

5-2018

# Getting Things Done for Life: Long-term Impact of AmeriCorps Service for Diverse Groups of Members

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GETTING THINGS DONE FOR LIFE: LONG-TERM IMPACT OF AMERICORPS  
SERVICE FOR DIVERSE GROUPS OF MEMBERS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
International Family and Community Studies

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by  
Matthew D. Hudson-Flege  
May 2018

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## ABSTRACT

Each year, more than 75,000 Americans participate in a year of service with AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps members meet a variety of pressing needs in diverse communities throughout the United States in the short term, and in the long-term AmeriCorps programs seek to foster skilled, educated leaders who will remain civically engaged in their communities long after their year of service has ended. The 1999-2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study tracked approximately 2,000 AmeriCorps members, as well as a comparison group of approximately 2,000 individuals who expressed an interest in AmeriCorps but ultimately did not serve, in order to understand the long-term impact of service on volunteer members in the areas of civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education. Analyses of this study have demonstrated lasting, positive outcomes for AmeriCorps members relative to comparison group members. However, previous analyses have largely examined outcomes for AmeriCorps members as a whole, leaving important unanswered questions about how AmeriCorps service impacts diverse groups of members.

Using the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model as a framework, this dissertation identified distinct member profiles within a sample of 1,424 AmeriCorps members and 1,216 comparison group members from the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, and examined how outcome trajectories differed among these groups over time. Four distinct participant profiles were identified: *Young Idealists* (recent high school graduates with high public service motivation); *Wanderers* (19-20 year-olds with a high school diploma and possibly some college who had a low public service motivation);

*Gappers* (recent college graduates with low public service motivation); and *Public Servants* (recent college graduates with high public service motivation). Repeated measures analyses of variance revealed significant differences in outcome trajectories between these four profiles within the sample of AmeriCorps members, as well as between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within each profile.

AmeriCorps members within each profile demonstrated positive growth in civic engagement relative to comparison group members over the eight-year period, supporting the contention that AmeriCorps programs help to foster civic-minded leaders. Findings in the areas of employment, life skills, and education, however, were mixed among the profiles. AmeriCorps program leaders may therefore wish to adopt a more nuanced approach to member recruitment, retention, and support that can better account for the diversity of AmeriCorps members and ensure that more diverse members will have a positive experience and “get things done” for life. More current and comprehensive research is needed to better understand the background and motivation of AmeriCorps members and other year of service volunteers today, and to better understand the long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps and other year of service programs on individual volunteers and the communities in which they serve.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all those who participate in a year of service, and to the community members, staff, and families that support them in their endeavors. Whether you're a Young Idealist, a Wanderer, a Gapper, a Public Servant, or someone entirely different, I hope that your service is productive and brings you joy and learning, but that it also challenges you and will mark the beginning of a life-long commitment to service.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have countless people to thank for their support in completing my doctoral studies and dissertation. It would be impossible to name them all, but I will try to list a few. In chronological order, I would first like to thank my parents, David and Debbie Flege, for raising me to be the man that I am today, for setting an example of what a family should be, and for supporting my many endeavors. Next, I would like to thank my sister, Katie Flege-Friedericks, for encouraging me to join AmeriCorps\*NCCC when I was a young idealist graduating from high school in the wake of 9/11. I would also like to thank all those who I had the pleasure of working with and getting to know during my time in AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, and at St. Vincent de Paul, for inspiring me, supporting me, and giving me such hope for the future of our world.

I would like to thank my wife, Heidi, for being such an incredible partner in life. Pursuing my PhD was a daunting step, and it would not have been remotely possible without your support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Mary Beth, for joining our family and bringing a new joy and richness to my life. And to all my family and friends, thank you for your encouragement and support along the way.

