

Commissioned Paper

Civic Engagement, Volunteerism, and Young Adult Well-Being:
Volunteer Work and National Service as Developmental Opportunities
for Social Incorporation

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Volunteerism and Well-Being¹

Over the past 30 years there has been an exponential increase in research (correlational, longitudinal, and even some experimental studies) on the relationship between volunteering and well-being across various stages of the life span. The evidence is striking for the absence of contradictory findings: although some studies find no particular benefits (mainly for people at middle-age) and although there are differences of opinion about the “optimal” level of hours and causes, there are, to put it in Piliavin and Siegel’s (in press) words, “essentially no findings of negative effects” (p. 53).

With the exception of burn-out from too much volunteering with too little social support, no studies have found negative relationships between volunteering and psychosocial or health outcomes for the volunteer. Panel studies provide consistent evidence of a positive effect: independent of other kinds of social participation such as religious attendance, visiting with friends, or participating in other social activities, and with controls for earlier levels of well-being, volunteering has an independent causal effect - lowering depression and increasing six different measures of psychological well-being (Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; Musick & Wilson, 2003; Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; in press; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Explanations for the positive effect of volunteering on well-being include the value of expanded community connections, the sense of benevolence and collective efficacy that the volunteer experiences and the sense that s/he “matters” either to others in the organization or to the lives of others. Physiological effects also have been documented: the altruistic nature of volunteering and the social contact with others increases levels of oxytocin, which decreases anxiety and increases positive mood (Piliavin & Siegl, in press).

For adolescents and young adults, volunteering selects youth into pro-social peer groups with structured outlets for their time. Despite potential selection effects, longitudinal and even some random assignment studies with youth from diverse racial/ethnic and social class backgrounds find that volunteering is associated with fewer behavioral problems including lower rates of course failures, suspensions, school dropout, and pregnancy (Moore, Allen, Herre, Philliber, & Kuperminc, 1994; Schmidt, Shumow & Kackar, 2011).

¹ N.B. We treat volunteerism as one example of civic engagement. Although there are distinctions in the literature, we use these terms and community service interchangeably insofar as distinctions are not relevant for this paper.

Likewise, compared to retributive practices with juvenile delinquents, community service as a restorative justice practice is more effective in reducing recidivism (Uggen & Janikula, 1999). Compared to other forms of extracurricular activities, community service (whether mandated or voluntary) is associated in adolescents' reports with higher levels of bonding and bridging social capital, intergenerational harmony, and social support (Flanagan, Kim, Collura, & Kopish, 2014). Community service, whether voluntary or mandated for graduation, also has positive effects on students' academic progress: analyses of the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) panel data suggest that, controlling for a host of background factors, engaging in community service in high-school increases the odds of graduating from college in early adulthood (Davila & Mora, 2007). Volunteering also is the best single predictor of later volunteering. Panel studies show that volunteer service in high school and college is related to multiple measures of well-being in adulthood, effects that are mediated by volunteering in adulthood (Bowman, Brandenberger, Lapsley, Hill, & Quaranto, 2010).

Civic Engagement and the Life Cycle

Civic interest and involvement across the life span is not static. It changes as individuals take on new roles and engage with various institutions (e.g., high schools, colleges, employment and religious settings, the military) (Kinder, 2006; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004; Rotolo, 2000). Watts, 1999). In the years immediately following high school, civic participation is more episodic and less stable compared with the steadier involvement in adolescence and adulthood (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Involvement in civic organizations and volunteering is lower for 18- to 24-year-olds compared with the involvement of high-school students or older adults, with some studies showing increases around age 26 (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Kinder, 2006).

Differences in levels of civic involvement have been explained based on the vested interests associated with certain social roles (e.g., parents) and on the opportunities and normative pressures in institutions such as work or school (e.g. extracurricular activities and community service mandates of high-schools) (Kinder, 2006). Among recent cohorts of adults, delays in taking up the habit of voting are consistent with the protracted nature of the transition to adulthood and with delays in other markers of adult status (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Changes in Levels and Forms of Political Action Among Younger Generations Across the Globe

The protracted transition to adulthood and the declines in younger generations' participation in conventional forms of political participation are not unique to the United States. Across advanced industrial countries, younger generations are less likely than their elder compatriots to vote or contact elected officials (Dalton, 2008; Norris, 2011; Spanring, Ogris, & Gaiser, 2008). Since the mid-1980s voter turnout has declined in most democratic countries with younger generations contributing disproportionately to these declines. In both emerging and developed democracies young people are less likely to register to vote or cast a ballot than are older voters (Pintor & Gratschew, 2002). Over the past several decades, political trust has declined in advanced industrial democracies

and younger generations account for a disproportionate share of that decline (Dalton, 2004).

At the same time, youth are inventing and engaging in alternative forms of political action including lifestyle/consumer politics (boycotting and buycotting), community advocacy and development, social justice and interest based campaigns, use of online technology for organizing and information campaigns, and global activism (Dalton, 2008; Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; Norris, 2002). A growing body of scholarship and practice on these new forms points to their potential for promoting the well-being of young people and the organizations and communities where they reside (Calvert, Emery, & Kinsey, 2013). Convergent findings from research on adolescent and young adult civic engagement point to the following conclusions: First, youth are more likely to be civically active as adults if they have had opportunities during adolescence to work collaboratively with peers and adults on engaging issues and to discuss current events with parents, teachers, and peers. Interest in political issues tends to be generated by controversy, discussion, and the perception that it matters to take a stand. Second, young people's sense of social incorporation (solidarity with others, identification with community institutions, being respected and heard by adults) is a psychological factor that is positively related to youth assuming social responsibility for others in their community and for taking civic actions (voting and volunteering) in young adulthood. These relationships are true for youth from different social class and ethnic minority backgrounds. Third, there is a class and racial divide in the civic opportunities available to young people: cumulative disadvantage built up over the K-12 years (including the lack of opportunities to practice civic skills, the competing demands on attention and time of living in economically stressed communities and especially events such as dropping out of school or getting arrested) depresses civic incorporation and civic action later in life. Fourth, besides opportunities, there are traits of personality (extraversion, confidence, optimism) that predispose some youth to join organizations and get engaged in civic action. Finally, youth engagement in meaningful civic projects is positively associated with their psychosocial well-being and mental health (Flanagan, 2013).

Not only are youth more likely than their elders to be early adopters of new technologies, they also are more likely to take political advantage of the Internet. Even the experience of participating in or organizing an apolitical interest group can be a gateway to political action. According to panel data from a nationally representative sample of 18-35 year olds, youth who used the Internet to blog, e-mail, or post comments about political candidates or issues were more likely to participate in political campaigns or community volunteering and problem solving two years later. But even those youth who used the Internet for apolitical interest-driven activities (i.e., discussions, organizing or participating in social, recreational, fan or special interest sites, or who took the lead in an online community) were more likely to engage in community and political campaigns two years later. However, online activities driven by friendships were not related to later civic or political engagement (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2013).

