], VISTAs had an allegiance to the organization in which they worked [and] the VISTA supervisor had some authority. [VISTAs] tended to feel they belonged to the organization. When the rules changed, [we] had real problems because there was no authority or accountability. The VISTA felt they could go over your head to the state office (Phone interview, program director, 11/17/98).

In reality, as the Corporation state office director indicated, no rules changed when VISTA came under the AmeriCorps umbrella. Program D's termination of its partnership with VISTA occurred as a result of the Executive Director's perceptions of a change. This termination, however, illustrates how temporary coordinative processes can be. Even perceived changes in how organizations interact, despite long-standing relationships, can result in organizations voluntarily pulling out of those relationships without much difficulty.

Case Five: Program E

Program E, another VISTA project, has been in existence for over 5 years and continues to grow. It currently has eight VISTA volunteers who work in a large, well-managed and well-respected organization in Monroe County. Like Program D, VISTA volunteers work primarily in project-based activities and foster inter-organizational relationships in several organizational networks. What Program E offers us, that Program D does not, is an opportunity to examine VISTA's role in building within-house program networks and not just outside-organization networks.

Program E's Within-House Organizational Network. This VISTA project's lead agency is over twenty years old and has grown significantly in size partly because of the work of VISTA volunteers. In fact, VISTA volunteers, early on, so successfully expanded the organization's programming that staff expressed concern at their capacity to sustain the expansion. The executive director of the lead agency remembers one staff meeting in particular when her staff indicated they no longer wanted VISTA members at the organization because of a perceived lack of organizational capacity to manage program growth. "We can't keep up [with the VISTA volunteers]," they told the director.

They're young and enthusiastic. They want new programs. We can't even do the programs we've got (Interview, executive director, 12/8/98).

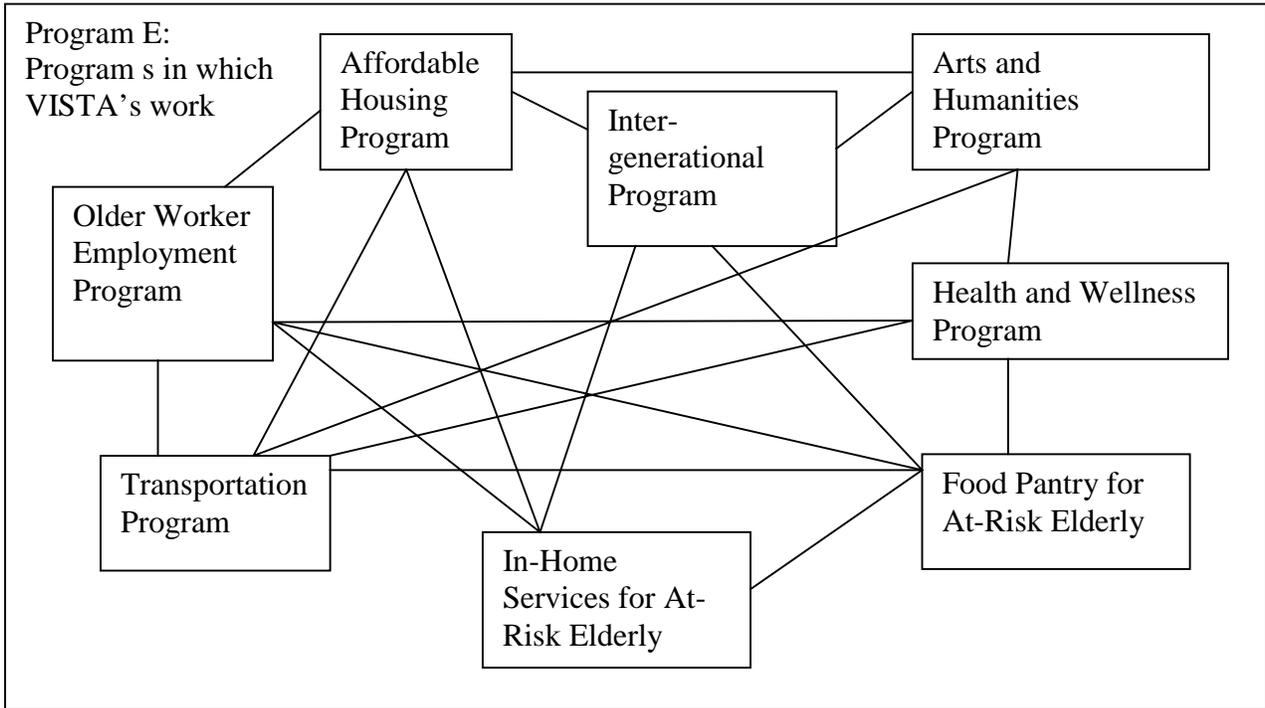
This prompted the executive director to change her approach to VISTA by designing VISTA projects to strengthen *existing* agency programs. VISTA members today are each assigned to particular projects that enhance one of the thirty-one programs already housed in the agency. One VISTA member's comments illustrate the scope of Program's E's goals and how VISTA members provide linkages across within-house programs to better meet the needs of the shared target population. This organization, the VISTA member said,

has one common theme -- it exists to serve seniors 55 and over. Once you leave the commonality of age, the programs just veer off into their own entities. [Yet], the cooperation and exchange of information that takes place between the different entities [is] extraordinary. We don't operate in a vacuum here. We are constantly cooperating with each other and are aware of the fact that if [a client] comes to us for one need, [that] doesn't mean they don't have another need [that some other program in the organization can meet] (Interview, VISTA member, 12/9/98).

Figure 3.7 depicts Program E's within-house network. Each of the lead agency's programs below is conceived as an "organization" in its own right (each has a director, a VISTA

member, a mission, and its own budget). Shared concern for the same target population and differing program expertise provide the “glue” that holds this within-house network together.

Figure 3.7: Program E’s With-In House Network Partners (1998)

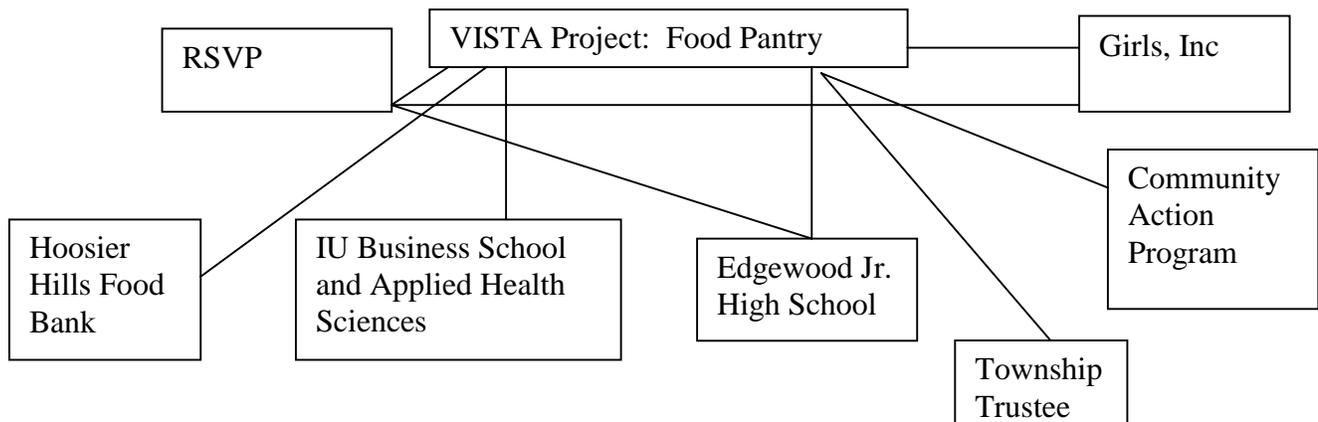


Partners in this type of organizational network demonstrate collaborative processes. This picture illustrates a unique kind of organizational network. “Partner organizations” -- conceived as individual programs -- have the advantage of being housed within the same building, sharing the overall structure of the parent organization and a strong and legitimate executive director, and engaging in frequent daily face-to-face interaction. These factors might provide some explanation for the tightly-knit structure of Program E’s within-house AON (as illustrated by the multiple lines connecting “partners”). Not all within-house networks, however, necessarily demonstrate this tightly-knit structure. Nearly all the VISTA members interviewed indicated

they deliberately foster the connections between their individual programs by referring their clients to each other's programs as needed.

Program E's Outside-Organizational Networks. Program E also belongs to numerous organizational networks in the community. Like Program D, these networks are primarily project-based and temporary. Partner organizations in these networks have often worked together before on other projects. One network in particular offers a rich example of the role VISTA members can play in building inter-organizational relationships. Figure 3.8 illustrates a network that developed around Program E's goal to bring food to home-bound low-income seniors in Monroe and Owen Counties.

Figure 3.8: Program E's Food Pantry Organizational Network (1998)



The VISTA member responsible for this project deliberately fostered partner organization relationships by convincing potential partners it was in their best interests to participate. As the Food Pantry Program AON expanded, network processes also changed. Table Seven summarizes this network's primary inter-organizational interactions.

Table Seven: Description of Program E's Food Pantry AON by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivations for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlapping missions not shared missions motivate partner organizations to join the network (Interview, lead agency staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98; Executive director, 12/8/98) • Organizations see they can accomplish own goals better together than individually
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide homebound seniors with food and help instill a community service ethic in at-risk girls by engaging them in Program E's Food Bank Program (Interview, program staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98)
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent, intense, and formal at outset of project (Interview, program staff, 12/8/98) • Once program in place, communication informal, as needed (Interview, program staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98) • Nearly daily interaction by e-mail with certain partners depending on the nature of the partner organization (e.g. IU Business school student volunteers) (Interview, program staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98)
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missions overlap, organizations of different types • In some cases, partner organizations share same overall target population (home-bound at-risk elderly) but most of the partner organizations also have their own individual target populations (e.g. at-risk young girls, Jr. high-school students)
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of roles and responsibilities important during negotiation phase of project where partner organizations focus on memorandum of agreement (Interview, program staff, 12/8/98) • Management of the food bank program network essential to maintain interest of certain partner organizations (Interview, program Staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98) • Other partners require very little management
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint planning occurred intensely at beginning of project but little if any joint planning occurs now • One time joint grant writing activity occurred around a specific project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No governance structures in place for shared ownership and joint decision making (Interview, program staff, former VISTA, 12/9/98) • Program E's executive director makes primary decisions about program • Some evidence to suggest that norms of reciprocity beginning to develop between lead agency and one partner organization

Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources shared: primarily time, effort, people, and food • Resources are provided according to what each partner has to offer with cost to some partners greater than costs to other partners (e.g. time it takes to work with young girls at Girl’s Inc.)
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Overall, a collaborative process characterizes the interactions among partner organizations in Program E’s Food Pantry Program network. Although the network fails to demonstrate several key dimensions such as joint planning, shared decision-making, and network governance structures, partner organizations realize they need each other to achieve their missions and can do so better together, than if they try to accomplish them alone. This is the hallmark of a collaborative network process. In the case of Program E’s other community-based organizational networks, VISTA members are primarily involved in networks with coordinative processes to achieve short-term concrete goals such as building an affordable housing rental unit for seniors in Owen County.

Case Six: Program F

Program F, like Programs D and E, is an AmeriCorps*VISTA project, but unlike these two programs, it is significantly larger in geographical scope and complexity and shares characteristics more like those of Program A, an AmeriCorps*State/National program. Like Program A, Program F:

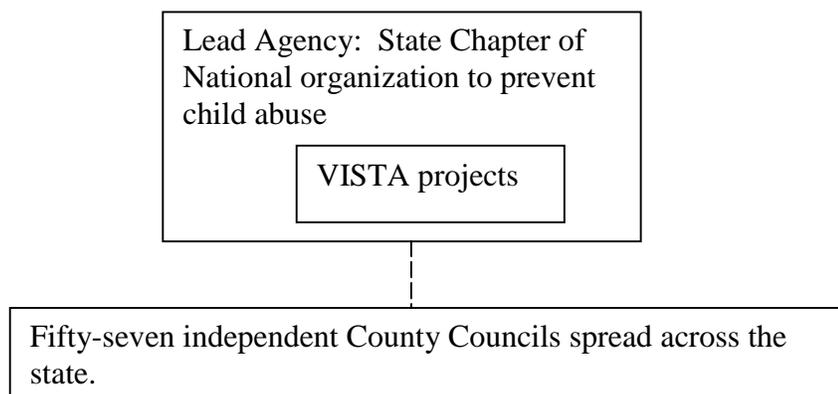
- is highly decentralized with a state / local level dynamic that causes problems for network management,
- has its central office in Indianapolis with fifty-seven host sites (called County Councils) scattered across the state of Indiana, and
- supports host sites that are highly independent and unique in their structure, culture, and activities.
-

Each of Program F's fifty-seven county councils is its own non-profit organization and each has its own organizational network of community organizations with which it interacts. A recent internal survey (1998) of local county councils (response rate: 44%) demonstrates that these councils primarily partner with organizations such as schools, Step Ahead Councils,⁸ local Healthy Families programs⁹, and domestic violence groups. Only two of the respondents indicated their county council worked with another county council even when councils were located in adjacent counties (1998 Program Document, Council Survey Summary, no pg. number).