Finally, I would like to thank all the faculty, staff, and students in the Department of Youth, Family, and Community Studies at Clemson University, particularly my committee members Dr. Sue Limber, Dr. Martie Thompson, Dr. Arelis Moore, and Dr. Kevin Ward. I could not have asked for a better family of teachers, mentors, and colleagues to spend the past few years with... Go Tigers!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....	1
Definitions .....	4
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	6
Organization .....	10
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
Historical Roots of AmeriCorps .....	11
Global Trends in the Year of Service .....	15
Present Status of AmeriCorps .....	20
Outcomes of AmeriCorps Service .....	24
Theoretical Framework .....	35
Conclusion .....	43
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....	44
Participants .....	44
Procedures .....	45
Measures .....	46
Analysis Methods .....	58

## Table of Contents (Continued)

	Page
4. RESULTS .....	61
Descriptive Statistics.....	61
Hypothesis 1- Participant Profiles .....	64
Demographic Differences Between Profiles.....	66
Hypothesis 2- Outcomes Among AmeriCorps Members .....	68
Demographic Differences Between AmeriCorps and Comparison Group Members.....	74
Hypotheses 3a-3d- Differential Change in Outcomes Between AmeriCorps and Comparison Group Members .....	76
Summary of Results .....	96
5. DISCUSSION .....	100
Key Findings .....	100
Policy Implications .....	115
Programmatic Implications .....	117
Limitations .....	125
Recommendations for Future Research .....	127
Conclusion .....	129
REFERENCES .....	131



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
2.1 Summary of longitudinal AmeriCorps studies .....	33
2.2 Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Individual characteristics of the volunteer .....	37
2.3 Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Host community characteristics.....	40
2.4 Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Service program elements.....	40
2.5 Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Outcomes .....	41
3.1 Civic engagement outcome measures .....	50
3.2 Employment outcome measures .....	53
3.3 Life skills outcome measures.....	55
3.4 Acceptance of responsibility for educational success.....	57
4.1 Participants' reported family pre-tax income in 1999 .....	61
4.2 Descriptive statistics of Public Service Motivation subscales and individual items.....	62
4.3 Baseline descriptive statistics of outcome measures .....	63
4.4 Grouping variable mean scores for participant profiles.....	65
4.5 Frequency distribution of race/ethnicity within AmeriCorps sample by member profile.....	67
4.6 Mean differences in family income between member profiles within the AmeriCorps sample.....	68
4.7 Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps member profiles while controlling for gender, race/ ethnicity, and income .....	69

## List of Tables (Continued)

Table	Page
4.8 Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Young Idealist profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income .....	76
4.9 Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Wanderer profile while controlling for gender and race/ethnicity, and income .....	80
4.10 Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Gapper profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income .....	83
4.11 Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Public Servant profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity and income .....	91
4.12 Summary of significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members by participant profile.....	99

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.1 A Cross-Cultural year of service theoretical model.....	36
4.1 Estimated marginal means of neighborhood obligations for AmeriCorps members .....	71
4.2 Estimated marginal means of grassroots efficacy for AmeriCorps members .....	72
4.3 Estimated marginal means of community based activism for AmeriCorps members .....	74
4.4 Estimated marginal means of grassroots efficacy for Young Idealists .....	79
4.5 Estimated marginal means of neighborhood obligations for Wanderers .....	82
4.6 Estimated marginal means of neighborhood obligations for Gappers .....	85
4.7 Estimated marginal means of grassroots efficacy for Gappers.....	86
4.8 Estimated marginal means of basic work skills for Gappers .....	87
4.9 Estimated marginal means of constructive personal behavior in groups for Gappers.....	88
4.10 Estimated marginal means of appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity for Gappers.....	89
4.11 Estimated marginal means of acceptance of responsibility for educational success for Gappers .....	90
4.12 Estimated marginal means of neighborhood obligations for Public Servants.....	93
4.13 Estimated marginal means of grassroots efficacy for Public Servants .....	94
4.14 Estimated marginal means of constructive personal behavior in groups for Public Servants .....	95
4.15 Estimated marginal means of appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity for Public Servants .....	96

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond. I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.” The AmeriCorps Pledge (Corporation for National and Community Service [CNCS], 2017a)

Each year, more than 75,000 Americans recite these words as they begin a year of service with AmeriCorps (CNCS, 2017b). AmeriCorps members serve in diverse communities throughout the United States, working in areas ranging from disaster services, to education, to environmental stewardship. But as indicated in the AmeriCorps Pledge, the goal of AmeriCorps programs extends beyond the work performed during the actual year of service. An important aim of AmeriCorps service is to foster leaders who will be civically engaged in their communities during the year of service and beyond.