Social Class, Racial/Ethnic, and Gender Differences

Both forms and levels of civic participation vary by social class, race/ethnicity, and

gender. In the United States there has long been a class divide in civic engagement with political interest and voter turnout concentrated among the more advantaged segments of society (Pacheco & Plutzer, 2008; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Nearly half (45%) of those between 18 and 29 voted in the 2012 elections but those who went to college voted at almost twice the rate of their non-college-educated peers, although African Americans voted at the highest rate of any racial/ethnic group in 2008 and 2012 (Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, 2013). The educational gap in voting has been highly consistent since the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1972. However, analyses of trends among high-school seniors in intentions to vote point to an increasing divide between those who plan on attending a four-year college and their peers who do not (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, & Briddell, 2011). Analyses of voter turn-out in the 2012 elections shows that policies also matter. Specifically, young people without college experience who lived in states with photo ID requirements were less likely to vote in 2012 than their counterparts in states without such ID laws in place, even when other factors related to voting were accounted for (Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, 2013).

The social class divide in political engagement reflects a larger divide in civic opportunities that begins in childhood (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 2003) and is exacerbated by the uneven opportunities for civic practice in middle- and high-schools (Kahne & Middaugh, 2009). For young adults who do not go on to college, there is a lacuna of institutional opportunities for civic incorporation. Rates of participation in churches, voluntary associations, grassroots political parties, and unions have fallen for younger generations in the working class (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten 2009, Godsay, Kawashima-Ginsberg, Kiesa, & Levine, 2012). Rates of union membership today are actually higher among young people with a college education than among their peers without one.

Gender divides in civic participation also have roots in early adulthood. College women are less likely than men to aspire to political careers at a local or national level (Lawless & Fox, 2013), to discuss politics on a regular basis, and to believe they have leadership qualities and skills that would qualify them for office (Kawahima-Ginsberg & Thomas, 2013). That said, with the exception of programs that target particular groups, women are more likely than men to enroll in national service programs.

Institutional Connections

Institutions are the venues whereby people get recruited into civic life (Verba, et al., 1995) and the nature of these recruitment contexts has changed over the past three decades. College has and continues to be a venue for civic recruitment and, not surprisingly, levels of civic engagement are higher for young adults who are in college compared with their peers who are not (Zaff, Youniss, & Gibson, 2009). Workplaces also used to be a venue for the civic recruitment of young adults who did not go on to college. However, over the past three decades, significant changes in the labor market have diminished the recruitment potential of this venue and have contributed to an increasing social class divide in civic participation. Compared with their parents and grandparents, today's young adults who terminate their education after high school are less likely to

find steady employment in unionized workplaces that heretofore were a venue for civic recruitment (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

National Service as an Alternative Institution

As an alternative or in addition to college, participation in national service offers opportunities for civic engagement. In particular, national service may offer a new route for building social connections and getting recruited into civic life for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (Flanagan, Finlay, Galloway, & Kim, 2012; Hyman, & Levine, 2008). In fact, when youth from disadvantaged families were asked why they had enrolled in AmeriCorps national service programs, they said that they wanted to make connections, get job training, and earn a stipend to further their education (Finlay & Flanagan, 2009).

Not only does national service provide modest financial support for school, smoothing pathways to educational institutions, it also may enable participants to gain financial and personal resources; to hone their leadership, organizing, and communication skills; to connect with organizations in the community; and ultimately to get recruited into many forms of civic, social, and economic life. As volunteering (at least as it is measured in national surveys) is lower among disadvantaged groups (Zaff et al., 2009), opportunities to participate in civic affairs while still earning an (albeit modest) income are important for reducing the class divide in civic participation.

A Brief History of National Service in the United States

Historically, the enabling legislation for national service programs (whether FDR and the CCC, JFK and the Peace Corps, or William J. Clinton and AmeriCorps) has invoked two major goals: first, meeting the needs of communities and second, developing the capacities and character of Corps members.² Whether the unique assets of this age group (Peace Corps), or the crushing and lifelong deleterious effects of unemployment (the CCC), young adulthood has been framed in each piece of legislation as a unique phase in life that is formative of later life trajectories. When FDR proposed the CCC, he argued that a period of prolonged unemployment would have negative lifelong impacts on the character of a generation. In 1961 when there were ample opportunities for young adults to find remunerative work, it was the assets of young adults that Kennedy invoked when he proposed that the Peace Corps recruit young educated and talented Americans to share their resources with citizens of the developing world and, in the process, serve as ambassadors of the United States.

Since then, each president has had his signature national service initiative: LBJ started VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) as part of the War on Poverty. George H.W. Bush created the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light

² In the past decade, the funding priorities of major national service programs have shifted from an earlier emphasis on member development to the current emphasis on community impact. See details of the 2011-2015 CNCS priorities in a later section on policy gaps.

Foundation to promote volunteerism, and signed into law the National and Community Service Act of 1990. In President Clinton's administration the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was created (1993) with three components: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve (K-12 service learning, no longer funded). The CNCS still exists and offers an opportunity to coordinate national service programs across different federal programs (although that has not yet happened). George W. Bush's development of the USA Freedom Corps in 2004 expanded volunteerism and national service partnerships, mainly in the area of homeland security (fire corps, medical reserve corps, disaster preparedness).

The most recent expansion to national service legislation, the 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act signed by President Obama, sought to reinforce, alter and, in some cases, build on a wide variety of service opportunities. It realigned existing work into priority areas of disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures and veterans and military families. In its initial year, FY 2010, the Serve America Act did help increase federal dollars allocated specifically for AmeriCorps positions over those allocated in FY 2009, by just over \$105 million. As of FY2014, funding levels for positions are now at about \$63 million dollars over 2009 levels. In total there has been an increase in funding, although not to the levels needed for the number of positions anticipated. In short, aside from administrative changes to service opportunities, the sweeping support for national service embodied in this act remains largely unrealized.³

In summary, since FDR first introduced the idea of national service, it has been defended as something that is 'good' for society and 'good' for those who serve. President Clinton summarized the civic impact of service on those who serve when he said, "citizen service changes people for the better" (Clinton, 2001). Claims about the transformative nature of national service programs also have been made by the proponents of those programs. For example, Teach for America (TFA) not only claims that its program provides educational services to students in need but also that participation transforms TFA members into lifelong citizens (Teach for America 1999 cited in McAdam & Brandt, 2009).

Current National Service Programs

The current umbrella programs coordinated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) include AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and the Social Innovation Fund and the Volunteer Generation Fund. As set forth by the Serve America Act, CNCS activities are now aligned under priority areas of disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures and veterans and

³ In some cases, programs that were initially funded, such as the Summer of Service that supported and awarded middle school youth from disadvantaged families for participating in service, were subsequently defunded by Congress the following year due to budget cuts. Organizations such as ServiceNation and ServeNext have established a grassroots coalition to hold public officials accountable for the implementation of the legislation.

military families.