Figure 3.9 illustrates Program F's organizational network. The one dotted line is meant to illustrate that interactions between state and local level partner organizations occur only sporadically. Linkages between the state chapter and local county councils are primarily limited to the program's annual "Breaking the Cycle" conference and occasional contacts initiated by local councils requesting information or advice. As the county council survey demonstrates, cross-county partnering is very rare, though VISTA volunteers did make attempts at this by developing newsletters or by personally describing one county council's activities to members of another county council (Interview, VISTA volunteer, 12/16/98).

Figure 3.9: Program F's Primary Partners (1997)

⁸ . Step Ahead Councils were established by the state of Indiana to coordinate all activities affecting children in each individual county. In some cases, Step Ahead councils were instrumental in developing Program F's county councils by giving them a grant to obtain 501© -3 status.



This lack of interaction among Program F’s partner organizations is not surprising because of the state chapter’s deliberate policy to foster complete independence and autonomy at the local level. VISTA member activities occurred primarily at the local sites, helping county councils obtain non-profit status. Program F’s staff attribute much of the success of the program to VISTA members who were instrumental in making Program F a model state chapter. A recent change in leadership at the state level, the denial of the state Corporation office of Program F’s 1999 VISTA project proposal, and the acquisition of new funding through a local foundation may change this decentralized picture dramatically. A new vision for the program dominates Program F’s activities and is discussed later in this paper.

Table Eight describes Program F’s AON prior to this new development.

Table Eight: Description of Program F’s AON by Dimension

Dimension	Findings
Motivations for Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall shared mission among partners brings organizations together, but each achieves that mission “from different angles” (Interview, state chapter board member, 1/4/99) • Individual experience with child abuse provides the passion for involvement (Interview, VISTA supervisor, 11/18/99)

⁹ . Healthy Families is also a State mandated program whose mission is to assist new parents in the development of their newborn children. It is a hands-on direct care approach. Program F was initially responsible for bringing this national model to Indiana.

Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent child abuse (1995-96 VISTA Project Application)
Nature of Interaction and Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal communication between state and local partners except when initiated by local county councils (Interviews, program staff, 11/18/98, 1/6/99) • State chapter provides local county councils with expertise, information, advice when asked (Interviews, program staff, 11/18/98, 1/6/99)
Organizational Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite having the same mission, target populations, and having the same nonprofit status, local county councils vary significantly in resources, sophistication, ability to accomplish goals (Interview, program staff, 1/6/99; 1998 County Council Survey, no pg. #) • Most county councils value their autonomy and the state chapter has tried to respect this (Interviews, program staff, 1/6/99)
Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal network management • “When creating the local councils, state office [staff] told the local councils, ‘do whatever you want’ “(Discussion, Council meeting at Breaking the Cycle Conference, 4/22/99)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No joint planning between local councils and state chapter
Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No governance structures in place for joint decision making or state-wide identity
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VISTA members provided costly resources to local councils, resources such as personal effort, time, energy (Interview, local county council board member, 1/12/99) • Once councils in place, least costly resources shared – information, perhaps expertise

Clearly, cooperative processes most accurately characterize Program F’s organizational network since 1990. Recent implementation of the new vision has resulted in a significant increase in contacts between state office personnel and local county council board members. Central office staff members have convened regional meetings trying to foster networking across county councils and to strengthen interaction between the state and local level partners.

The vision that “explains” this important change in direction is best articulated by Program F’s new executive director, and suggests the potential for movement from cooperative

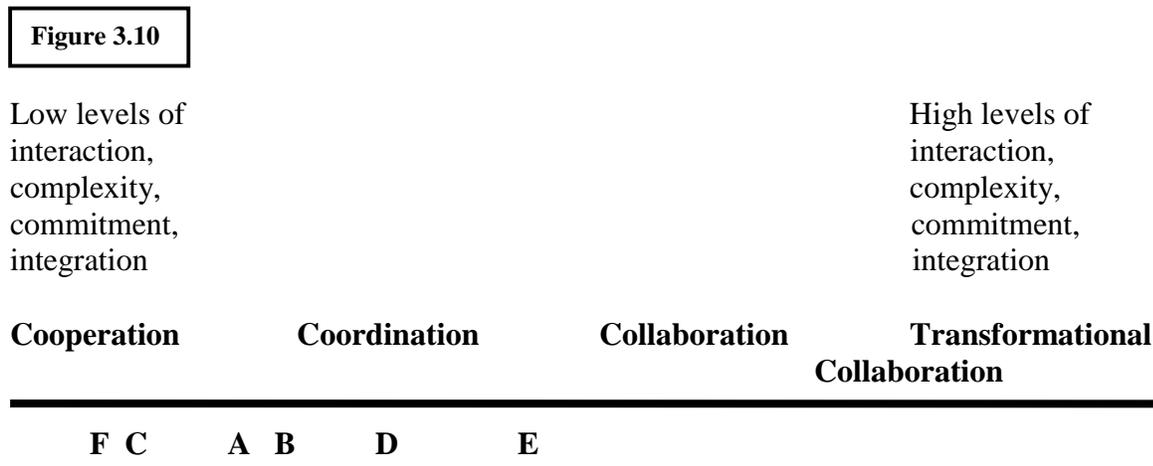
network processes to collaborative ones. Even elements of a transformational process emerge as suggested by the executive director’s comments.

Instead of thinking about meeting [our] own individual goals of preventing child abuse at the local level, the mission should not be prevention so much as it should be the well-being of children. When you make this common vision, then you can see that meeting this mission has a number of key components, of which prevention is only one. The key from this perspective is for local prevent child abuse councils to look at their role as creating and being part of “prevention partners.” When we’re trying to create that song that we’re all trying to sing, [it is important to recognize that while there is] strength in uniqueness, [in order to sing together] we still need to come around to a common purpose (Interview, Executive Director, 4/22/99).

This program represents a great opportunity for a future case study of how a program can deliberately foster movement from one network process to another.

Summary

Overall, my findings suggest that AONs on the ground demonstrate primarily cooperative and coordinative network processes rather than collaborative ones. Figure 3.10 provides a crude picture of where the six programs in my sample fall on a continuum from low to high levels of interaction, complexity, commitment, and integration.



Each of the six programs in my sample tends to fall on the lower half of the continuum. It is important to remember, though, that at least four of the six cases (A, B, D, E) do demonstrate

some evidence of collaborative activities and changes in Program F's focus suggest a deliberate attempt to pursue collaboration in the future.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Although the AONs in my sample demonstrate less variation in network processes than expected, a cross-case analysis provides some interesting patterns that do not emerge in the case-by-case analysis. Cases were chosen to vary along several variables: size, geographical scope, service model, length of time in existence, area of service, and whether or not a program is still funded.¹⁰

Geographical Scope

Intuitively one might expect that the broader the geographical scope, the less likely organizations will work together because of difficulties in coordinating and communicating across wide distances. My findings suggest, however, that problems inherent in coordinating decentralized programs and the norm of organizational autonomy affect AON processes more than does geographical scope.

Programs A and B, for example, both exhibit similar network processes despite the fact that Program A's scope is statewide and Program B's scope is localized in one small city. Both of these programs find it difficult to build unity among partner organizations to accomplish AON goals because of a deliberately decentralized design that values local autonomy. In the case of Program A, local identity concerns tend to undermine state-wide vision for the program despite attempts by state level staff to communicate with Community Partners. In Program B's case,

¹⁰ . Size and area of service do not yield enough information to make meaningful statements about their effects on network processes. This may be partly due to measurement error. A more accurate measurement for size, such as number of partner organizations in an AON, for example, may have yielded more meaningful results. The large number of organizations that comprise AONs, however, and the time constraints of the fellowship limited my ability to examine size in this manner. Measurement of area of service also requires more refinement than was possible in this study. More systematic research is needed to determine the nature of the problems AONs try to address in each of the four mandated areas of service and how they affect network processes.

partner organizations, though they have known each other and worked together for years, tend to view their organizational relationships in terms of their different areas of expertise. Individual organizational autonomy and expertise in the service of overlapping target populations dominates Program B's design, making it difficult to build program unity throughout the AON despite geographical proximity.

Program F, the other statewide program in my sample, demonstrates similar tensions between fostering local autonomy and building unity among partner organizations. One board member of a local county council in Program F put it best in her response to the following statement made by a state level staff member.

“One of things I learned very quickly,” the staff member indicated, “is that you can't tell local councils [partner organizations] what to do.”

“Well,” the board member responded, “you can tell us what to do, but we'll just ignore you”(County Council Meeting, 4/22/99).

Although the comment (made in jest and good humor) elicited laughter, local host site representatives recognized enough “truth” in the statement to appreciate the irony in the board member's comment.

Programs D and E tend to exhibit more coordinative and collaborative network processes than the other four programs in my sample. Program D's scope, limited as it is to one city neighborhood, differs in geographical scope from program E which covers a two county area. In both cases, the programs belong to multiple project-based networks. Project goals tend to drive AON processes such that organizations, even though they may be scattered across a county (such as in Program E's case) are still willing to participate in the network in order to accomplish the project.

Number of Years in Existence

Each of these programs has been in existence for at least four years, one (on and off) for twenty. Some evidence exists in the data to suggest that organizational learning has occurred. Organizational representatives in Programs A and F, for example, indicated that the decentralized nature of past approaches to achieving their goals needed re-evaluation (Interview, program director, 11/25/98; Interview, executive director, 4/22/99). Initiatives in both programs suggest evidence for a more comprehensive approach to achieve program goals. This is best demonstrated by Program F's executive director's comment quoted earlier and in the following comment found in Program A's 1998 end-of-term report. Program A, the document indicates,

is committed to identifying ways to truly 'hold hands' with other programs so that we are all maximizing our efforts and affording youth, families, and communities, the best service possible (4th quarterly report, 4/98 – 9/98, no page number).

In order to do this, Program A's central office staff is currently talking with staff at several other state-wide agencies, such as Indiana Youth Service Agency, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Youth as Resources, and the Indiana Department of Education about working on a new project, "Bridges to Success." This project, if it were adopted, would require Program A to view corps member activities differently. Instead of just recruiting, tutoring, and mentoring at-risk eighth grade and high-school students (a direct service approach), corps members would begin to play a more indirect role by helping to build bridges across community-based organizations. Corps members would serve "as distinctive bridges for [at-risk students] and families to local and necessary resources in their communities" by referring students and families to organizations that match their particular needs (End-of-Term report, 4/98-9/98). This approach shares similarities with Program B's "continuum of care" model that uses multiple organizations with different areas of expertise to more holistically meet its target population's needs.

Other evidence for learning over time exists in several of the other cases in my sample. Program E, for example, has had AmeriCorps*VISTA members for nearly six years. Over that time, VISTA activities have changed significantly to enhance Program E's organizational capacity. The *within-house* AON supported by the referral activities of VISTA members from one within-house program to another represents one example of learning over time. In Program D's case, the partnership with AmeriCorps*VISTA over the years helped to build its credibility as a strong community voice. This increased legitimacy provided Program D greater opportunities to learn to negotiate its own interests among larger players such as the city's planning department and HUD.

Service Model

Overall, AmeriCorps*VISTA program AONs tend to exhibit coordinative network processes. This is not surprising given the project-based nature of VISTA programs. AmeriCorps*State/National program AONs, on the other hand, tend to exhibit more cooperative processes. Both groups of AONs, though, exhibit "moments" of collaborative processes.

Overall, partners in AmeriCorps*State/National networks focus primarily on achieving their own interests through the network. They engage *less* in project-based activities than do VISTA partners, and as such, do not demonstrate as much collective effort as organizations in VISTA AONs exhibit. When AmeriCorps* State/National AONs do engage in coordinative network processes, this usually occurs around projects like Martin Luther King Day celebrations, signature projects, or annual retreats.