AmeriCorps’ long-term mission may be especially important today, given concerns about declining civic participation in America, particularly among the Millennial generation, born after 1980. Social scientists have found that narcissism is on the rise (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), empathy is declining, and the Millennial generation is “one of the most self-concerned, competitive, confident, and individualistic cohorts in recent history.” (Konrath, O’Brien, & Hsing, 2011, p. 187). Concerns about lack of civic participation in the United States extend beyond just the Millennial generation, however. In his seminal 2001 book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam makes the case that civic participation in America is on the decline as a whole, arguing that Americans are less involved in neighborhood associations and the social fabric of our communities is

eroding. In the 2016 presidential election, only 55.7% of voting-age Americans cast a vote, placing the United States 28<sup>th</sup> out of 35 highly developed countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in voting rates in recent national elections (DeSilver, 2017).

While Millennials may vote at slightly lower rates than previous generations (Taylor and Keeter, 2010) and may express less of an interest in involvement in the public sector, Millennials do show a strong attraction to volunteering in the nonprofit sector (Ertas, 2016; Ng, Gossett, & Winter, 2016). Indeed, studies have found that Millennial volunteering rates either match those of previous generations (Taylor and Keeter, 2010), or may even exceed them (Patusky, 2010). There is certainly a difference, however, between hands-on volunteering with a nonprofit organization as a young person, and broad, long-term civic participation throughout the life course. Converting Millennial's sense of volunteerism into more comprehensive, lasting civic engagement is therefore a critical challenge for the United States, and one that AmeriCorps takes head on with its long-term mission of fostering community involvement beyond the year of service.

From 1999 to 2007, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) commissioned the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, which tracked a large group of AmeriCorps members, as well as a comparison group of individuals who expressed an interest in AmeriCorps but did not ultimately serve, in order to examine long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service in the areas of civic engagement, life skills, employment, and education (Jastrzab et al. 2007). As will be detailed in chapter 2,

analyses of these data have demonstrated lasting, positive outcomes for members in several areas, such as high sense of community and civic efficacy (Frumkin et al., 2009), increased public service motivation (Ward, 2014), and a facilitated transition to adulthood (Flanagan, Finlay, Galloway, & Kim, 2012). AmeriCorps members, however, are diverse in terms of demographics, education, and motivation to serve, and outcomes of AmeriCorps service may differ among members who join the program at varying levels of personal and professional development and with a variety of motivations to serve. However, previous analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study have largely examined outcomes for AmeriCorps members as a whole, rather than among distinct subgroups. Important questions about how the long-term impact of AmeriCorps service varies among diverse groups of members therefore remain unanswered.

Using the Cross Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model (Hudson-Flege, 2017) as a framework, this dissertation examined how civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills outcome trajectories differed among diverse groups of AmeriCorps members who participated in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study. Using baseline variables including age, education level, and public service motivation, cluster analyses were conducted in order to identify distinct profiles of AmeriCorps and comparison group members. Repeated measures analyses of variance were then conducted in order to identify significant differential changes in outcome measures over the eight-year study period.

This dissertation is significant for four reasons. First, this study extends the literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the long-term effects of AmeriCorps service on diverse groups of members. This understanding could help to inform the work of AmeriCorps program leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders as they seek to build a pipeline of diverse, civically engaged leaders through national service as they advocate for expansion of national service programs and seek to identify how AmeriCorps service benefits members in the long-term. Second, by identifying why distinct groups of AmeriCorps members are motivated to serve, and how they benefit from AmeriCorps service in the long run, this study could help to inform AmeriCorps recruitment efforts targeted to diverse audiences. Third, by identifying outcome areas where members in each distinct profile excel, and where they struggle, this study could help AmeriCorps program leaders tailor their training and ongoing support to diverse members, providing extra support for potential challenges, and leadership and development opportunities for areas of strength. Finally, this dissertation can inform future research on the long-term effects of national service by shedding light on the role that diversity plays in outcomes for volunteer members.

### **Definitions**

Distinct member profiles in the study were derived based on participants' age, education level, and public service motivation. Outcomes that were examined in the study included civic engagement, employment aptitude, life skills, and education aptitude. The following section provides definitions for these terms.

#### **Public Service Motivation**

While there have been numerous, evolving definitions of public service motivation over the past few decades (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010), Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) provide a comprehensive definition of public service motivation as a “general, altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind,” (p. 23). Within this broad context, public service motivation in the present study will be measured by indicators of participants’ civic awareness, commitment to the public interest, and attraction to public policymaking (Ward, 2014).