A major objective of the CNCS 2011-2015 Strategic Plan is to enhance accessibility of CNCS supported National Service to a more diverse audience. Strategies for achieving this objective include funding prioritization for organizations and programs that engage underrepresented populations. Additional priority measures in the Plan include the percent of CNCS supported participants who are aware of community needs and community-driven solutions, as well as the percent of participants who report that they are connected to the national service community (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2011).

AmeriCorps, a national program administered by the CNCS, provides grants to public and nonprofit organizations to support community service. AmeriCorps comprises three major programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). State and National and NCCC programs largely focus on the provision of direct services. In contrast, VISTA is more decentralized; its members serve individually or in small groups and focus primarily on building capacity in local communities.

Individuals learn about AmeriCorps programs through various routes: Public Service Announcements and social media; formal (e.g., college) and informal networks; by accessing the AmeriCorps portal where individuals can use filters to select potential geographical locations and program foci that match their interests. Member information is collected via the e-grants system which is kept by the CNCS. When opening an application, an individual has to provide some basic demographic information including gender, permanent mailing address, highest level of educational attainment, and veteran status.

One of the goals of AmeriCorps is to enable those who want to serve to do so. Thus attempts are made to remove barriers and to be inclusive. In exchange for a year of full-time service, AmeriCorps members receive job and life skills training, a modest living stipend for the duration of the program (\$10,900 to \$21,800, depending on the program); health benefits, childcare benefits, training, and forbearance of student loans (the interest for which is forgiven upon the completion of service). Often, they do not receive room and board, but many programs have access to resources and networks that can support members. In some states, such as Washington, the living stipends do not count towards income, and therefore are not included in an individual's determination for food stamp eligibility. Additionally, \$4 million from CNCS supports overhead costs for Education Award only programs, such as the Student Conservation Association, that "top off" existing service or training opportunities in communities across the country by providing an Education Award.

Federal funding is often first allocated to intermediary organizations, which include national nonprofits and state service commissions that work with local organizations to place members in service positions. One-third of AmeriCorps State and National grant funds are distributed by a population-based formula to governor-appointed state service commissions, which in turn make grants to local nonprofits and public agencies.

AmeriCorps State and National members are recruited by nonprofits, schools, and other organizations, known as sponsoring agencies, to help address local community needs. Organizations receiving AmeriCorps funds are required to obtain up to 48% matching funds. Some intermediary and sponsoring agencies acquire this money through a site matching contribution, while others use private philanthropic or state granted dollars.

Education Award

In exchange for a year of full-time or sustained part-time service, AmeriCorps participants, referred to as Corps members, receive an education award that can be used toward higher education or vocational training, or to repay qualified student loans. The Education Award must be used within 7 years of receipt. In alignment with policies guiding Federal Financial Aid distribution, however, members with convictions on their records, including a drug charge such as possession, are unable to lawfully use their education awards. A Corps member is eligible for the education award if s/he successfully completed his/her term of service or left for a compelling reason. Opportunities exist for alternate uses of the Education Award, although currently these only apply for members over the age of 55.

The 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act made changes to the maximum amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. The amount is now tied to the maximum amount of the U.S. Department of Education's Pell Grant. For terms of service that are approved using 2009 funds (or earlier funds) the award continues to be \$4,725 for a year of full-time service, and is pro-rated for part-time service based on the full-time amount. For terms of service that are supported with 2010 funds, the award value increases to \$5,350.00. The CNCS keeps track of the numbers using the education award for projections of funding needs communicated to the National Trust. As of the writing of this report, those numbers were not made available to us.

Qualified educational institutions around the country can contribute matching grants (varying in maximum amounts and restrictions) to AmeriCorps members that apply their education award to tuition and qualified expenses, as determined by the school's financial aid department. For example, the University of Arizona offers two years of base tuition costs to AmeriCorps Alums, but only for members who have served in the University of Arizona Extension's AmeriCorps and VISTA projects. This benefit has been growing over the last 15 years through the initiative of schools. The list of schools providing such benefits is available on the AmeriCorps website.

AmeriCorps State and National Program

AmeriCorps-State and National is by far the largest of the AmeriCorps programs, supporting participants through a network of local community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other agencies. There are approximately 500,000 applications per year for approximately 80,000 AmeriCorps positions (many of which are part-time). However, because an individual can apply to up to 10 sites, these data include some duplication of cases.

Currently, about 15,000 members serve full time, with over 60,000 more serving in part time or Education Award only positions across the country. Note that the increase in part-time positions is a significant change. In the national longitudinal study that we summarize below about three-quarters of the members served full-time in the 1999–2000 program year. This change can be attributed to the development of various models designed to be flexible to fit both the interests and needs of members and the community. For example, individuals may be serving “full time”, as in 40 hours per week of service that is recognized and supported by AmeriCorps, but only for several months during the summer for National Parks maintenance or during the school year for educational support. Other programs may engage participants in activities that are outside the scope of acceptable AmeriCorps service during part of the day, and therefore are considered “half time” service positions even though participants are involved full time.

AmeriCorps members may opt to serve for a maximum of four terms of service (a recent change). However, members are only eligible for the total equivalent of two education awards, or \$10,700. The minimum requirement for eligibility is that an individual is a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful resident alien age 17 or older. Although there is no age limit, most participants are young adults. AmeriCorps programs vary in their expectations and requirements for incoming members. Several higher barrier programs, such as Teach for America (TFA), explicitly require a college degree, while many others do not. Some programs receiving AmeriCorps support, such as YouthBuild, target young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom have not yet completed their high school degree. Individual programs have additional eligibility requirements. For example, for programs that serve youth, it is at the program’s discretion whether or not to hire members that have had a previous non-violent crime (such as a drug charge) on their record. However, some programs and site placements aim to support youth and young adults working past such charges to help them succeed in their next stage of life. For programs designed for youth 17 or older who are no longer enrolled in high school, infrastructure within the individual programs typically supports members to obtain a GED, which is a required outcome of their service in order to obtain their education award from AmeriCorps.

Many, although not all, AmeriCorps members serve in teams and meet community needs in cooperation with nonprofit organizations and state and local agencies. Examples of the kind of work performed by AmeriCorps members include assisting elderly residents by providing transportation to medical appointments and doing house repairs and working in elementary schools among many other tasks. The 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act expanded the kinds of service to include areas of the environment, homeland security and first responders, and health.