The "building organizational capacity" service model of AmeriCorps*VISTA does tend to yield slightly more evidence for evolving networks than those that emerge in AmeriCorps* State/National programs. In both Programs D and E, for example, long-time organizational

partners demonstrate limited evidence for the development of norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness despite the project-based nature of these networks. When asked about the inter-organizational relationships in Program E's networks, for example, the program director indicated that even in networks that no longer remain active (because a project was completed), commitment to past partners remains strong. "We may move on," she said,

but if those [organizations] really needed help, [we] would have a hard time turning our backs on them because you just don't do that to people. Is there ever an end [to working together]? I don't think so. Not if you really care. Then those people [and organizations] will look back and say, why did we ever do that with them (Interview, executive director, 12/8/98).

Discussions with stakeholders at the three AmeriCorps*State/National programs do not demonstrate evidence for this kind of long-term commitment. Other factors related only to AmeriCorps*State/National programs such as newness of program (two were four years old, one five) and lack of legitimacy in the community may partly "explain" this difference.

These two groups of programs also exhibit other differences. As would be expected, AmeriCorps* State/National programs tend to demonstrate more "getting things done" thinking than do AmeriCorps*VISTA projects. In two of the three AmeriCorps* State/National programs, emphasis on demonstrating results tends to undermine the ability of administrators and host site directors to focus on building inter-organizational relationships. This is most evident in Program C where lack of accountability early on in the program led to a hierarchical management style that emphasized monitoring, counting volunteer hours, and paperwork at the expense of providing personal support to corps members and building organizational relationships.

An internal 1997 evaluation of Program C blamed the burden of paperwork for some of the program's problems. The "administration of the program," the evaluator writes,

has become too much [of] a paper-chase [with] report-writing and administration of trivial detail (Program Evaluation, 1997, p. 12).

Quarterly reports from Program A repeat the theme, demonstrating the frustration some local coordinators feel about adequately documenting results. “Coordinators,” one program document indicates,

report that they are having difficulty documenting information that reflects the sites’ successes. In some case, the “getting things done” [focus] does not lend itself to easily quantifiable documentation (1st Quarterly Report, 1/94-12/94, p. 20)

This focus on documenting results and “getting things done” may limit AmeriCorps* State/National programs from building the kinds of inter-organizational relationships necessary to sustain AONs over time. Trying to obtain reports of corps members’ service hours and activities in local partner organizations, for example, may have the effect of setting up an adversarial relationship between the AmeriCorps program organization and its partners. AmeriCorps program directors, trying to complete their quarterly reports on time, find themselves having to collect data from multiple partners that do not necessarily share the director’s sense of urgency about completing the report. AmeriCorps*VISTA projects in my sample do not demonstrate evidence of this kind of tension, probably because VISTA members are directly responsible for documenting their results, not partner organizations in networks.

Conversations with corps members in both groups of programs also suggest that VISTA programs tend to foster awareness of building inter-organizational relationships better than do AmeriCorps*State/National programs. Again, this is not surprising, given the “building organizational capacity” model of VISTA. My findings demonstrate how AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*State/National training differs. Compared to AmeriCorps*State/National corps members, VISTA members in my sample more quickly understood my questions about the value

of AONs for building local communities than did AmeriCorps*State/National corps members. State/National corps members required more prodding and clarification of terms than did VISTA members. Most AmeriCorps* State/National corps members who were interviewed had difficulty conceiving of their roles outside of their immediate assigned partner organizations.

Programs Funded / Not Funded

Three of the programs in my sample (C, D and F) are no longer funded. Two of the three demonstrate the least evidence for collaborative activities (Programs C and F). Program D, however, demonstrates viable, even vibrant, inter-organizational relationships, though those relationships tend to be project-based and temporary. All three programs that remain funded (Programs A, B, and E), though they demonstrate primarily cooperative and coordinative activities, also demonstrate some evidence for collaborative processes. In all three cases, in varying degrees, organizational representatives demonstrate an awareness either that they are, or that they could, achieve their own goals better working together than they could working alone.

Summary

Overall, my findings suggest that service model, length of time in existence and whether or not a program is funded may be important variables that affect network processes. Decentralization, the norm of organizational autonomy, and project-based goals tend to be more important than geographical scope for determining how organizations work together to achieve national service goals. Each of these variables needs further refinement in conceptualization and measurement before more rigorous research can be conducted.

FINDINGS FROM PROGRAM DIRECTORS SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP

A mail survey of all AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA program directors¹¹

¹¹ . Fifty-nine surveys were sent out with an over-all response rate of 44%. Forty-three of the fifty-nine were AmeriCorps*State/National programs. The response rate for these programs was 40% (n = 17). The response rate for AmeriCorps*VISTA was 56% (n = 9).

Supports most of the findings of the case-by-case and cross-case analyses. Primary new findings are summarized below.

- **Prioritizing AmeriCorps AON goals:**

When asked to prioritize among five goals on a scale of most important (one) to least important (five), a clear pattern emerged. Directors of both AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*State/National programs indicated that a shared belief in the value of national service was the *least* important goal.¹²

The most important goal for both groups was “providing direct service to those in need in the community.”¹³

- **Perceived costs and benefits of working together:**

When asked whether the perceived benefits of working together with other organizations to achieve AmeriCorp goals outweighed the costs in terms of time, energy, and commitment, both groups of directors agreed, but AmeriCorps*VISTA directors felt more strongly about the benefits than did AmeriCorps*State/National directors.¹⁴

- **Factors most important for organizations to successfully work together:**

Program directors in both groups identified communication as one of the most important factors for organizations to successfully work together, but AmeriCorps*State/National directors felt more strongly about this.¹⁵ “Having a common vision that national service can meet critical community needs” proved to be the most important factor for successful collective action for AmeriCorps*VISTA directors.¹⁶

For AmeriCorps*State/National program directors, the least important factor for successfully working together was time and effort.¹⁷ No clear pattern emerged from AmeriCorps*VISTA program director responses about the least important factor.

¹² . 50% of AmeriCorps*VISTA directors who responded to the survey ranked this goal as 4 or 5; 75% of AmeriCorps*State/National directors ranked it as 4 or 5.

¹³ . 38% of AmeriCorps*VISTA program directors ranked this goal as 1, 25% ranked it as 2. 70% of AmeriCorps*State/National program directors ranked this goal as 1 or 2.

¹⁴ . 29% of AmeriCorps*State/National program directors strongly agreed to this statement, 35% agreed, 18% were neutral, and two directors (of the 17 that responded) disagreed. In contrast, 67% of AmeriCorps*VISTA program directors strongly agreed the benefits outweighed the costs and the remaining 33% agreed.

¹⁵ . Using the same scale of 1 (most important) – 5 (least important), 50% of AmeriCorps*State/National directors ranked communication as 1 and 19% of them ranked it as 2.

¹⁶ . 38% of AmeriCorps*VISTA directors ranked having a common vision of national service as 1, 25% ranked it as 2.

¹⁷ . 44% of AmeriCorps*State/National directors ranked time and effort as the least important factor for successful collective action.

Findings from a **program director focus group** add yet another perspective for understanding what AONs look like on the ground, especially understanding issues of power.¹⁸ Responses to questions about decision-making and power distribution are somewhat mixed. While the majority of directors that filled out the focus group questionnaire indicate local level programs have a fair amount of discretion to make local level programmatic decisions, 94% of them indicate some organizations in their AON are more powerful than other organizations. Reasons given for this imbalance in power are listed below.

- Funders (whoever has the money),
- Legitimacy in community (organizations with legitimacy have more power than those that lack legitimacy),
- “Big picture thinking” gives organizations power,
- Presence of a need (“agencies that need us are willing to accept our suggestions”),
- Passion and level of commitment (whichever organization has the most passion at any given time has the most power in an AON).

When asked whether organizations in the AON to which they belong each has an equal say in how to achieve network goals, 44% of those that filled out the questionnaire indicated “yes”, 56% indicated “no”. When pushed to discuss this further, respondents provided a range of reasons for why some organizations have more say than others. These reasons match those listed above. Although ownership of resources clearly emerges as an important predictor of power, the other sources of power such as passion, vision (“big picture thinking”), and willingness to commit time and energy cannot be discounted as unimportant.

SUMMARY

¹⁸ . Program directors (n = 21) were asked to complete a four-page questionnaire to prepare them for discussion, first in small groups and then in one large group.

This section of the paper presents a case-by-case description and cross-case analysis of six Indiana AmeriCorps programs. A mail survey of all AmeriCorps* State/National and VISTA program directors and a program director focus group supplement findings from these case studies. The following list summarizes the overall key findings about AON processes that determine how AONs look on the ground.

- **Motivation for working together**

Organizations within the AONs in my sample work together primarily because of overlapping missions and target populations not shared missions. Individual organizational interests dominate most of these AONs.

Most of the AmeriCorps program and partner organization directors (both State/National and VISTA) interviewed do not view “bringing a group of organizations together that share a belief in the value of national service as a mutually beneficial way to meet community needs” as an important goal when compared to other goals like “providing direct service” or corps member development. AmeriCorps* VISTA project directors, though, do view this as an important factor necessary for organizations in AONs to successfully work together.

- **Expected outcomes**

Interviewees (program and partner organization directors, board members, and corps members) find it difficult to think of the AON, as a *whole*, achieving outcomes. Most stakeholders view outcomes in terms of achieving individual organizational interests through the network. Expected outcomes for AONs tend to focus on meeting overlapping missions and serving overlapping target populations, not in community-wide visions for change.

- **Nature of interaction and communication mechanisms**

Overall, programs vary significantly in terms of frequency and type of communication. In many of the cases, organizational interactions and communication tend to occur around projects and on an as needed basis rather than in more regular planned ways. In several cases in my sample, interviewees indicated they felt meaningfulness of communication to be more important than frequency of communication.

- **Organizational missions**

Organizations in these AONs tend to have overlapping missions and target populations. Organizational expertise provides the glue that holds AONs together in several cases in my sample.

- **Network management**

Most of the AONs in my sample do not have the resources -- money, time, energy, human, outlook, or organizational capacity -- to adequately manage their AONs. The primary management focus of these AONs lies in each organization managing its own resources. Most stakeholders in these AONs indicated they were so busy trying to meet individual program goals, they were unable to focus on managing the network of organizations to meet community-wide goals.

- **Planning**

Minimal evidence of regular strategic joint planning exists in the cases studied. When joint planning occurs, it occurs around specific projects with concrete goals and ends when the project is completed.

- **Network governance**

Overall, none of the AONs in my sample demonstrate network governance structures based on norms of trust, reciprocity, and mutual obligation. Power sharing and joint decision-making, when it does occur, is project-based and temporary. Partner organizations vary widely in terms of commitment to memorandums of agreement among partners.

- **Use of resources**

Organizations in these AONs share many resources, especially expertise, information, basic support services (such as facilities, accounting, transportation), time and energy, and in some cases, volunteers. Organizational resources vary and are not symmetrical. Usually, one or several organizations in an AON tend to have more influence than do others. This influence tends to change depending on other factors besides money. Passion and the willingness to commit time and energy to the AON emerge as an important factor in determining which organizations have more power at any given time.

These findings have implications for the capacity of AmeriCorps organizational networks to evolve from one network process to another. This is the subject of the next section.

Findings:

What Factors Affect How AmeriCorps Organizational Networks Evolve Over Time?

The second research question driving this study focuses on movement from one network process to another. The results discussed in the previous section suggest that AmeriCorps organizational networks tend to move back and forth between network processes rather than evolve in a developmental pattern from lower levels of complexity and integration to higher forms of organizing. Organizations in the networks in my sample do not deliberately consider how movement from one network process to another might affect their performance and capacity to meet network goals, but stakeholders in these networks were quick to offer numerous examples of barriers they face when trying to work together.

SEVEN FACTORS THAT AFFECT AON PROCESSES

Findings from interviews and participant observation at case sites provide a rich reservoir of stories and ideas about factors that enhance or limit movement from one network process to another. Seven factors emerge from the data that offer an explanation for why these networks have not evolved in the manner that the developmental continuum predicts. These factors suggest that we may need to re-think the normative bias implicit in developmental theories of collaboration.

Multiple Organizational Perspectives

Researchers and practitioners often intuitively assume that network effectiveness depends on whether partner organizations are of the same type, and whether they share similar missions and target populations. My findings suggest that the process is more complicated than this. Several partner organization directors indicated that even if organizations in a network have these qualities, they may still have radically different cultures and perceptions about how to

achieve a shared mission, as indicated by one program coordinator's comment about partner organizations in her AON. In this case, partner organizations were all of the same type -- public schools. When asked about the inter-organizational relationships that existed in her AON, she indicated "every school is different, and [each] has a different personality even in the same county" (Interview, local program coordinator, 1/19/99). Two interviewees from two other programs described differences in organizational cultures as "the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing" (Interviews, AmeriCorps*State/National host site director, 1/19/98; VISTA project board member, 1/4/991).