### **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement can be defined as “the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future,” (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 236). In the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, civic engagement is measured by indicators of participants’ sense of neighborhood obligations, grassroots efficacy, and community based activism (Jastrzab et al., 2007).

### **Employment Aptitude**

Employment aptitude outcomes in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study refers to essential skills for success in the general workplace, and is measured by indicators of basic work skills and acceptance of responsibility for job success (Jastrzab et al., 2007).

### **Life Skills**

Life skills outcomes in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study refer to participants’ ability to successfully participate in diverse groups, and are measured by indicators of appreciation for diversity, constructive group interactions, and positive personal behavior in groups (Jastrzab et al., 2007).



## **Education Aptitude**

Finally, educational aptitude in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study refers to essential skills for success in education, and is measured by indicators of acceptance of responsibility for educational success (Jastrzab et al., 2007).

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This proposed dissertation sought to answer the following questions through a secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study:

1. What are the age, education, and public service motivation profiles into which AmeriCorps and comparison group members can be grouped?
2. Among AmeriCorps members, how do civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes of AmeriCorps service differ between member profiles over the eight-year study period?
3. How do civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcome trajectories differ within each member profile between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members over the eight-year study period?

### **Hypothesis for research question 1**

Based upon a review of the raw frequencies for baseline measures of age, education, and prior service exposure in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Survey, as well as this researcher's experience serving as an AmeriCorps member and as a community partner for numerous AmeriCorps members in nonprofit organizations, it was hypothesized that participants would cluster into the following profiles:

1. *Young Idealists*- This group will consist primarily of 18-19 year olds who have recently graduated from high school, and wish to participate in a year of service before pursuing university studies or entering the workforce. Public service motivation will likely be high for this group, as they will generally be joining AmeriCorps with a strong desire to make a positive impact on the community.
2. *Wanderers*- This group will consist primarily of 19-21 year olds who have either started postsecondary education, but not yet completed a course of study, or who have limited experience in the workforce, but have not yet begun a career in earnest. Public service motivation will likely be low to moderate for members of this group, as they will generally be most interested in gaining a sense of purpose or direction through their year of service in AmeriCorps.
3. *Gappers*- This group will consist primarily of 21-25 year olds who have recently completed college and are seeking to take a gap year before entering the workforce or pursuing graduate studies. Group members may be either interested in a career unrelated to public service, or unsure of their future direction. Public service motivation will likely be low to moderate for members of this group, as they will be primarily interested in joining AmeriCorps to take a break from their career trajectory and experience an adventure.
4. *Public Servants*- This group will also consist primarily of 21-25 year olds who have recently completed college, and who seek to use their year of service as a springboard for a career in public service by building their resumes for entry level

work or graduate education. Public service motivation will likely be high for members of this group.

### **Hypothesis for research question 2**

1. Hypothesis 2- Within the treatment group of AmeriCorps members, there will be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills and education outcomes between the four groups over the eight-year study period. It is hypothesized that Wanderers will demonstrate the largest positive improvement across the four outcome areas, because they are at the beginning stages of emerging adulthood and due to their low public service motivation, AmeriCorps service will likely expose them to many new experiences. It is hypothesized that Young Idealists will demonstrate moderate, positive improvement across the four outcome areas because although they have already solidified some of their identity roles, as evidenced by high service motivation, they are still at the beginning stages of emerging adulthood. It is also hypothesized that Gappers will demonstrate moderate positive improvement across the four outcome areas, because although they are at the upper age of the period of emerging adulthood, due to their low to moderate public service motivation, AmeriCorps service will likely expose them to many new experiences. Finally, it is hypothesized that Public Servants will demonstrate only modest improvement across the four outcome areas, because they are at the upper age of the period of emerging adulthood and have already solidified much of their identity roles as evidenced by their high public service motivation.

### **Hypotheses for research question 3**

2. Hypothesis 3a- There will be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes between Young Idealists in the AmeriCorps treatment group and the comparison group over the eight-year study period, with AmeriCorps members demonstrating more positive growth than comparison group members.
3. Hypothesis 3b- There will be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes between Wanderers in the AmeriCorps treatment group and the comparison group over the eight-year study period, with AmeriCorps members demonstrating higher growth levels than comparison group members.
4. Hypothesis 3c- There will be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes between Gappers in the AmeriCorps treatment group and the comparison group over the eight-year study period, with AmeriCorps members demonstrating higher growth levels than comparison group members.
5. Hypothesis 3d- There will not be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes between Public Servants in the AmeriCorps treatment group and the comparison group over the eight-year study period.