Participants may have opportunities during their year of service to interact with diverse groups of individuals, to learn and practice civic skills, and to engage with adult mentors, although the mix of opportunities varies by programs and sites (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004). In addition to “on the job” learning, up to 20% of a member’s time can be used for member development and training. Specific AmeriCorps training opportunities come from individual sites, AmeriCorps program structures, state commissions and national workshops and conferences. Trainings typically include

reflective learning, team building, service project development and professional development. Although mechanisms for achieving such opportunities vary, two common structures that support civic and skill development are strong staff mentorship and team based trainings. Team-based programs often consist of anywhere from 5 to 50 members that train together and collaboratively complete local service projects. In some instances, civic development activities can include inviting a legislator to visit a service day, designing a community project, wrestling with individual differences across a team, developing a network of support, and completing an effective citizenship curriculum. In the past, programs have utilized a toolkit for members called *Effective Citizenship through AmeriCorps*, which included modules on active citizenship, identifying community problems, conducting news searches and policy analyses, discussing rights and freedoms, and considering values in conflict (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2001). These particular activities, however, have become less common as the emphasis on demonstrating community impact has eclipsed the goal of member development.

Youth-Focused Service Programs

In 2014, the top 10 National Direct Grantees (national organizations receiving grants) included YouthBuild National, City Year National, Notre Dame Mission Volunteers, Washington Service Corps, Minnesota Reading Corps, Public Allies National, Health Corps, Teach for America, Habitat for Humanity and Jumpstart. Five of these focus on youth explicitly, while two (YouthBuild and Public Allies), hire almost exclusively “opportunity” youth.⁴ Some programs intentionally recruit “opportunity youth” and prioritize member development such as City Year, YouthBuild, Public Allies and PASCO (the last a regional service corps that engages all of its members in leadership development). Other programs that involve youth from marginalized communities in service vary by state, such as Wisconsin’s Fresh Start program. While these programs receive funding from a diverse array of sources, they, often with supplemental support of AmeriCorps, comprise the networked community of service programs that engage disadvantaged youth participants in civic opportunities.

YouthBuild

Before adopting its current structure, YouthBuild was developed in 1978 in East Harlem. It expanded in 1988 to engage low income youth ages 16-24 across the country in service while delivering educational programming to assist with high school or GED completion. The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1992 put YouthBuild in the ranks with the

⁴ In 2012 a report by Belfield, Levin, and Rosen coined the term “opportunity youth” to describe young people, disconnected from all major institutions, who present an opportunity for society to devise new ways to re-engage them. Note that the Serve America Act defines disadvantaged youth as: out of school youth, including those who are unemployed, aging out of foster care, with limited English proficiency, homeless or runaway, at risk to leave secondary school without a diploma, former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency, or individuals with a disability.

Peace Corps and Head Start, receiving yearly allocations from Congress. Currently, the Department of Labor provides \$75 million in support for YouthBuild programs that will serve over 5,700 youth. Some YouthBuild sites, called YouthBuild AmeriCorps, also receive support through AmeriCorps, either through half time member stipended positions with an Education Award or just an Education Award.

As of 2013, more than 110,000 individuals participated in YouthBuild. Members are entirely low-income; 94% enter without a high school diploma; 71% are men; 53% are African American, 22% White, 20% Latino, 3% Native American, and 2% are Asian American; 32% are court-involved; 45% have received public assistance (Levine, 2012). According to the program's own statistics, 78% of the entering students complete the program and of those, 2% obtain a high school diploma or equivalent by the time they finish and 60% of alumni are placed in jobs or pursue further education (YouthBuild USA, 2010). In the YouthBuild program model, youth alternate weeks between participating in educational course work and in building housing for low-income and homeless individuals. In this model, youth serve in their own communities in contrast to other models such as City Year in which "opportunity" youth serve in groups with recruits from other communities.

There are core elements of the YouthBuild model that every site adopts. In contrast to a "youth at risk" paradigm, their theory of change is founded on a belief in the transformative power of love. Based on this principle, program elements include: Family-like support and appreciation of members from adults and peers; Protection and patient caring for each young person's development; Profound respect for each person's intelligence coupled with high standards and expectations for his/her performance; Inspiring and caring role models; Opportunities for Career and Leadership; Opportunities for civic engagement and skill development.

YouthBuild also employs a unique approach to civic development with many opportunities for leadership and public action. Standard practices in the 12-16 month program include advocating for funding, shared governance established through an elected policy committee, team decision making about building projects, and community problem solving. At the local program level investments include staff training in youth and leadership development, staff time incorporating leadership into all aspects of the program, the director's time and involvement in the program policy committee, creation of leadership skills training and funds to support leadership opportunities such as Statehouse Days and leadership learning trips. In addition, several levels of leadership opportunities exist for program alumni (nationally the organization puts more than half a million dollars annually into these leadership pipeline programs) including: the National Young Leaders Council (elected by peers at an annual conference); National Alumni Council; VOICES (Views on Improving Credential and Education Success) for alumni in post-secondary education; National Speakers Bureau, and others. Finally, in the last few years YouthBuild USA has funded staff to mentor and provide support to alumni as they transition out of the program and into the next phase of their lives. The Department of Labor also is funding a year of follow up of alumni.

City Year

Established in 1988, City Year was the model from which the current AmeriCorps Program was built. An independent program, its central office and statewide entities combined receive by far the largest National Direct AmeriCorps grant funding from the CNCS (over 30 million). City Year members do service in curricular support, youth leadership development, after school programs and day camps, health services/outreach and park renovation/housing restoration, although currently almost all of the positions have a focus on educational achievement. A primary goal of the program has always been to promote attitudes and behaviors that alter the civic path of City Year members themselves through engaging 17 to 24 year olds in social and civic institutions.

In contrast to YouthBuild which recruits only youth from low income backgrounds, City Year seeks to establish integrated teams of members from different socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and geographic backgrounds. In 2011, City Year developed a member diversity plan, which included strategic recruitment partnerships with African-American and Latino(a) fraternities and sororities to increase diversity among its members. They have also joined with Peace Corps, Teach for America and the Breakthrough Collaborative (a program that seeks to connect low-income middle school students to college) in developing a Diversity Recruitment Collaborative.

Public Allies

First established in Washington, D.C., Public Allies was named a demonstration site for National Public Service in 1992 by President George Bush and was one of the first programs to receive AmeriCorps funding. Public Allies now operates in 21 sites, recruits diverse participants from the communities in which they live to participate in a service and leadership development apprenticeship program. The program has evolved to include a franchise-like model, with central offices providing training and technical assistance to sites around the country on program design and a member leadership development curriculum that includes units on asset-based community development, diversity and privilege, critical thinking, nonprofit management and teamwork. Program demographics of Public Allies: two-thirds people of color, 60% female, 50% college graduates, and 15% LGBT. Numbers vary for specific sites, with New York hiring approximately 90% people of color.