Need for Early Successes

One former board member at another site indicated that the key to holding a network together lay less in shared mission and more in the network producing an "early success" (Interview, VISTA project board member, 12/29/98). "You can't keep people [and organizations] together and nothing ever comes of it," she told me. "Even if you are trying,

[if you] don't have early successes, then you're going to lose a lot of people. They don't have to be big successes, just something that people can point to. [Otherwise], you won't be able to keep people [and organizations] together (Interview, VISTA project board member, 12/29/98).

Another interviewee agreed. When asked about ways to successfully tie organizations together, she suggested breaking network activities into small tasks

so [partners] can actually see a success...Too many times you have this big vision, it's way too comprehensive. You get all these people together. Two or three meetings later, nothing has changed, you're still in the planning stage, and then the next meeting, half your members are there, and the next meeting a quarter of them are there, and then it's all over. You can't ask people to do too much. We all have so many other things [going on] (Interview, AmeriCorps*State/National program coordinator, 1/19/99).

Human Nature

The complexities of getting organizations to work together can often be attributed to the realities of human nature. The quote above demonstrates people in organizational networks have limited amounts of time, energy, and enthusiasm for working together, even if they believe in a common cause. Program documents and interviews abound with examples of the limits of human capacity to balance multiple expectations, activities, and goals. One interviewee attributed the territorialism and “this-is-the-way-we-do-it” attitude that often characterizes inter-organizational relationships to the reality that “this is partly because of who we are” (Phone interview, partner organization staff member, 1/14/99). Organizational capacity to adequately address complexity mirrors human capacity and raises another key issue identified by nearly all interviewees -- adequate resources.

Resources

In both program documents and interviews with multiple organizational representatives, resources (including, but not limited to money) are the most common factor identified as necessary for organizations to successfully work together.

Effect of decreased resources on network processes. My findings provide mixed conclusions about the effect of decreased financial resources on the likelihood of organizations working together. Complaints about inadequate resources to match program growth abound in the program documents of most of the six cases in my sample, especially in AmeriCorps* State/National programs. AmeriCorps has achieved significant success in expanding local programs, but resources have not kept pace with program growth and in one case especially, budget cuts created asymmetries in local partner organization endowments causing increased inter-organizational tensions (Program B, 3rd quarterly report, 4/97-7/97, State Application, 1997-98).

In two other cases, however, decreased resources actually *increased* the likelihood of organizations coming together to achieve goals. One executive director's story illustrates this. In comparing two organizational networks in which her Program participates, she argued that the network with the fewest resources (County A) addressed local problems better than the one with the greatest resources (County B). "County A," she said,

does a much better job than County B of giving up personal identity and saying, 'let's all work together to meet these people's needs. They have so few resources that when you sit down at a meeting, you might actually get something done. In County B, these people want to have 3000 committees and a dozen focus groups and by the time you get ready to meet the need, half of our people will be dead. The process for county B [is] sophisticated [but] its exclusive, it's bad, it cuts people out. In County A, we sit down at a meeting, we roll up our sleeves and figure out how to get it done (Interview, executive director, 12/8/98).

Board members at another site indicated that getting organizations to work together in their rural community is hardly an issue because "there aren't a lot of different options; [in] order to get everything done, you share" (Interview, board member, 1/12/99). She quickly added, though, that although decreased resources may create sustainable organizational networks (because organizations need each other), lack of resources also decreases the likelihood of network growth (in size and capacity). Sustainable networks, she told me, are not always "growable" networks (Interview, VISTA project board member, 1/12/99).

Effect of multiple sources of funding on networks. Most of the AONs in my sample received funding from multiple sources. In at least two cases in my sample, this caused significant problems for the AON because of confusion created over funding channels and the multiple expectations of different funding sources. According to one director, federal funding brings with it conflicting messages. On the one hand, federal expectations encourage collaborative responses to community needs, but different funding sources have inconsistent

standards and evaluation criteria that inevitably create conflicts for program directors at state and local program sites. “We want to keep the [funding] lanes clear,” she told me,

but it seems the more we try to collaborate, the more we go against the very grain [of] what the federal people are asking us to do. What would really be nice is if the feds could collaborate more (Interview, program director, 11/25/98).

This comment illustrates the realities that many practitioners on the ground experience. Program directors at the community level often feel that the constraints imposed upon them by funding sources undermine the very collaborative efforts these same funders mandate.

Type of AmeriCorps Member Recruited

Several program stakeholders interviewed indicated that maturity and capacity of AmeriCorps members made a big difference in their program’s ability to work with other organizations. At all three VISTA sites in my sample, age, maturity, and the skills corps members bring to their VISTA projects proved important for enhancing the lead agency’s ability to meet its goals through networks. One director deliberately chose corps members to match the target population her organization serves. Most of the corps members at this agency are older and retired from careers ranging from teaching, business, the arts, social service work, and county government. Program staff interviewed at this VISTA project site unanimously agreed this made a difference in achievement of program goals (Interviews, lead agency staff, 12/8/98, 12/9/98).

At another VISTA site, though, youthfulness of corps members proved important for building local organizational networks. One young VISTA member described her role in network-building in this way:

Practitioners are tired. They’ve been working at it for a long time. VISTAs come in with a different perspective. [We’re] new to the area. [We’re] only there for a year. [We] have a freedom to blurt out all these new ideas (Phone interview, VISTA member, 1/5/99).

She successfully helped to build a network of younger organizations that quickly organized themselves around a strong sense of solidarity in response to the status-quo nature of the more well-established organizations in the community.

Meaningful Forms of Communication

Research on collective action unequivocally demonstrates the importance of communication (especially face-to-face) for building and sustaining personal relationships (Ostrom, 1998). Not enough research on organizational communication patterns currently exists to make this claim about building inter-organizational relationships. Intuitively, one might expect that increased inter-organizational communication would enhance the likelihood of collaborative network processes. My findings provide anecdotal evidence for this, but interviews at program sites also suggest that communication, while it is a primary factor in determining how organizations interact with one another in a network, has to be meaningful if it is to enhance inter-organizational relationships. This was a common theme in nearly all of the programs, but especially among stakeholders in AmeriCorps* State/National programs.

In the case of one of these programs, growth of the program's organizational network resulted in decreased opportunities for face-to-face personal interaction. "Before, when we had [only] seven host sites," one interviewee told me,

we would meet every month in Indianapolis. We knew one another [and] people actually enjoyed and looked forward to coming together. That's not the case now. It's too costly [to do this] (Interview, program director, 11/25/98).

Instead, this program now relies on computer and satellite technology to hold virtual meetings among corps members and program directors. Corps members meet once a month on university campuses scattered across the state where they interact in "virtual Indiana classroom" settings.

Several local program coordinators indicated this was not nearly so useful as the face-to-face meetings and retreats they used to have (Interviews, program coordinators, 12/21/98).

Even when communication occurs face-to-face, it isn't always meaningful, as partner organization staff indicated at two other sites in my sample. Several interviewees attributed this to the AmeriCorps director using monthly partner organization meetings to disseminate information about AmeriCorps program expectations, not as an opportunity to explore how organizations could work together to achieve community-wide goals (Phone interviews, partner organization directors, 1/6/99, 1/7/99; 1/11/99). Partner organization directors at these sites did admit that they had developed a greater understanding and appreciation for what other organizations were doing and the problems they faced. But overall, they agreed that communication among participating organizations could be improved by changing the format of these meetings from a focus on program compliance and individual organizational activities to exploration of how organizational missions are accomplished within the network

Management Style and Infrastructure

Management style of corps members can affect how partner organizations work together. The directors' management styles in two different programs demonstrate how different styles can affect corps member attitudes in partner organizations. One director's hierarchical management style resulted in constant monitoring of corps member activities, not in building an *esprit de corps* among corps members or finding ways to link partner organizations together through increased communication. Nearly all the corps members interviewed in this program identified only with the public schools in which they worked, not with their fellow corps members or the AmeriCorps program itself (Phone interviews, corps members, 1/5/99, 1/18/99). Most of the corps members interviewed did not know what their fellow team members were doing in other

schools. One corps members indicated she never felt trusted and several others said they were never rewarded for what they did (Phone interviews corps members, 1/5/99; 1/18/99). Another corps member attributed the lack of sustainable linkages across partner organizations to her director's emphasis on monitoring and data collection rather than building organizational bridges. There was a "ton of potential," one corps member commented,

for AmeriCorps members to build a partnership between [the high school I worked in] and [the AmeriCorps program, but] there was no connection between [the AmeriCorps meetings and our work at school]. Once we got back from the AmeriCorps meetings, we just did our own thing. People stayed in [AmeriCorps] because of the kids [they tutored], not because of the program (Phone interview, corps member, 1/5/99).

In contrast to this program, two local coordinators from another program used a facilitative management style that they learned at the Corporation's Leadership Institute. Corps members at this site were clearly excited about their work and their coordinators. "They value us," one corps member told me.

They let us be real people. We have fun. That's the key to our site. [Our] coordinators [are] low key, but they get things done" (Focus group, AmeriCorps members, 11/15/98).

These coordinators deliberately take a team approach to management. They also encourage corps members to reach out to other organizations in the community and several corps members at one site sit on boards of other community-based organizations, some of which are partners of their local AON.

But a team-based management style, while it is probably necessary, may not be sufficient to create a management infrastructure adequate to sustain a large organizational network. Most of the programs in my sample were unable to create for themselves a means to manage the organizational network, although all the program directors interviewed identified partner organizations with which they worked. Network management requires a difference in

perspective, particular skills that require training, and adequate resources. The overall lack of evidence in my sample for network management may be partly explained by the following reasons.

- The newness of a concept like network management requires a broader vision that extends beyond managing individual organizational tasks:

Most of the program directors interviewed found the concept of network management either unfamiliar or impossible given their current operating budgets.

- Lack of adequate network management training and skills:

Network management requires proficiency in networking, skills of persuasion and negotiation, the ability to build commitment among multiple organizational interests, information technology skills, and leadership. Only three program directors among all the directors of Indiana AmeriCorps programs have been able to attend the Corporation's Leadership Institute training. This training had a significant impact on these directors' approaches to the management of their programs (Interview, program coordinators, 12/21/98).

- Lack of adequate staff:

Many of the programs in my sample relied on one coordinator to manage the program network, a role too difficult for one person to fill (Phone interview, partner organization director, 1/7/99; Program B, State Application, 1999-2000). Organizational networks need "relationship managers" (Sagawa and Segal, 1998), not just program directors, people whose specific task lies in managing the partnership and building inter-organizational relationships, not just making sure program requirements are being met.

- Decentralization:

Accountability problems inherent in decentralized policy implementation are usually exacerbated in network settings as several programs found out (Phone interview, program director, 11/20/98; interviews, program directors, 11/19/98, 11/25/98, lead agency staff member, 1/6/99). Decentralization has the undermining effect of creating a management style that focuses on monitoring and trying to induce organizations to comply with federal regulations at the expense of network management to achieve goals.

- Multiple autonomous stakeholders:

This may be the primary "explanation" for the overall lack of evidence for network management in my sample. Multiple stakeholders come to the network voluntarily

and no formal mechanism exists (as it does in hierarchical organizations) for enforcing compliance to rules collectively devised by organizations through memorandums of agreement. This means managers have to rely on “soft bargaining” techniques -- either persuading organizations to join the network because it is in their best interest to do so, or convincing them it is their duty (Hanf and Scharpf, 1978). Unless programs can develop norms of trust and reciprocity, and build commitment to an overall goal, carrots and sticks are the primary management tools these programs have to keep partners together.

MOVEMENT ALONG THE CONTINUUM

These seven factors suggest that on the ground AmeriCorps organizational networks face multiple challenges trying to achieve national service goals. They also help to “explain” why most of the networks examined in this study exhibited cooperative and coordinative network processes rather than collaborative ones. The “realities” of these seven factors for the day-to-day workings of AONs suggest that different network processes carry different costs, including but not limited to money. In fact, the amount of time and effort required to sustain an organizational network, manage individual corps members, and build inter-organizational relationships may be more costly to individual partner organizations than financial costs alone. One partner organization director put it this way when asked about the costs and benefits of participating in the AON to which his organization belonged:

Within our program, we don't have time to think about how to collaborate. We all have enough to do. In reality, with most of the agencies [in the AON], our resources are so limited. [There isn't] the opportunity to communicate [because] most agencies are in a survival model. It's not so much money [that is costly] but the time required [to work together] (Phone interview, partner organization directors, 1/7/99).

The developmental continuum model of network processes implies that collaborative processes are more costly than cooperative ones. My findings support this. The dominant network processes the AONs in my sample exhibit are cooperative and coordinative, not collaborative. Organizations are sometimes willing to engage in more costly collaborative

processes, but this depends on the presence of more costly resources such as passion for a cause, willingness to commit time and energy to the network, or commitment to what one VISTA member called, “a bigger picture approach” (Interview, VISTA members,12/5/98).