In summary, it was hypothesized that participants in the AmeriCorps longitudinal study would cluster into four distinct member profiles based on age, education level, and

public service motivation. It was further hypothesized that there would be significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes over the course of the study period between AmeriCorps members in these four profiles. Finally, it was hypothesized that significant differential change would be observed in the outcome areas between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members in the Young Idealist, Wanderer, and Gapper profiles. However, because Public Servants in both the AmeriCorps and comparison groups are at the upper age of the period of emerging adulthood, and have already solidified their identity roles through completion of a bachelor's degree and high public service motivation, it was hypothesized that there will not be a significant differential change in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups of Public Servants.

### **Organization**

The second chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the proposed dissertation. An overview of the historical roots of AmeriCorps, global trends in the year of service, and the present status of AmeriCorps are presented. Long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service and gaps in the existing literature will be identified, and the Cross Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Framework are also discussed. The third chapter outlines the research methods, including an overview of the sample, measures, approach to analyses, and limitations. The fourth chapter presents the results of the study analyses. Finally, the fifth chapter is a discussion of the key study findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature which follows will examine the historical roots of AmeriCorps, global trends in the year of service, and the current status and design of AmeriCorps programs. An overview of existing research and gaps in the literature on long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service will be provided, and the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model will be presented.

#### **Historical Roots of AmeriCorps**

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed legislation creating the Corporation for National Service, and under its umbrella, AmeriCorps (Bass, 2013). Today, more than 75,000 AmeriCorps members serve in diverse communities throughout the United States, working in areas ranging from disaster services, to education, to environmental stewardship (CNCS, 2017b). AmeriCorps can trace its roots to three prior domestic national service programs: the Civilian Conservation Corps, Volunteers in Service to America, and the National Civilian Community Corps.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), was a hallmark program of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. By taking a walk or drive through almost any State or National Park in the country that is 75 years old or older, one is bound to see the legacy of this program first hand. Immediately after taking office, President Roosevelt instituted a series of programs under the New Deal in order to combat the Great Depression, one of which was the CCC (Bass, 2013). The CCC served as both a government "relief" program aimed at providing employment and a modest income for young, unemployed

men and their families, as well as a means to conserve the country's national and state forests (Bass, 2013). CCC members lived together in camps in forest settings, building roads and trails, constructing shelters, and planting trees in forests throughout the country.

In addition to the day-to-day work done by CCC members, the program also included citizenship and education components, with the goal of fostering active citizens who were better prepared to enter the workforce upon completion of their service. As Scott Leavitt of the U.S. Forest Service described, in the CCC "... the threatened resources of America's youth were sent to the rescue of the devastated and endangered resources of the forest. And it came to pass that in applying the remedies of regeneration to the land, the young men themselves have correspondingly and likewise benefited" (as cited in Bass, 2013, p. 40). At the same time, by bringing Americans from diverse backgrounds to live and work together in the CCC camps, members gained a new appreciation for the country within which they lived and developed skills for living in community. As one former CCC enrollee described:

Ask a CCC veteran what he got out of the experience, and invariably his first response is that he learned to "get along with other people." But this doesn't mean an appreciation of ethnic or cultural diversity; it means something much simpler: this was often their first exposure to life beyond home, farm, [and] village. 30 Farm boys, city boys, mountain boys, all worked together. I was a farm kid. I didn't know how other people lived or what other people thought about the world.

In the CCC we didn't have a choice, we had to work together and get to know each other (as cited in Bass, 2013, p. 62).

At its peak in 1935, the CCC enrolled more than 500,000 Americans per year, with more than 3 million total enrollees participating from 1933 to 1942. At the onset of WWII, however, the program was suspended due to the increasing demand for soldiers and workers in support of the war effort. Because the program had initially been presented as a work relief program, in the booming postwar economy, proponents of the program were unable to make a sufficient argument to keep the program alive solely on the merits of civic education and community building (Bass, 2013). Nevertheless, in addition to the visible reminders still in existence in parks throughout the country, the ideological legacy of civilian national service initiated by the CCC lived on in creation of AmeriCorps.