Among national service programs Public Allies is relatively unique in its focus on alumni engagement and continuing development (although, as noted above YouthBuild involves some of its alumni in continuing leadership programs). Public Allies hosts a National Leadership Institute conference to share best practices in service and community building, particularly as it relates to engaging young diverse leadership. Alumni are a key feature of the Public Allies' overall recruitment strategy. The organization also has a commitment to diversity in leadership amongst its own staff.

One mechanism by which Public Allies is able to effectively engage alumni is through their Personal Impact and Service Documentation (PISD) portal. This online portal for data collection and management, developed with technology fellows and an advisory board, has been touted as a model for service programs. It also provides the program with the capacity to share up to date outcomes (Goggins-Gregory, 2004). The program also

has a complex leadership development evaluation strategy (Hannum, Martineau & Reinelt, 2006). While this infrastructure is in place and data has previously been compiled through a partnership with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Policy Research, public reporting on member outcomes is not widely studied outside of the organization.

Teach for America (TFA)

TFA participants commit to teaching 2 years in a rural or urban school in a low-income community. The program, which only recruits those who have completed 4 years of college, aims to reduce educational inequality by placing teachers in these low-income schools. During these 2 years, teachers receive a salary (\$30,000 to \$51,500 depending on the region), health benefits, and other benefits such as an education award (Teach for America, 2010).

The Civic Justice Corps

The Civic Justice Corps was a model initially developed through collaborations between the U.S. Department of Labor, the CNCS, the Open Society Institute, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Cascade Center for Community Governance, and The Corps Network. At the time, the incorporation of ex-offenders and disadvantaged youth through multi-sectoral partnerships was an explicit component of the CNCS strategic plan. The program engaged formerly incarcerated or court involved youth between the ages of 18-24 in community service projects and work experience, vocational training and academic interventions for skill improvement and career development. Its pilot, implemented by the Corps Network and including wraparound support services and civic leadership development, demonstrated significant reductions in recidivism and increased educational and employment attainment. The Department of Labor subsequently began administering \$20 million for the Civic Justice Corps in 2011. Since then, \$30 million in additional funding has been granted to programs that have adopted a similar model, although it is no longer administered under the auspices of the Civic Justice Corps program.

AmeriCorps NCCC

AmeriCorps-NCCC is a 10-month, full-time, residential service program for men and women between the ages of 18 and 24. Inspired by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, the program combines the best practices of civilian and military service. AmeriCorps-NCCC members live and train in teams at five regional campuses, and serve nonprofit organizations and government entities in communities across the country. During their service period, NCCC members spend considerable time off campus providing services throughout the region, living temporarily in schools or other facilities provided by the community. Some NCCC members also participate in disaster relief efforts such as flood relief or fighting wildfires. In 1999–2000, NCCC members spent approximately half their time away from NCCC campuses providing services throughout the states in their regions. While the Serve America Act did authorize the opportunity for NCCC programs to be developed in communities away from campus,

these programs have yet to be enacted. However, one of the major new federal interagency partnerships built by the CNCS is housed in the NCCC. This collaboration places 18-24 year olds with FEMA to assist with disaster relief initiatives around the country.

The Serve America Act also reinforced an existing goal for the NCCC to hire 50% of their members from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, the NCCC is held to higher burdens of proof of participation by the CNCS and Congress than any other AmeriCorps program in this regard. Presently, about 50% of youth serving in NCCC have a college degree and about 70% are Caucasian (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2014). In response to the Serve America Act, the NCCC developed targeted recruitment strategies to engage youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, including outreach to specific institutions and programs around the country that serve at-risk youth. They also contracted on the development of a staff training program and 3 year action plan for establishing staff readiness and support systems for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Youth Corps

Conservation and Service Corps, or Youth Corps refers to a diverse set of programs (really a network) united in their common mission of engaging corpsmembers, primarily young adults, in a combination of community service, workforce development, and education. The programs have their legacy in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Today, youth corps are operated by local community-based organizations and local and state government agencies. While they typically provide educational, employment and training, and community service activities, there is no single program model. Youth Corps vary a good deal in their organizational structure, type of members targeted, duration and intensity of participation. Corps receive support from the Corporation, other federal agencies (including the Departments of Labor, Interior and Housing and Urban Development), and local and state government and foundations. Some programs receive additional support from fee-for-service projects, in which project sponsors, typically local or state government agencies, provide corps with direct funding for services.

Research on National Service Programs

CNCS 8-Year Longitudinal Study

In the summer and fall of 1999, the CNCS commissioned Abt Associates to conduct a nationally representative longitudinal study of AmeriCorps members and a comparison group. The initial sample included 2000 people who were first-time, full-time members either in 107 of the AmeriCorps State and National program or in 3 of the NCCC programs and who enrolled between September 1999 and January 2000. A comparison group of 1,524 people was selected from individuals who indicated interest in AmeriCorps by contacting the CNCS for information but who did not enroll. Data were collected at baseline (1999), at the end of the service period (2000), three years after baseline (2002), and 8 years later (2007). Of the initial sample of 4,153 who completed a baseline survey, 3,300 completed Wave 2, 2,975 the third wave, and 2,240 completed the

final survey. Data were analyzed using propensity score matching (based on interest in national and community service, member and family demographics, and prior civic engagement).

There were both short- and long-term impacts on members, especially in the area of civic engagement, members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, and participation in community-based activities. Participation in AC also had positive impacts on outcomes that could be considered both civic and work-related, i.e., increasing confidence in one's capacity to work with local government and to lead a successful community-based change effort. AmeriCorps had other positive impacts on its members' employment-related outcomes (public service employment), especially for ethnic minorities. Few statistically significant impacts were found for measures of participants' attitude toward education or educational attainment (measured as confidence in ability to obtain, personal responsibility for success, and actual progress), or for selected life skills measures, although life satisfaction increased over 8 years. One negative outcome was found for the NCCC (residential model of service): 3 years after baseline, this group were less likely to endorse intergroup contact as an important goal, although that disappeared at the 8 year follow up (Abt Associations, 2004; 2008; CNCS, 2008; Frumkin et al., 2009).

In summary, there were many positive impacts on civic engagement and some on employment, both priority areas for national service. However, there were few effects for educational outcomes or other life skills, which also are priority areas. The one negative outcome for the NCCC raised questions about the need to examine different models of national service and the group dynamics and member development that takes place in different programs.

Two other studies using this same data set looked at retention (McBride & Lee, 2011) and at patterns of civic incorporation over the 8 years (Finlay, Flanagan, & Wray-Lake, 2011). The AC sample demographics are noteworthy: average age of 28; 75% female, 18% married, 7% with a disability, and 43% with a college degree or more. Comparisons between the Corps and comparison groups at baseline revealed the following demographic differences: Corps participants were slightly older, more likely to be male, to be African American or Hispanic. They also more likely to have children and to be financially disadvantaged as indicated by their lower family financial resources. Comparison group members were more likely than AmeriCorps participants to report attending college. As expected by their commitment to national service, Corps participants were more likely to endorse community participation (activities, meetings) and civic organizational involvement (on issues of concern); however, they were less likely to endorse local or national voting (Finlay, et al., 2011).