Although many of the networks in my sample exist separately within the same program, others are nested within systems of networks at the community level. This is especially characteristic of VISTA projects. The processes that characterize these networks vary and demonstrate a fluidity of movement across several different processes. These findings suggest that movement seems to occur in a far more haphazard manner than it does in a developmental manner and that different processes may exist simultaneously over a short period of time.

Program E’s food pantry project provides an example of this. The VISTA member instrumental in building the network deliberately recruited organizations by showing them how participation in the program would further their own interests. Involvement based on self-interest suggests a cooperative network process. One partner organization, in particular, offered Program E a perfect location for a second food distribution site that perfectly matched Program E’s needs. In return, the partner organization wanted to provide the young girls it serves a way to do ongoing community service. After six weeks of negotiation, both organizations agreed to a mutually beneficial agreement based on the understanding that each organization could achieve its own interests better together than it could working alone (characteristic of a collaborative process). Senior volunteers from Program E and the young girls from the partner organization worked together to bag food and prepare it for delivery.

It became evident early on that working with the young girls at the partner organization site hindered Program E from achieving its mission, to organize food delivery in the most efficient manner. Unexpected management issues emerged. Seniors from Program E often had

to re-bag groceries after the girls left for other activities at the site (Interview, VISTA member, 12/9/98). Despite this inconvenience, Program E's volunteers actually began adopting the partner organization's mission as their own -- to instill a service ethic in the young girls with whom they worked. Even Program E's director and staff adopted this mission as their own (hints of a transformational process).

When pushed further, however, interviewees at Program E indicated that despite this unexpected transformational process, in the end, the real glue that held their partnership together lay in the partner organization's facility not in a shared mission (characteristic of a cooperative process). If the facility were not available, one interviewee indicated, Program E would probably not be willing to transport the girls to another site to continue meeting its partner organization's mission to serve at-risk young girls (Interview, VISTA member, 12/9/98).

This story illustrates the dynamic nature of inter-organizational relationships and the unexpected movement that can occur between different network processes. It also demonstrates, however, that self-interest remains one of the dominant reasons for participation in a network. Most organizations do consider the costs and benefits of participating in networks and when the costs outweigh benefits, unless organizations are held together by some norm of reciprocity or mutual commitment to each other's goals, they will easily extricate themselves from the network.

Summary

Although networks in my sample demonstrate fluidity of movement along the continuum of network processes, overall, they remain primarily networks with cooperative processes and / or project-based networks with coordinative processes. The overall lack of evidence for sustained collaborative activities in these networks suggests that the normative bias for

collaboration in the literature and among practitioners may need reconsideration. Organizations can achieve goals together in networks even if they do not necessarily share a commitment to a broader vision for the community. Rather than focus on trying to mandate collaborative processes -- which are costly -- it may be more realistic for the Corporation to help partners in local AONs clarify how participation in the network can help them better achieve their own interests. Where this cannot be determined, collaboration should probably not be pursued.

National service program stakeholders at all levels of implementation need to avoid the assumption that collaborative processes are always better than cooperative ones. Empirically, the “new value” produced through collaboration is difficult to substantiate, although intuitively, it makes sense that collaboration should yield more long-term benefits to a community. A more fruitful approach may be to analyze the trade-offs partner organizations face when they collectively engage in one process and not another.

TRADE-OFFS: MOVING FROM ONE NETWORK PROCESS TO ANOTHER

Trade-offs are the opportunity costs partner organizations in AONs incur by not moving to another form of organizing. The seven factors discussed earlier in this section, for example, suggest that the costs partner organizations face moving from cooperative and coordinative processes to collaborative ones may be too great for many AONs to bear. Helping partners in AONs identify the costs and benefits of pursuing one network process over another will help them understand the trade-offs implicit in how they work together. Consideration of these trade-offs may, in turn, help program stakeholders reconsider the way they view the costs and benefits of participating in national service implementation.

Tradeoffs of Staying in a Cooperative Network Process

Cooperative network processes, where organizations share the minimal amount of information, forgo the opportunity to achieve their own goals better by working with other organizations. Cooperative processes among organizations do allow for competition that may result in improved service delivery but this type of network process may not produce the development of norms like trust, commitment, and reciprocity, norms that have been empirically demonstrated as necessary for self-governing networks (Ostrom, 1990; Radin et al., 1996).

AONs that exhibit cooperative processes may benefit over the short-term because of decreased costs. Avoiding collaborative processes, however, may result in partner organizations forgoing the possibility of developing a potentially more “effective service provision network” for their communities (if we define effectiveness, as some scholars and practitioners do, in terms of a more comprehensive approach to community problem solving). Even if partners in AONs view collaboration as unrealistic, by continuing to engage in cooperative processes, they may forgo the benefits that a coordination process offers, such as the achievement of short-term goals through project-based activities.

Trade-offs of Staying in a Coordinative Network Process

Project-based organizational networks with coordinative processes tend to yield interest-based models of working together that focus on negotiating interests among multiple stakeholders. These processes hold the potential for meeting community needs in real but incremental ways. AONs that engage in coordinative network processes provide partner organizations enough immediate clarity about roles, responsibilities, and outcomes sufficient to keep them committed to achieving network goals over a short period of time. In light of the seven factors that emerge in my research, these benefits may be sufficient for partner organizations to forgo the trade-offs of not moving to collaborative-type networks.

Such a process, while it may be more realistic, does not necessarily yield a movement toward the creation of value-based networks with shared visions for community change. The likelihood of partners extricating themselves from the AON is significantly greater with cooperative and coordinative processes than it is in a network characterized by collaborative processes. By not moving to collaborative processes, national service AONs forgo the potentially more satisfying experience that a collaborative process may yield -- satisfying because organizational partners may experience a deeper level of commitment and a broadening of their understanding of community needs. Some academics and practitioners call this “new value.” By not producing this “new value,” partner organizations may forgo the opportunity to create sustainable networks for community change (Cropper, 1996).

Trade-offs of Pursuing Collaborative Network Processes

Collaborative processes, while they may produce “new value” in local communities, may also decrease the network’s ability to achieve goals in the short run. Building commitment among partners takes a significant amount of time and is therefore very costly, more costly than most of the organizations in my sample were willing to incur. These kinds of networks also require more risk for partner organizations. Loss of individual organizational autonomy and other resources, including but not limited to money, can pose problems for networks because organizations are often unwilling to take this risk. Without partners skilled in negotiation and persuasion and without a relationship manager to manage inter-organizational relationships, collaborative network processes are difficult to sustain.

Trade-offs of Pursuing Transformational Collaborative Network Processes

Transformational processes have the potential (at least conceptually) to yield forms of organizing conducive to self-governance and a comprehensive approach to community change.

Often, as illustrated in the food pantry story, elements of transformation-like processes can occur for a short period of time, but these processes, when they occur in my sample, seldom yield long-term transformational outcomes. By not deliberately designing their network to sustain these processes, partner organizations in the food pantry story gave up the potential for developing norms of reciprocity that might have enabled them to address more complicated problems in the future.

The lack of evidence for sustained transformational processes in my research suggests that this type of network process has too many short-term costs for organizations in networks to bear. Transformational collaboration processes often produce the ironic result that what is good for the community may not always be good for the individual organizations in networks (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98).

Summary

Overall, my findings suggest that the trade-offs of staying in cooperative and project-based networks with coordinative processes are not serious enough to induce partner organizations to deliberately pursue collaborative network processes. Organizations are savvy enough to know that they need each other sometimes to meet their own needs, but they are not generally willing to give up their own interests to achieve a comprehensive vision for community change, even though the rhetoric that precedes many “collaborative endeavors” suggests otherwise.

Implications of Findings for National Service Practice and Research

My findings suggest that the linear developmental models of network processes (widely accepted by scholars and practitioners) and the normative bias for collaboration that often infuses policy implementation rhetoric and the theoretical and practitioner-based literature, do not sufficiently describe on the ground national service networks. This finding has implications for both national service practice and research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SERVICE PRACTICE

Public policy debates, including those that surround national service, always have at their core the fundamental problem of implementation. The goals created by the 1993 National Community Service Trust Act pose enormous challenges for AmeriCorps programs. The realities of devolution and increasing reliance on networks to meet mandates such as these make this problem even more challenging. The results of my research suggest that the Corporation for National Service may want to re-evaluate four areas as it considers how national service policy is implemented on the ground. These four areas are:

- Re-evaluating the meaning of collaboration,
- Approaching national service policy implementation from a network perspective,
- Reconsidering the value of AmeriCorps members for building inter-organizational relationships, and
- Examining cross-stream service initiatives and the value of the AmeriCorps Leaders Program for strengthening network performance.

The Meaning of Collaboration

In its Principles for High Quality National Service Programs, the Corporation describes collaboration as “a linkage exemplifying mutual problem-solving, decision-making, and mutual

respect” (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. 53). Vital elements of successful collaborative processes include principles such as:

- commitment of time by all participants,
- a foundation based on a common vision that national service can meet critical community needs and have mutual benefits for all partners,
- an understanding of that vision by all staff in participating organizations,
- consistent, stable, and fair mechanisms for managing the partnership and each partner’s resources, and
- a structure and style that reflect the diversity of needs, populations, and organizations in communities (Corporation for National Service, 1994, pp. 53-54).

These principles imply what should be, not what is. They also imply costs that the programs in my sample were either unwilling to incur or unable to pay. Yet, the Corporation for National Service intends to “increasingly [enter] into collaborative ventures where Corporation funds are a much reduced, even minor, part of the investment pool supporting service opportunities” (Corporation for National Service, 1997, p. 35). If the Corporation views collaborative ventures as a means to decrease Corporation costs, or to spread those costs across greater numbers of organizations, then it may need to reconsider what it means by collaborative ventures. My findings suggest that collaborative ventures, if they are to be successful, require an increase, not a decrease in organizational resources. Though financial resources are important, other resources such as commitment, time, energy, and collaboration training are equally important.

Rather than focus on achieving normative principles such as mutual problem solving, decision-making, and respect, a more useful approach may be to consider *when fostering collaboration is appropriate and feasible and when it is not*. Expecting local AONs to engage in collaborative processes may be unrealistic given the Corporation’s intention to decrease its

own investment in the process, even though it remains an important partner because of its political, financial, and authoritative standing. This standing is itself a resource the Corporation has to offer partner organizations that wish to pursue collaborative network processes. Where collaboration is feasible, the Corporation may wish to target its investment in the process rather than decrease it. Requiring a certain percentage of technical assistance money be used for collaboration training, for example, is one way the Corporation can target its resources to cover the additional costs of collaboration.

Where collaboration is inappropriate, the Corporation's definition of partnership provides a more realistic way to conceive of policy implementation through AONs. The emphasis on "common objectives that are specific and well-defined, and in which the responsibilities of each partner are clearly defined and mutually understood" (Corporation for National Service, 1994, p. A-62) may be a more feasible approach than focusing on mutual problem-solving, decision-making, and building respect. This may also offer a more useful means of determining how to measure network effectiveness.

The Corporation's strategic plan calls for more program evaluation and research on "effective approaches to collaboration" (Corporation for National Service, 1997, p. 18). My findings suggest that effectiveness needs to be reconceived in terms of *appropriate outcomes for different network processes*. The primary motivation for organizations to work together in the networks in my sample lay in achievement of their own organizational missions. Where those missions overlapped, organizations found enough "glue" to hold their network together.

The preponderance of evidence in my sample for organizational networks with cooperative and coordinative processes suggests that this type of network may be the most realistic form of organizing, given the limitations inherent in any form of collective action.

Performance measures for this type of network process need to focus on the achievement of a specific goal, not on building a sustainable network capable of a more comprehensive response to community problems, or in the creation of “new value.” Viewing collaboration as only one of several processes available to achieve national service goals suggests that different processes yield different outcomes. This means we need different performance measures for different AONs.

Regardless of which network processes the Corporation may choose to foster -- collaboration or existing coordinative networks -- or whether it chooses to foster both, taking a network perspective may be a more accurate way to think about national service policy implementation than the programmatic perspective that continues to characterize most national service programs.

A Network Perspective on National Service Policy Implementation

A network perspective on national service policy implementation provides a more useful way to think about policy implementation because of its focus on the *network* as the unit of analysis, not the program. This re-orientation is consistent with what the Corporation already knows, that

the results of national service and volunteer activities [come] about through a complex series of partnerships (Corporation for National Service, 1998, p. 29). By viewing AmeriCorps programs within the context of a system of nested inter-organizational relationships, a network perspective:

- more accurately portrays the multi-organizational setting of on the ground AONs,
- shifts the focus away from program compliance to network performance,

- places greater emphasis on developing negotiation and network management skills instead of trying to identify sticks and carrots to compel partner organization compliance, and
- accepts as a given that AmeriCorps program interests represent only one of many organizational interests for achieving national service policy goals.