In summary, those who joined AmeriCorps appeared to be more disadvantaged than the comparison group on several indicators. The potential for social incorporation that national service might offer vulnerable groups was hinted at in other reports by the AC and comparison groups: Even among those who came from families with incomes below the national median at the time, the Corps members were less likely to be working outside the home, to be attending schools, and more likely to be taking care of their own

children whereas the comparison were either working or looking for a job (Finlay & Flanagan, 2009).

Concerning reasons for joining AmeriCorps, those with lower family incomes were more likely to report that they were influenced by social connections (e.g., a friend or relative was a member, an AmeriCorps organization helped their family in the past) or by a desire for social connections (e.g., wanted to make friends) as well as for the education award. Other reasons endorsed by all groups, regardless of family income, included needed a job, believed they would develop useful skills, and altruistic reasons (Finlay & Flanagan, 2009).

Concerning program retention, McBride and Lee (2011) found that 30% of AC members did not complete their term of service with ethnic minorities, those with lower levels of education, and those with a disability less likely to complete. Reasons given for not completing: 38% personal or health; 20% dissatisfaction with program; 15% financial reasons, 8% taking a job, 5% were asked to leave. In addition, according to members' reports⁵, the likelihood of completing the service period was increased if the program involved members in planning service activities, matched activities to career interests, helped Corps members develop a relationship with a mentor, and encouraged the Corps member to reflect with others on the service experience.⁶

Our own team has recently completed analyses of the AC program characteristics that boosted members' civic commitments and behaviors between baseline and the end of the program. Regardless of the Corps' member's SES, serving with team members and community members from diverse backgrounds boosted civic commitments and behaviors over the year. In addition, for members from lower SES backgrounds, feelings of belonging to a community and collective efficacy boosted commitments and behaviors. For those from higher SES backgrounds, opportunities in the program to lead and manage boosted those outcomes (Flanagan & Kim, 2013).

Teach for America (TFA)

A retrospective study of TFA was conducted in 2001-2002. Three groups were compared: matriculants (who completed their 2 years of service); drop outs (who started but dropped out before completing their 2 years, and non-matriculants (who completed

⁵ All of the studies have relied on member reports. A program directors survey also was administered but the data have generally not been used. Due to the diverse levels of "administration" and wide range of the size of AC programs, it is difficult to compare across programs.

⁶ Reflection appears to be a critical element of service programs. A meta-analysis of service learning programs with adolescents found that reflection, especially on the academic aspects of service, was associated with multiple positive outcomes (van Goethem, van Hoof, van Aken, & Orobio de Castro, 2013, under review).

all of the TFA paper work but never did TFA) (McAdam, & Brandt, 2009). Based on an original sample of 2,771 individuals whom TFA listed as having applied to and been accepted between 1993-1998, the final sample was comprised of 1,583 graduates, 324 dropouts and 634 non-matriculants (44.7% graduates, 38.3% drop-outs, and 46.2% of nonmatriculants completed and returned the survey. Since TFA has never asked applicants for social class information, no comparisons could be made. However, on race/ethnicity and gender, there were no differences between the groups.

The main goal of the study was to test the ‘transformational’ claims of the TFA organization. However, McAdam and Brandt (2009) found that TFA graduates lagged significantly behind the two comparison groups: On seven dimensions of civic life-service, civic activity, institutional politics, social movements, voting, charitable giving and pro-social employment (teaching, working in non profits). Note that these “lower” levels have to be put in perspective insofar as this was a highly civically engaged sample. For example, 92% of the respondents said that they had voted in the last presidential election (almost twice what their peers in the general population reported). So the “lower” levels of TFA (89% voted) have to be interpreted in the context of this very high overall rate.

After running a number of post hoc tests, McAdam and Brandt offer some plausible explanations of the counter-intuitive finding (that civic indicators were lower for the TFA matriculants than for the non-matriculants) including temporary exhaustion on the part of recent graduates (and drop-outs), negative reactions to TFA and, for many, the isolating nature of the teaching experience. Analyses of the drop-outs’ experience are especially diagnostic: not only had their experience left them disillusioned with TFA but it also turned them off to educational service in general. Based on pre-test interviews and other information, McAdam and Brandt conclude that five features of TFA placements contribute to a negative experience: urban school placement; lack of support within the school; lack of support from TFA; low sense of efficacy on the part of the volunteer; and disillusionment with TFA.

City Year

In 2007, Policy Studies Associates (PSA) completed a five year, three part study of the impact of City Year on alumni, which consisted of a mail survey completed by over 2,189 participants and focus groups with 37 participants, and 20 open ended interviews with alumni as well as a telephone survey of the parents and families of alumni. Alumni were categorized into three cohorts from 1988 to 1993, 1994 to 1998, and 1999 to 2003 (Anderson & Fabiano, 2007). Retrospective accounts were gathered on how alumni perceived City Year’s impact on outcomes including their employment, education, civic attitudes, political engagement, leadership and social capital development. Some of the City Year alumni responses were compared with those of a matched group from the National Election Studies and CIRCLE’s National Civic Engagement Survey.

Two trends in the demographics of program participants were noteworthy. First, between 1988 and 2003, across all sites the percentage of youth entering with some college remained the same while the percentage of youth entering with a GED or less decreased

and the percentage of those with a bachelor's degree doubled. Second, from the first cohort to the last, the percentage of African American participants increased from 25% to 35%, while the percentage of white participants decreased from 51% to 41%. Over the entire period of 1988 to 2003, the City Year programs in Rhode Island, Boston and San Antonio all had enrolled the highest number of members without any college experience, each just over 60%.

Concerning outcomes reported by the alumni, those who entered the program without a GED were the most likely to report that their experience with City Year impacted their career. In addition, the more educational attainment a participant entered with, the less additional education the participant pursued upon completing the program. In addition, alumni consistently reported that their City Year program had a positive impact on their self-efficacy and sense of egalitarianism. Compared to the national sample of 18-40 year olds, City Year alumni in all racial, ethnic, and educational attainment groups were more likely to participate in organizations, to vote, and to volunteer. For members of the population who already had a GED or higher level of education, City Year alumni also were more likely to contribute to political campaigns. Finally, the social capital (combined measure of social trust, political efficacy, egalitarianism, and social and political expression) reported by City Year alumni was higher than that reported by the national comparison group.