The problem is most policy makers and program implementers still think in programmatic terms that focus on achieving individual program goals, despite the reality that most policy implementation today is multi-organizational and occurs through networks.

A recent post to the listserve from an AmeriCorps program director illustrates this point.

“I have a question,” he writes,

regarding maintaining service partnering sites. We are a multi-site program with approximately 30 members serving at 20 sites. Some of the sites really “buy into” the meaning and purpose of AmeriCorps. [Other] sites do as little as possible -- sending in paperwork months late, providing cursory supervision of the members, missing quarterly supervisors’ meetings, etc. It’s very frustrating...so my question is, how do we get them to comply with regulations and procedures? What carrots or stick do you use to get sites to give more than the minimum to the program. I know that the short answer is to drop them and recruit new sites. And believe me we’re trying. But we’re in a somewhat rural area and it’s hard to do. So we’re interested in what we can do to get these organizations in line (listserve posting, May 12, 1999, 9:14 AM).

Nearly every AmeriCorps program director across the country can identify with this director’s dilemma. This director’s comments illustrate a program approach that focuses on meeting federal regulations and monitoring partner organization compliance to program rules. A network perspective focuses on negotiating among multi-organizational interests. Rather than asking how his program can “get these organizations in line,” this director’s dilemma could be minimized if he *first* took the perspective that his program represents just one partner organization in the network of partners trying to achieve a particular goal. Making this the starting point of discussion re-orientes the director’s “world view” by leading him to consider several more productive questions:

- What interests do these twenty partners bring to the AON?
- How are those interests met within the context of the AON?
- Why did the partners join the network in the first place?
- How can the partners collectively articulate for themselves the purpose of the AON and what does each partner bring to the network to achieve that purpose?

Asking these questions, rather than “how can we get these organizations in line?” naturally forces network partners to consider multi-organizational interests first, not program requirements. My findings give anecdotal evidence that the more partner organizations can identify where their interests are met in the network process, the more likely it is they will stay in the AON. This hypothesis needs further empirical study.

Another way to get partner organizations to “buy into” the AON lies in fostering what the VISTA member in one program in my sample called “a bigger picture approach.” The Corporation and state commissions could foster cross-partner organization training by hosting conferences and network meetings that include all of the participants in an AON. Most program director training focuses on the AmeriCorps program organization, not on the network of organizations collectively implementing national service policy. Partner organizations should be included in AmeriCorps program director trainings at the state level and incentives should be developed to encourage their participation in both state and national level conferences. Such incentives might include:

- personal phone calls from Corporation or state commission staff to invite partner organization directors to state and/or national meetings,
- a small reimbursement of travel costs such as making group rates available to partners or provision of meal vouchers, and
- strengthening corps member-partner organization relationships such that partners in the AON view involvement in state and national meetings as important.

Corps members may be an untapped resource for fostering a “bigger picture approach”. The Corporation may wish to examine more closely the role AmeriCorps members can play in building inter-organizational relationships.

The Value of AmeriCorps Members as Organizational Bridge-Builders

If the Corporation for National Service intends to foster collaborative network processes, then it should consider more deliberately how it views the role of its corps members in that endeavor. Instead of viewing AmeriCorps members merely as resources for individual community-based organizations to meet their own goals, the Corporation should re-evaluate the potential corps members hold as bridge-builders across organizations, what the theoretical literature calls, “boundary spanners” (Radin et al. 1996; Huxham, 1996).

Interviews with stakeholders at every implementation level of the AmeriCorps program and with experts in the field provide mixed opinions. Some experts argued this is neither an appropriate role for corps members nor is it feasible (Interviews, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98; collaboration expert, 2/1/99). Others strongly disagreed. One expert indicated that she believed corps members hold great potential to be “glue people” but it depends entirely on the AmeriCorps programs’ intentional use of corps members as resources for partner organizations to evolve into more collaborative forms of organizing (Interview, national service expert, 11/15/98).

Both groups of interviewees did agree on this: that if corps members were to play such a role, they would have to be recruited carefully. “It’s very sophisticated work doing collaborations,” one expert told me, “you just can’t pick anyone off the street” (Interview, national service expert, 11/15/98). The expert insisted that careful planning and change in

program design could result in corps members' successfully building organizational networks to better meet the national service goal of building local communities.

Program directors' responses. AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA program directors in a focus group tended to agree with this expert's opinion. When asked at the focus group -- *What role do AmeriCorps members play in building the "glue" that holds the organizational network together?* -- directors were nearly unanimous in their belief that corps members at least held the potential for acting as inter-organizational bridges. Several of them argued corps members do not create the glue to hold organizations together. They *are* the glue. "AmeriCorps members play an integral part holding the organizational network together," one director indicated,

It's through their dedication and laboring in the program that brings about the necessity of the cohesion of all the partnership networks" (Program director focus group, 12/12/98).

"Continuously [being] out in the community," "taking more pride and ownership in being a part of AmeriCorps," and "participating more in simple leadership tasks" were other ways directors felt corps members could build AmeriCorps organizational networks (Program director focus group, 12/12/98).

AmeriCorps members' responses. AmeriCorps members' responses provide more mixed opinions than those of program directors. Most AmeriCorps*State/National corps members, for example, tend to see themselves as resources for individual partner organizations rather than as resources for building linkages across organizations. Those members from this group that do see themselves playing a broader role are Inter-Corps Council members. One Council member indicated that because corps members are "out of the vested interests of the host agencies and community organizations, [they are] good sources of neutral encouragement and

evaluation,” and hold the potential to break down the “cliques, turf issues, and even old stratifications” that characterize community based organizations (Inter-Corps Council focus group, 2/11/99). When pushed, however, most Inter-Corps Council members said that, in order for corps members to serve as bridges, partner organizations, state commission staff, and lead agency directors would all need to share a commitment to foster this role. AmeriCorps program leadership would also need to give corps members a greater voice in the *on-going* development of the AmeriCorps program (Inter-Corps Council focus group, 2/11/99).

In contrast to AmeriCorps*State/National corps members, VISTA members tend to respond more readily to my questions about their potential to build inter-organizational relationships. This is not surprising given the difference in training across these two groups. Several VISTA members interviewed indicated their greatest potential as corps members lay in their ability to make personal contacts with people and organizations. Program directors agreed. One director described the potential this way,

If members can make connections with specific people in the organizations, it will be easier to work together. I believe that individual connections are the crucial key to long-lasting cooperative relationships (Program director focus group, 12/12/98).

Another AON representative, a partner organization board member, attributed the loss of inter-organizational links in his community to the project’s loss of a VISTA member who used to provide the personal attention those links required (Interview, board member, 1/12/99).

The differences in corps member responses across the two streams of service suggest that the Corporation for National Service may need to consider linking the “getting things done” model of AmeriCorps*State/National programs with the “organizational-capacity-building” model of AmeriCorps*VISTA. This is already occurring through the Corporation’s cross-stream service initiative and the AmeriCorps Leaders Program. As one senior staff member at

the Corporation indicated, five years of AmeriCorps' programming have demonstrated that "a combination of VISTA and AmeriCorps*State/National actually makes sense" (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98).

Cross-Stream Service and the AmeriCorps Leaders Program

The Corporation's cross-stream service initiative and its AmeriCorps Leaders Program both demonstrate new approaches to fostering collaborative network processes among national service programs. Both programs have the same logic: if corps members and program directors across different streams of service can learn to work together, then they can spread that learning to the local organizations in which they work. One interviewee described it as "building bridges from the bottom up" (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/13/98).

It is not clear whether on the ground AONs can evolve to sustainable collaborative processes through cross-stream service initiatives. My findings give anecdotal evidence that, at least at this stage in the cross-stream service initiative, participants in the process face similar limitations that on the ground networks face. Factors such as:

- multiple organizational perspectives,
- the limits of human nature,
- the costliness of the process, and
- a programmatic approach that continues to dominate national service policy implementation

may, together, undermine this initiative's potential to move from, what one interviewee called, "internal" collaboration processes to "external" ones (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 11/12/98).

The AmeriCorps Leaders program may hold greater potential for building AmeriCorps organizational networks because it starts at the bottom where AONs operate and more directly

builds inter-organizational relationships on the ground than does the cross-stream service initiative. AmeriCorps Leaders are required to spend at least twenty-five percent of their time in “ambassadorship activities” such as building inter-organizational relationships (Interview, Corporation for National Service, staff member, 2/3/99). The remainder of their time focuses on corps member development, another potential area for training corps members to act as bridges across the organizations in which they work

Because of the sophisticated nature of collective action to achieve national service goals, the Corporation needs to invest more technical assistance resources in training AmeriCorps Leaders and stakeholders in the cross-stream service initiative to develop collaboration skills like negotiating, problem-solving, brainstorming, and team-based management. Given the Corporation’s intention to rely increasingly on collaborative approaches to national service, targeting resources for collaboration training may prove a cost-effective use of AmeriCorps technical assistance dollars (Interview, national service expert, 11/15/98).

The practitioner-based literature is rich with manuals to assist local organizations in techniques to build inter-organizational relationships. Two organizations that specialize in this work and that offer multiple workshops and resources to practitioners are:

- The Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc. (<http://www.educ.msu.edu/epfp/iel/welcome.html>), and
- The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation (<http://www.wilder.org>).

The Corporation could use these resources not only to develop collaboration-training materials for AmeriCorps Leaders and cross-stream service stakeholders, but to provide training of this sort to staff in all organizations that belong to on the ground AONs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My findings suggest that the Corporation may wish to re-evaluate its perspective on collaboration by identifying when such ventures are feasible and appropriate and when they are not. When they are not feasible, the Corporation might consider strengthening existing coordinative network processes. When collaborative ventures are feasible, targeting resources (not just financial) to more deliberately cover the costs of collaboration may increase the likelihood that such ventures will be successful.

Strengthening Existing Coordinative Network Processes

AONs with coordinative network processes hold great potential for “getting things done” in local communities. Strengthening these processes will require improving network management by helping organizational partners:

- clarify their roles and responsibilities,
- develop meaningful memorandums of agreement (to which partners are committed), and
- identify concrete, short-term, achievable national service goals.

This approach works with what is, not with what could be, or should be. It is far less costly than trying to build collaborative network processes. It focuses primarily on achieving project goals, which are specific and concrete enough for partner organizations to “buy into.” It appeals to the self-interest of each partner organization. From this perspective, performance measures for AON outcomes need to match coordinative network processes -- achievement of short-term project goals -- not outcomes for collaborative processes which imply long-term organizational commitments to long-term network goals.

Fostering Collaborative Network Processes

Pursuing collaborative outcomes requires willingness by all partner organizations to invest more resources, not less, in developing the collaboration skills of mutual problem-solving, and decision-making. This approach also requires collaboration training for AON participants, including AmeriCorps program and partner organization directors and corps members, especially AmeriCorps Leaders. It is costly and will require a management infrastructure that focuses on sustaining the AmeriCorps network, not the AmeriCorps program.

Sustaining an AON requires more staff than a program director or an assistant. In addition to a program director, sustaining an AON will require the presence of what Sagawa and Segal (1998) call, a “relationship manager,” someone whose primary responsibilities lie in the day-to-day building of inter-organizational relationships. Fostering “big picture thinking” may also increase the likelihood for collaborative activities in local AONs.

This alternative, when compared to the short-term achievable goals pursued by AONs with coordinative processes, is significantly more time-consuming and costly for partner organizations. If the Corporation for National Service views partnering as a way to decrease costs internally, or to diffuse costs, then fostering collaborative network processes is probably not the most cost-effective approach to achieve national service goals, at least in the short-term. This is clearly an area where we need more empirical research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SERVICE RESEARCH

In its strategic plan, the Corporation leadership calls for more research on effective strategies for collaboration. This study of Indiana AmeriCorps programs is one response to that call. My research is *exploratory* and represents a “bottom-up” approach based on the

assumption that national service policy implementation occurs in a multi-jurisdictional, multi-organizational environment (Matland, 1995; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Elmore, 1982).

Research on policy implementation in such an environment is daunting. It is nearly impossible to control for all the variables that can confound results. Although case study research remains important for increasing our knowledge of these new forms of organizing to achieve national service goals, we need more rigorous systematic research on network processes because this has implications for network outcomes. Examining the relationship between network processes and network performance represents one of the most important areas for research because it has implications for both theory and practice. Program directors, funders, partner organizations, upper level national service stakeholders, and scholars of implementation all seek an answer to the question: can networks achieve results?

In its 1999 Annual Performance Plan, the Corporation for National Service uses program logic models to design performance measures (pp. 29 – 40). This is an excellent way to approach the primary evaluation problem devolved programs face: “outputs and outcomes become relative terms depending on one’s point of reference” (Corporation for National Service, 1999, p. 29). These models illustrate how outputs from one level of implementation become inputs to lower levels to produce outputs for the next level of implementation. The end outcome, though, is assumed to be the same for participants at all levels of the process.

It is not clear, without further research on partner organization perceptions, that local AONs share the same end outcome goals identified in the Corporation’s Annual Performance Plan. Partner organizations may share these goals or they may have their own end outcomes in mind. We need more research on local perceptions of what *effectiveness* for national service

programs really means. The program logic models, though they are helpful for thinking through policy implementation from the top down, do not adequately take into account the link between network processes and network outcomes from the bottom-up. Certain network processes may yield forms of organizing more conducive to certain types of outcomes. If this is true, and we need more research to examine this hypothesis, effectiveness depends on which outcome a particular network may wish to achieve. Holding networks accountable for outcomes that do not match processes may be problematic.

My findings also suggest that AmeriCorps organizational networks on the ground belong to a system of nested networks at different levels of implementation. Partners in one AON at one level often have no knowledge of (or interest in) partners at other levels partly because each is so removed from the others. Organizations in an AON in rural Indiana, for example, generally only know they have AmeriCorps members to help them meet their community's needs. They may be peripherally aware of the Corporation's role in providing those resources, but their primary focus lies in how to use corps members to meet individual organizational goals, not in a shared vision for national service. We need more research on the effect of this lack of awareness among partner organizations of the "nestedness" of their AONs and its ability to "get things done" at the community level. It is an open question, and one that should be explored, whether or not knowing one is part of a system of nested networks will strengthen that network's performance at each level of implementation.

The national service policy field offers an extraordinarily rich opportunity for research in many different areas. Harris Wofford is correct in characterizing the field as a "kind of R&D experiment" (Wofford, 1997, p. 108). A network perspective is an increasingly relevant

perspective for studying national service policy implementation. Besides the areas already identified above, future research also needs to include such topics as:

- The potential for national service programs to build community through AONs.

A “market model” -- that views network processes as a way to achieve individual organizational goals -- might be contrasted with an “institution-building” model -- that views network processes as a way to create new value in local communities, producing sustainable community-wide systems for problem solving and self-governance.

- The relevance of program design.

Do national service networks naturally emerge in response to mandates, funding, and other internal and external factors or must stakeholders deliberately design network processes to achieve particular goals?

- The effects of organizational learning over time.

Do network processes result in organizational learning, so that over time, networks actually do evolve in a developmental fashion from lower levels of complexity and integration to higher forms of organizing?

- The value of a concept like transformational collaboration.

Does this concept actually have empirical support and how can it be measured?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporation for National Service calls for program evaluation and other forms of research on ways to “implement effective strategies and processes for collaboration among local national service programs and with other organizations responsible for addressing community needs” (Corporation for National Service, 1997, p. 18). My findings suggest that identifying “effective approaches to collaboration” will require significantly more rigorous research on network processes.

One way to approach the study of collaboration involves making the unit of analysis *the network*, rather than the program itself. This forces researchers and practitioners to think in

broader terms. Moving from a programmatic perspective to a network perspective will help researchers more accurately think about the complexity of national service policy implementation. By examining the processes that characterize networks on the ground, researchers can begin to link processes to outcomes. This will yield more relevant information to practitioners on the ground and promote better ways to conceive and measure network outcomes.

CONCLUSION

“Public administration,” writes Larry O’Toole,

increasingly takes place in settings of networked actors who necessarily rely on each other and cannot compel compliance on the rest” (O’Toole, 1997a, p. 45).

This is no less true for the administration of national service programs. The “series of complex partnerships” that implement national service goals occur in systems of nested networks at the national, state, and local level. The overall problem for these systems is: national service goals set at the Corporation level are not always interpreted in the same way by state commissions or by local AmeriCorps organizational networks. The Corporation’s problem lies in finding the balance between assuring accountability without being overly prescriptive, embracing devolution without losing the national identity so important for a broader vision for service. The problem AmeriCorps programs on the ground face is trying to “get things done” through a network of organizations that probably do not share the same national service goals, but seek to achieve their own missions within the context of the AmeriCorps network.

I began this study in hopes of discovering what AmeriCorps organizational networks look like and what factors affect how these networks evolve over time. The six cases in my sample provided a fertile environment for exploring these interests. The exploratory nature of this research project and the qualitative research design used to study AONs poses limitations on my

ability to make general explanatory statements about AmeriCorps organizational networks. This decreases the usefulness of the data for other programs nation-wide. But the alternative -- conducting a quantitative national study -- was neither feasible (given the time frame of this fellowship) nor desirable (given the potential richness of process data that a qualitative study would yield).

Based on my findings, AmeriCorps organizational networks exhibit a rich variety in how they look and a fluidity in network processes not captured in my review of the literature. The processes that characterize these AONs are more dynamic and haphazard than the linear, developmental models predict. Although most of the networks in my sample exhibit cooperative and coordinative network processes more than they do collaborative ones, several of them demonstrate *moments of collaboration* and in some cases, even hints of transformational processes. This suggests a more fluid back-and-forth movement along the continuum rather than a step-wise movement, from lower to higher levels of interaction and complexity. AmeriCorps organizational networks demonstrate a richness and vibrancy that pose challenges and hold great potential for strengthening inter-sectoral national service policy implementation. Research on the processes that emerge as participants in these networks interact is not only timely but important for understanding how such networks yield effective national service outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

Program Profiles

The following descriptions are taken directly from program pamphlets and documents. I have tried to use the programs' own words whenever possible making changes to these documents only when necessary to maintain anonymity or to clarify particular points.

PROGRAM A

Program A began in 1990 as Indiana's way of raising the educational aspirations of low and moderate-income families. The program aims to ensure that all Indiana families can afford a college education for their children.

Income-eligible eighth graders who enroll in the program and fulfill a pledge of good citizenship to the state are guaranteed the cost of four years of college tuition at any participating public college or university in Indiana. If the student attends a private institution, the state will award an amount comparable to that of a public institution. If the student attends a participating proprietary school, the state will award a tuition scholarship equal to that of Ivy Tech State College.

In 1995, the first group of eighth graders headed to college -- with the continued support of the Governor and the Indiana General Assembly.

The goals of the program are to:

- Help more students continue their educations,
- Reduce the high-school dropout rate,
- Prepare students for the workforce,
- Decrease the use of drugs and alcohol among middle and high-school students, and
- Improve individual economic productivity and the quality of life for all Indiana residents.

Program A oversees the statewide initiative. In 1995, the U.S. Department of Education partnered with Program A to implement the National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership Program (NEISP) initiative. As one of nine states to pilot this scholarship and early outreach support service, the collaboration keeps participants in the program on track toward higher education. By investing in the future of Indiana's youth, the NEISP and Program A make an invaluable contribution to the success of early Indiana citizens.

Sixteen agencies, known as Community Partners, direct the regional early outreach initiatives of Program A. Community Partners are the backbone of the local support program component, serving program participants and their families in a four to eight county area. Under the direction of full-time local outreach staff, each Community Partner hosts a Parents' Project support group; an Indiana Workforce Development

linkage, and a team of AmeriCorps Members who help strengthen the bridges between program participants, their schools, and their communities.

Program A's Support Program:

Funded by the State of Indiana, the U.S. Department of Education and the National Corporation for Community Service, this program prepares students for the rigors of college life. Program staff members work with students, parents, school systems, and community organizations to encourage participants in the program to succeed.

Activities include college tours, career counseling, computer training, tutoring, and financial aid search assistance. Other activities, such as cultural outings, discussion sessions, organized sports, and after-school programs, promote life and social skills. All of these activities are designed to help program participants reinforce the commitment to their pledge of good citizenship and to achieve the goal of college success.

Parent's Project

First funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc., the Parent's Project is now fully integrated into Program A. The Parent's Project helps parents become educational leaders in their homes. In an age when raising a teenager is becoming increasingly more challenging, parents need a way to share education concerns. Working together, parents network with a wealth of resources to sharpen parenting skills, understand college systems, foster a more nurturing home environment, and promote community action on behalf of their children. Each parent group is parent-led and tailored to meet the unique needs of the participating families.

AmeriCorps

Program A hosts teams of AmeriCorps members in its sixteen regions across Indiana. During their service year, more than 100 AmeriCorps members work directly with program participants to build academic success and the social resilience of the college-bound youth. AmeriCorps members tutor, mentor, and engage program participants in other activities designed to strengthen the bridges between program participants and their education dreams. AmeriCorps members also promote the ethic of service, supporting the efforts of local volunteers and fostering in program participants a lifetime commitment to community service and learning.

Indiana Department of Workforce Development

In collaboration with Community Partners, local Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) offices link program participants, their families, and AmeriCorps members to IDWD activities and services. IDWD activities and services include:

- The School-to-Work initiative, which prepares Indiana students for successful job and career experiences,

- Summer job placement for eligible students, and
- Financial aid for eligible parents pursuing a college education.

Other service ordered to parents and program participants

Besides the above, Program A offers the following other services:

- Summer youth programs,
- Local labor market information,
- Job placement assistance,
- Employability-skills training,
- Essential-skills instruction,
- Career planning,
- On-the-job training,
- Financial assistance, and
- Dropout prevention programming.

The Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center (ICPAC)

The Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center service participants of Program A and their families with college planning information and support services such as the ICPAC Hotline and PLANpals mentoring program. ICPAC handles the application process and eligibility determination for Program A and maintains participant records until Program A's participants graduate from high school.

PROGRAM B

Program B is a project developed in 1995 by a consortium of four agencies in one Indiana city to address the issue of homelessness. These agencies have worked together on previous projects and have been recipients of other project grant awards, especially one organization that acts as the lead agency for a recent US Department of Housing and Urban Development grant. The mission of Program B is to assist homeless men, women and children in achieving housing self-sufficiency by assuring access to needed direct services at critical points along the homeless continuum of care and to develop in the AmeriCorps members an awareness of the homeless problem nationally and the skills to combat it.

The structure of Program B involves the use of a lead agency through which finances, information, and organizational matters are handled. The local Program Coordinator oversees the administration of the program by managing the yearly budget, communicating with partner organization directors, arranging orientation and trainings for AmeriCorps members, and providing logistic support to both partner organization directors and AmeriCorps members.

One of the foundations of Program B's design is that it furthers collaborative efforts between existing service partners in an effort to holistically address homeless issues in

the region. Since its inception, the program has grown from the four original partners to eight. In its 1999-2000 application to the Corporation for National Service, Program B identifies seven new partner organizations that wish to participate in the program.

The consortium of agencies involved in Program B understands that homelessness means much more than just the need for food and shelter. The consortium understands that homelessness is an experience of acute poverty characterized by a lack of self-knowledge, personal skills, resources and social networks. In order to enhance service to homeless persons in the city, the consortium has built on a continuum of care model housed in one of the program's partner organizations. This model is best described below:

To demonstrate, one has to imagine being very poor and homeless as the result of being drug or alcohol addicted, or at least having addiction as a barrier to independence. One might wind up at the a local shelter with nowhere else to go, or be arrested and released to treatment. The referral, past the emergency housing phase, would be to a local detox program; once detox had occurred, one would go to the housing unit of either the partner organization serving only women (if the homeless person is female) or a similar unit housed within the organization that runs the detox program.

Once sobriety had been in place for a reasonable time, one would then be referred back to the original shelter to participate in their Supported Housing Program. Eventually, an individual could seek help and be a client at all the partner organizations; if one is an Hispanic migrant worker or recent immigrant, the cycle would start at the partner organization serving the Latino population, and if one is a survivor of domestic abuse, one's emergency care would be at the partner organization serving only women. In order to move to the independent housing stage, the next referral would be to the city's housing authority or another partner organization that assists with homeownership and rental housing.

Program B's comprehensive approach to serving the homeless population is further enhanced by its vision for AmeriCorps members. Program B seeks new members in traditional and non-traditional ways. For example, the program continues to receive referrals from the toll-free AmeriCorps number and from the State Commission in Indiana. Members are also recruited from the local community through advertisements in the local newspapers, Workforce Development, and through the local college placement offices. The program is also conducting less traditional recruitment. For example, three of the members from the first year were former "guests" or clients of the local homeless shelter that houses the continuum of care model program. These guests were able to bring their experiences as service recipients to their work.