YouthBuild

Several studies of YouthBuild have documented its impact from baseline to program completion. Hahn, Leavitt, Horvat, and David (2004) compared YouthBuild participants with high-school drop-outs who were not in the program. They found increases between start and end of involvement in the program on youths' expected life-span. They also documented an 87% employment rate among graduates and a high correlation between how quickly youth found jobs and how much assistance their YouthBuild mentors provided in the search. Finally, seven years after graduating from the program, 75% of the graduates participating in this study were either working, in school, or in a job training program; 70% had registered to vote and nearly half had voted in one or more elections (Hahn et al., 2004). Tomberg (2013) found significant increases in civic outcomes between pre- and post-program assessments. Specifically, regardless of age, race, or number of hours served, youths' reports of social trust and community orientations increased and, among 16-18 year olds, there also were significant gains in commitments to service. Tomberg also included 494 staff in her study and found that staff were well-versed in the implementation of the YouthBuild model and engaged youth in wraparound support services, in civic leadership development, and also in ways to negotiate service opportunities.

Others have studied specific elements of the YouthBuild model or groups targeted by specific programs. Concerning the latter, Cohen and Piquero (2010) evaluated the YouthBuild Offenders project and documented reduced recidivism for young offenders who stuck with the program when compared to a similar group not enrolled in the program. Leadership development is an integral part of the YouthBuild model with skills training, field trips, and programs such as Statehouse Days part of every program. In

addition, the national program recruits alumni into a leadership pipeline of programs (e.g., Young Leaders Council, National Alumni Council, VOICES, etc.) where they exercise skills in communication, advocacy, decision making for the organization, etc. One retrospective study surveyed 344 alumni and did intensive interviews with a sub-set of 54, all of whom had engaged in one or more of the alumni leadership pipeline programs (Godsay, Kiesa, Kawashima-Ginsberg, Henderson, & Levine, 2012). Two pathways to becoming leaders emerged in their reflections. For some it was the result of a steady incremental feeling of mattering to and social support from staff during their YouthBuild program that enabled them to step up to new challenges. Others identified turning points or transformational experiences. For example, many mentioned the *Mental Toughness* training module early in a YouthBuild program that pushes participants to aim higher. Graduates of the Conference of Young Leaders (an intensive, multiday event in DC) referred to transformations in their leadership self-concepts and in their commitments to lead and attributed the change to specific elements of the program: developing a sense of solidarity with youth from similar marginalized communities across the country when they met in DC; participating in public actions such as speeches, discussions, and visits to Capitol Hill to advocate with legislators about federal appropriations for the program.

National and Volunteer Service as a Pathway to Employment

Concerning the potential of national service as a pathway to employment, the longitudinal study following AmeriCorps members eight years after their service year found that participation in AmeriCorps had impacts on attitudinal and behavioral employment outcomes: based on self-report measures, Corps members in the State and National program scored higher than the comparison group on accepting responsibility for employment success (individual's assessment of extent to which s/he is personally responsible for his/her success in getting a job) and were more likely to be in public sector careers (education social work, public safety, arts, religion, or military service (Frumkin et al., 2009).

Less intense volunteer experiences also have been linked to employment outcomes. Spera, Ghertner, Nerino, & DiTommaso (2013) analyzed ten two-year cohorts (2002/2003 – 2011/2012) in the Current Population Survey (CPS) to assess the effect of volunteering on subsequent gainful employment. Based on respondents 16 and older who, in their first survey year, reported that they were either: a) unemployed or b) not in the labor force but interested in working, the team identified a final sample of 70,535 in the ten cohorts. After controlling for a number of demographic and community-level factors, they found that volunteering was associated with a 27% increased odds of employment in the second survey year. The relationship between volunteering and employment was strongest for those without a high school diploma or GED and for those living in rural areas. The positive relationship between volunteering and employment was stable across gender, race, and ethnic categories, age, time, and Metropolitan Statistical Area.

New Directions of National Service: Implications for Young Adult Development

Based on changes in the Serve AmeriCorps Act, one can anticipate seeing an increase in service opportunities for young people. While current funding allocations encourage programs to hire disadvantaged youth, one can also expect to see a greater level of professionalization of service in order to meet the demands of rigorous goals for community impact through the CNCS distribution of resources. Senior AmeriCorps officials have suggested that retention rates for AmeriCorps, which in aggregate is well over 90%, are an indicator of such professionalization driven by increased competition for and nature of the positions (B. Basl, personal communication, May 7, 2014). Currently, AmeriCorps receives over 500,000 applications for 60,000 positions. The largest number of current positions now focus on education, which requires basic education attainment to effectively reach benchmarks established by performance measures. In the past there was a wide array of activities related to construction work, gang-related or anti-violence work and others that established positions for members of various skill levels and enrolled members in communities in which they serve. Now, however, the role of the member and the types of projects are driven by performance measure goals.

In this vein, the primary objective in the CNCS 2011-2015 Strategic Plan is to increase the impact of national service on community needs. To achieve this end, CNCS is engaging in a rigorous evaluation strategy, including allocating millions of dollars towards program evaluation and evaluation capacity building. Funding allocations to AmeriCorps programs are now made based on a formula that includes the capacity to demonstrate causal conclusions of a program's logic for community impact, including evidence of this impact through the completion of experimental studies of the program design. Any program that receives over \$500,000 through National Direct funding must undergo a third party community impact evaluation. NORC at the University of Chicago is providing technical assistance to these programs to develop their evaluation strategies. While programmatic structures that use full time or part time volunteers to impact communities are discussed by this evaluation, it does not include information about the impact on the participants. With respect to member training, funding formulas take into account only how members are trained on best practices for implementation of interventions. Smaller programs that cannot compete nationally can use formula funding. Thus, states have discretion to use a portion of funding for smaller communities

A new element of CNCS developed from the Serve America Act, the Social Innovation Fund, departs from the traditional model of national service, collaborating with philanthropists to support venture philanthropy to address social issues. In 2014, the Social Innovation Fund received 70 million dollars that it subsequently granted to intermediary philanthropic organizations. This money is matched by the philanthropic organization, and subsequently matched again by the institution receiving funds (thus "tripling" the investment). This fund, combined with new rigorous community impact evaluation models, marks a shift in the CNCS goals from earlier civic development goals realized through service learning and national service programs towards attempting to identify, drive and support other strategies for community change.

With respect to impacts on national service participants, CNCS previously supported longitudinal studies of participant civic development and has funded evaluations of participant impact alongside rigorous impact evaluations for programs such as Youth Corps (Abt study). Presently, strategic priorities include CNCS supported participants remaining engaged in their communities and finding professional, educational or civic growth opportunities through their service. The present performance measures for funding allocation at the national level, however, only mention professional development and educational attainment for low barrier and high barrier CNCS youth-focused programs, as opposed to continual monitoring for civic outcomes.

AmeriCorps has a variety of mechanisms that could be used to encourage the discussion and dissemination of models that effectively incorporate youth development for members. One example is a newly established virtual learning community of practice within the AmeriCorps network. One such community of practice has already begun to examine effective program models that achieve community impact in reading and education. Additionally, a rich database of material for program practices is available to current programs through an online portal, Encorps, and the White House supported online National Service Knowledge Network.

While these strategic priorities may reflect the fact that resources were allocated towards monitoring participant civic development in the previous decade, they leave open the possibility for programs shifting focus towards the development of higher barrier national service programs that necessitate higher skill level upon entry into the program. For this reason, it is important for organizations and institutions interested in the civic development of youth, and in particular of disadvantaged youth, to continue monitoring the goals, measures and strategies of the CNCS, as well as the development of other national service-type programs such as the Civic Justice Corps. It is also important to consider the value and fates of programs that have historically operated in the name of youth development and functioned largely independently of CNCS.

Senior AmeriCorps officials in Wisconsin, for example, recall the trajectory of the Fresh Start program, an early model for what is now YouthBuild (T.Devine, personal communication, May 5, 2014). In the years following the program's inception in 1970, a diversity of funding sources provided Fresh Start with the opportunity to provide wrap-around, developmentally focused support to disadvantaged youth over the course of multiple years while they engaged in service opportunities. As the focus has shifted to short-term outcomes and performance measurement, programs have become less developmental and no longer include developmental benchmarks. While delivery systems may still dedicate themselves to such support, they are frequently not reporting on it or being supported for it.

Research Gaps and Policy Opportunities

There is more research than one might imagine on the impacts of national service on young adults and, although it varies in quality, a case can be made for the benefits of engaging in service at this time of life. For some it is a logical next step after college; for those who do not go on to college, it can be a means for social incorporation, skill, and

network building. However, if national service is to provide such an “alternative institution” for vulnerable youth, it would have to provide at least some of the scaffolds (mentoring, counseling, education and training, communication, guided practice in leadership and team work) that are built into the curricular and co-curricular life of colleges.

Investing in such “member development” is challenging since national service programs are trying to achieve two goals – developing the capacities of those who serve and responding to the needs of communities. These twin goals end up posing competing priorities for funding and allocation of staff. For example, one of the critiques leveled at national service (TFA, in particular) is that the model of engaging well-meaning but inexperienced people for short term stints in service and allocating valuable resources to their repeated training is not particularly helpful to the host sites and communities. In 1999, the CNCS invested in an 8-year study of impact on members. However, in recent years its priorities for evaluation have shifted to community (rather than Corps member) impacts. Whereas there used to be performance measures for all CNCS goals (getting things done, community strengthening, member development) programs are no longer expected to assess member development. The member experience piece is no longer a part of the CNCS application and programs get higher scores on their CNCS application to the extent that they can make the case that they are already demonstrating program impact.

To advance research and policy on the potential of national service programs for the development and well-being of young adults, we make the following recommendations:

To address gaps in research:

- Add some key items about volunteering and community involvement to national data sets such as was done in the CPS supplement
- Conduct secondary analyses of the CNCS 8-year study with a particular focus on sub-groups of vulnerable youth.
- Collect basic information about member development practices from the largest national service programs with a particular focus on theories of youth development; look for consistencies across programs in how service opportunities and member development practices match up with theories

To motivate policy:

Encourage and contribute to the national conversation about service. In particular, revive the historical models emphasizing the social compact between government and citizens and the role of educational benefits to reward service (e.g., GI Bill for WW II veterans; deferred college loans for Peace Corps, etc.). N.B. Clinton invoked these and other precedents when he made the case for the AmeriCorps educational stipend – based on a reciprocal contract between the nation and those who serve that nation. National service has been promoted as an antidote to youth unemployment (Boteach, Moses, & Sagawa, 2009) and national

panel studies have shown that volunteering increases the odds of gainful employment across racial/ethnic, gender, and age groups and is especially impactful for people with low levels of education (Spera, et al., 2013).

Here we list just a few of the groups that have been contributing to the national conversation on youth civic engagement and national service:

- PACE (2010) Report (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement) learning collaborative of funders and foundations doing work in the fields of civic engagement, service learning, and democratic practice. PACE (created in 2005) to signal a broader approach to educating grantmakers about effective civic engagement strategies to strengthen democracy and communities. Their goal is to motivate interest and policy to promote service as a pathway out of poverty and into opportunity.
- AACU – National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement produced *A Crucible Moment* in 2012 at the request of Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, www.aacu.org/civiclearning/crucible.
- Commission on youth voting and civic knowledge, <http://www.civicyouth.org/about-circle/commission-on-youth-voting-civic-knowledge/>
- CIRCLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement), www.civicyouth.org
- Ready by 21
- Center for American Progress

Policy Opportunities

- Increase interest among more federal agencies (Justice, Labor, Education) in the potential of service for the development of human capital. Examples of funding from non-CNCS sources already exist (e.g., Department of Labor funding for YouthBuild and Civic Justice Corps). In July, 2013 President Obama's issued an executive order to a Task Force on the Expansion of National Service, tasking 20 different federal agencies to consider how the government could tap into national service to accomplish their mission.
- Increase number of slots in national service programs.
- Expand service programs in sectors where job prospects are growing. Some of this has been realized in the Kennedy Serve America Act (first responders, emergency preparedness, health, environment) but more emphasis is needed on career coaching and linking the skills gained in service experience with career paths

- Develop a leadership pipeline into public and non-profit sectors, linking skill development in service with these career opportunities. (N.B. The 8 year study of AC found that ethnic minorities were more likely to go into public service careers)
- Decrease disincentives to work with elected politicians and to contribute to community organizing work
- Make more explicit the connection between the Corps experience and careers in the non-profit or public sectors
- Provide more second chance programs like the Civic Justice Corps and YouthBuild
- Provide mentoring as alumni transition out of programs (YouthBuild has recently added this component)
- Pressure colleges and universities to match the educational stipends earned by Corps members. Roughly 100 colleges now match the award. Leverage the campuses in Campus Compact to get on board.
- Align civic service tuition benefits with military service tuition benefits. Veteran's movements have successfully established in-state tuition benefits in many states, even for those who live elsewhere.
- Provide more opportunities for college loan forgiveness for going into national service – expand public service loan forgiveness programs to link careers in underserved communities to service need areas; for those going into service where community need is identified (professional corps, law school legal aid). Models are developing in Pennsylvania and Michigan.
- Increase diversity in leadership because most programs serve low-income communities and leadership matters in the way that community service is framed and provided
- Reduce the barriers related to program eligibility such as drug charges or minor offenses
- Reduce restrictions about the size of the programs – increase the capacities of intermediary organizations to help with program development, member training and mentoring, and evaluation (the small organizations need support)
- Provide funding to track a random sample of alumni of the full range of national service programs. The Department of Labor's one year follow up of YouthBuild alumni is one model but a wider range of program models and their alumni is needed.

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