In its original vision for the program, the consortium participants indicate the following vision for the program:

Typically, social service agencies in a community work closely together, but only where mutual goals and objectives of the agencies overlap or meet. If Program B is a success, collaboration among the existing and future members of the homeless consortium of agencies will be driven by the needs, goals and objectives of the homeless population instead. Rather than the agencies meeting the needs of those who need what the agency has, the homeless people of the area will help determine what the goals of the agencies will be at each particular point in history, based on the ever changing needs of the city's communities and its citizens.

PROGRAM C

In 1994, a small Indianapolis-based university (Program C's lead agency) proposed to administer an AmeriCorps program. In response to a grant proposal to the Corporation for National Service, the program was funded in the amount of \$279, 984. Denied full funding for a second year, Program C was awarded \$76,811 to continue and complete its program in school-year 1995-96. In the original grant proposal, the lead agency for the AmeriCorps program described itself as:

ideally suited to be the organizing site of Program C because it is intimately involved in the life of the community in which the AmeriCorps program is designed to serve, namely the economically disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, the elderly, prison inmates, the disabled, and other adult students whose access to higher education has been impeded by a variety of causes. The student body is about 92% African American, and the average age of our students is about 37 years old, although the university also energetically welcomes recent high-school graduates, especially those in the at-risk category for higher education who mostly have been rejected by other institutions.

On this premise, the university proposed to collaborate with another Indianapolis-based university and a former retired teachers association (former teachers from the historically African American high-school in Indianapolis) to accomplish the following:

The community-in-need will help itself through Program C by making available several kinds of tutoring and mentoring -- collaborative learning across ethnic and generational lines -- to under-prepared, low-income, first generation students, so that Black and White, young and old, advanced and foundational students, can link up to help one another learn and succeed in school and in life.

A dual program was envisioned: (a) a developmental service-learning program for students at the two participating universities, and (b) a tutoring/mentoring program for at-risk students in Indianapolis, specifically participants in Program A. The original vision for the program is taken from program documents.

- Education majors (candidates for teacher-certification) and other advanced

students will tutor students enrolled in Foundation Courses (special courses for university students whose literacy and numeracy skills are inadequate and who, therefore, are at risk of failing).

- These tutors and tutees (hired as AmeriCorps members) will become mentors to Program A's participants, a special group of high-school students who have taken pledges not to do drugs or dropout, but to get good grades, graduate, and go on to college.
- In a summer Family Education Workshop, family members of Program A's participants will benefit from Program C's activities by learning how to support their future college students in their higher education.
- AmeriCorps members will prepare for this work by engaging in a for-credit process of inter-and intra-racial healing called "ethnotherapy". Along the way, they will do a "think piece" to process the meaning and relevance of the AmeriCorps program.

Program C's mission is to instill feelings of self-worth and confidence in youth; to strengthen communities by uniting individuals from different backgrounds and institutions of all kinds; to promote school success; to encourage responsibility through life-long learning' and to expand educational opportunities for youth. AmeriCorps members work with at-risk Indiana youth who have taken the pledge through Program A. Their goal is to impress upon them the importance of taking responsibility for their future.

Instead of the original collaboration among three partner organizations, Program C evolved so that by 1997, the lead agency partnered with three Indianapolis public middle schools, one high school, one neighborhood youth center and a private Catholic school. The role of the collaborative partner in the administration of the program is to sign and comply with Program C's letter of agreement; to work with corps members and project management on program sustainability; to attend site supervisor meetings; and to provide on-site supervision for AmeriCorps members.

Program C is no longer funded. An internal evaluation of the program may have affected the lead agency's decision not to seek further AmeriCorps funding.

PROGRAM D

Program D, a non-profit community based organization, was founded in 1979 by VISTA Volunteers in response to the ever increasing numbers of abandoned homes in several neighborhoods in one Indiana city. Coupling the impact of the flight to suburbia, the changing neighborhood and the unspoken but prevalent "red-lining" by banks and insurance companies, residents found themselves without the means to improve their neighborhoods as more property became vacant. With the Assistance of local VISTA workers, six neighborhood residents formed a group dedicated to revitalizing and stabilizing the residential climate of the neighborhood. The revitalization of one neighborhood in particular and the city in general is the mission of Program D.

The organization is governed by a grass-roots volunteer board of approximately twenty-five members, all but three of which must be neighborhood residents or business owners. The majority of the board members are low-income. Over 300 neighborhood households participate in Program D's activities. An advisory board consisting of representatives from local government, religious, education, health, and financial institutions, provide technical and financial assistance to Program D. The group actively solicits input from local residents via public forums, electronic media, door-to-door information, surveys, etc.

In 1989, Program D was awarded \$615,000 under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Grant Program. In 1990, Program D was selected to become the major Community Housing Development Organization for the city under the HOME program. An allocation of 2 million dollars for rehabilitation / construction in one neighborhood has been made available to Program D since that time.

Through the years, Program D has gained the active support of HUD, local hospitals, the city, the state of Indiana, and the major financial institutions in the area. Program D has implemented a number of programs under the project name "Pride and Hope". Some of these programs are:

- Rehab of 40 single family homes -- 25 sold, 15 pending,
- A five-unit apartment building completed and leased,
- A thirty-unit apartment building (in development stage),
- A full basketball court in one city part,
- An inspirational Tot Lot near a city hospital,
- An ongoing "clean-up, fix-up, paint-up, plant-up campaign",
- Continuing support of educational sessions on home ownership, financing etc.,
- Down Payment and Lease / Purchase Assistance program,
- Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Program,
- AmeriCorps*VISTA Public Safety Program,
- AmeriCorps*VISTA Summer of Safety Program,
- Three steel frame single family homes (Pre-development stage), and
- Rehab intake for the city.

PROGRAM E

Program E is a private, non-profit corporation serving persons in Monroe and Owen Counties and working to combine individual initiative to serve the public welfare. The program targets in-home care and community service to the older citizens and disabled persons in this area. It also has a rural public mass transportation system that offers service to all persons, regardless of age. Rural Transit serves children, teens, adults, and senior citizens in the 1,613 total road mile area. Staff at Program E are dedicated to assisting area residents maintain a quality lifestyle.

Program E provides the following services:

In-Home Services

This program provides individualized case management and care for Monroe and Owen County homebound elderly, including the following services:

- Adult Day Care services,
- Handyman/Home repair,
- Home health supplies and home-delivered meals,
- Telephone reassurance,
- Attendant Care services,
- Homemaker services and respite for caregivers,
- Case management service, CHOICE, and Medicaid Waiver Assistance.

Community Services

This program includes:

- The Senior Citizen's Nutrition Projects which provides daily meals at 8 congregate meal sites and delivers meals to homebound elderly across two counties,
- An Affordable Senior Housing program that works to meet a great housing need in Monroe and Owen Counties. Program E is combining public and private resources to develop new affordable housing for seniors,
- An older worker employment service to assist those 55 and older in finding a job,
- An ombudsman service for nursing-home residents and their families,
- The Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and the
- Annual Senior Games.

The Endwright Center: A Center for Active Older Adults

The Endwright Center is a part of Program E and is a center for adults aged 50 and older interested in keeping active and involved. Services include: an innovative Fitness program, one-on-one computer tutoring, arts and humanities classes and special events, planned intergenerational activities and volunteer opportunities. The Endwright Center aims to meet seniors' needs at many levels. The Center's facilities include a gymnasium for half-court basketball, two exercise rooms with state-of-the-art aerobic and resistance equipment, a kitchen, a performance arts stage, and a public access computing site.

Rural Transit

Rural Transit provides much needed, cost-efficient transportation for all citizens in Monroe and Owen Counties, regardless of age. This service includes: lift equipped transportation for the frail, elderly, and disabled; fixed routes going to key sites in the two

larger cities in the counties nine times a day Monday through Friday, and county routes with regular service to all townships.

PROGRAM F

Program F is a statewide, volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving as a catalyst for preventing child abuse in all its forms, thereby, enhancing the quality of life for children and families in Indiana. Program F has been a chartered affiliate of Prevent Child Abuse America since 1977. This affiliation and partnerships with other established child abuse prevention entities allows the program to continually identify and promote programs that prevent child abuse and neglect.

Program F is an organization founded on the belief that no child should be abused or neglected. Therefore, child abuse and neglect should be prevented before pain has been inflicted. It is governed by a geographically and culturally diverse volunteer Board of Directors and is supported by professional staff and a statewide network of volunteers. The program also believes that child abuse is a community problem that demands a community solution. To that end, the program has made a concerted effort with the help of VISTA volunteers to foster the development of local nonprofit organizations dedicated to child abuse. The state office envisions partnering with these nonprofits to create a network of organizations that share the vision for prevention.

Program F's primary activities include:

- Raising public awareness

Each year during the month of April, Program F's state office distributes educational literature concerning child abuse prevention to schools, day care centers, health care programs and others. The literature is then used to teach parents and caregivers throughout Indiana positive parenting skills that prevent abuse and neglect.

- Fostering media relations

Program F works with print, radio, and television outlets throughout the state to educate Hoosiers about the problem of child abuse, positive parenting skills and child abuse prevention

- Informing and educating caregivers and parents

The program provides a statewide toll-free telephone information and referral service for caregivers, parents, and professionals who need information, referral and support.

- Providing a Prevention Education Series

Program F provides a series of presentations to adolescents, caregivers, and professionals on indicators of abuse and neglect, preventing shaken infant syndrome, and preventing child abuse and neglect in day care centers.

- Convening conferences and workshops

Annually, Program F convenes the only statewide conference on child abuse prevention that is attended by 800 professionals and volunteers from all over Indiana who work directly with children and families. The program also provides continuing education workshops through the year for this same group.

- Providing resources

Through its lending Family Support Resource Center and web site, Program F provides caregivers and professionals resources on the problem of child abuse and neglect and positive parenting skills.

- Developing community-based networks and partnerships

Program F organizes and supports local volunteer prevention Councils that promote child abuse prevention efforts in their community. The program also identifies and partners with individuals from businesses and corporations, the faith community, civic groups, schools, and the public sector to promote child abuse prevention efforts at the local level.

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF DATA SOURCES

Corporation for National Service Fellowship Data Sources

- I. Comprehensive Literature Review**
 - A. Theoretical and empirical research on inter-organizational collaboration
 - B. Practitioner-based research
 - C. General information on AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA programs

- II. Longitudinal Content Analysis of Program Documents (1994/95 – 1998/99)**
 - A. Annual RFTs
 - B. Quarterly reports
 - C. Other supporting documents unique to each case (e.g. board meeting minutes, newsletters, internal evaluations)

- III. Face-to-face Interviews (Total = 51)**
 - A. Face-to-face interviews with experts on national service and inter-organizational collaboration (3 interviews)
 - B. Face-to-face interviews with national level stakeholders (4 interviews)
 - C. Face-to-face interviews with state level stakeholders (6 interviews)
 - D. Face-to-face interviews with local level stakeholders
 - 1. Program A (8 interviews, 3 focus groups)

Program Directors, Community Partner Program Coordinators, Guidance Director at one partner organization, focus groups with AmeriCorps members
 - 2. Program C (3 interviews)

Former Program Director, Guidance Counselor at one partner organization, former AmeriCorps member
 - 3. Program D (5 interviews)

Executive Director, Board member, Treasurer, City Planning and Community Development Dept. staff, Deputy Assistant to the Mayor and board member

4. Program E (12 interviews)

VISTA Program Coordinator, Executive Director, Deputy Director, RSVP Director, VISTA volunteers

5. Program F (7 interviews)

Executive Director, Community Relations Coordinator, Councils Administrator, Council board members, State Chapter board member, former VISTA member

IV. Phone Interviews (Total = 11)

A. Program B (6 interviews)

Program Coordinator, Partner organization staff and directors

B. Program C (3 interviews)

Former AmeriCorps members

C. Program D (1 interview)

Executive Director

D. Program F (1 interview)

Former VISTA volunteer

V. Participant Observation

A. Case site visits

B. Program Directors' Training (12/10/98 – 12/11/98)

C. Indiana AmeriCorps Winter Retreat (2/11/99 - 2/12/99)

D. County Council Meeting at Program F's Annual Conference on Prevention of Child Abuse (4/22/99)

VI. Focus groups

A. Program directors (Training hosted by ICCSV, 12/11/98)

B. Members of the Indiana InterCorps Council (Indiana AmeriCorps Mid-Year Retreat, 2/11-12/99)

C. AmeriCorps members at each site

VII. Program Director Mail Survey

- A. 59 surveys mailed to all AmeriCorps*State/National and VISTA program directors (43 AmeriCorps*State/National, 16 AmeriCorps* VISTA) Surveys sent 3/4/99 with due date of 4/15/99