The second historical root of AmeriCorps is President Lyndon Johnson's Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program. Created in 1964 under the Economic Opportunity Act, more commonly known as the War on Poverty, VISTA engaged approximately 5,000 young Americans per year in service in impoverished communities until it was incorporated under the AmeriCorps umbrella in the early 1990s (Bass, 2013). In many ways, VISTA resembled a domestic version of the Peace Corps. Projects were proposed by local and state governments and typically involved teaching or capacity building in neighborhood organizations. In addition to this direct service work, however, VISTA members often became involved in community organizing and efforts to promote democratic participation among the poor (Bass, 2013). This aspect of VISTA,



however, was highly politicized, with the Johnson and Carter administrations promoting higher levels of community organizing within VISTA, and the Nixon, Reagan, and Bush administrations promoting a focus on direct service (Bass, 2013). Unlike the CCC, VISTA never grew to become a large, widely known program. However, it survived several decades and presidential administrations, helping to establish a more permanent role for civilian national service, and the program still continues today under the AmeriCorps umbrella.

The third important predecessor of AmeriCorps is the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). In 1992, with the Cold War at an end and anticipated military downsizing on the horizon, President George H.W. Bush created the National Civilian Community Corps, intending to create a strong alternative to military service by combining the best elements of civilian and military service (Bass, 2013). Teams of 18 to 24-year-olds were assembled in bases throughout the country to work on projects in the areas of disaster relief, environmental protection, education, and unmet human needs. Drawing on the traditions of the military, NCCC members wore uniforms, participated in physical training, and were often led by retired members of the military. Drawing on the history of the CCC, members received a modest living and educational stipend, and focused on domestic, civilian service. Unlike the CCC or the military, however, NCCC was a small program, engaging only 1,200 members per year (Bass, 2013). Nonetheless, NCCC helped create a bridge between the distant predecessor of the CCC and the modern AmeriCorps programs of today.

## **Global Trends in the Year of Service**

Taking a year out of school or early career to engage in service through a program such as VISTA or NCCC is certainly not a uniquely American idea, but also traces some of its roots to the European concept of the gap year. Until very recently, an international gap year was a rare phenomenon restricted to the wealthiest young members of powerful societies (O'Shea, 2011). An early historical example is the Grand Tour, in which wealthy English gentry in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century would travel the European Continent in search of art and culture as a rite of passage to adulthood (O'Shea, 2011). A more recent iteration of the gap year is the Hippie Trail of the 1960s and 1970s, in which mostly young, upper-middle class Europeans would travel overland to India and back, interacting with new cultures and networking with one another along the way (Snee, 2014). While available to a wider segment of the population than the Grand Tour, the Hippie Trail was still largely restricted to young Europeans of at least middle class means.

Today, however, due to improvements in transportation and communication technology, as well as the new phenomenon of the period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000), more young people in nations around the globe are able to take a gap year in general, or a year of service in particular, with nearly 300 year of service organizations working in 156 countries as of 2012 (Lyons et al., 2012). In the United Kingdom, Snee (2014) estimates that roughly 45,000 18-year-olds, or 6.6% of emerging adults in this age group, take a gap year before entering university each year, with as many as half engaging in voluntary service. In Australia, approximately one in four college students

first take a gap year (Curtis, 2014). While a lack of a uniform, comprehensive dataset makes an exact estimate impossible, many of these Australian “gappers” spend at least a portion of their year off doing domestic or international service work (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012). In the United States each year, more than 75,000 Americans participate in a year of service through AmeriCorps (CNCS, 2017b), and more than 7,000 serve in the Peace Corps (Peace Corps, 2017a), the two largest and best known year of service programs in the country. While these programs appear large in raw numbers, with an excess of 4.2 million Americans turning 18 each year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), the actual percentage of emerging adults serving in a year of service program appears to be quite small.

Although certainly more prevalent in nations such as the UK and Australia, participation in year of service programs today is not limited to only historically wealthy, developed nations. In China, Wu, Pearce, Huang, and Fan (2015) report that more than 20% of emerging adults express an interest in a gap year, although there is no data source to accurately capture the number who do so. In their qualitative review of 103 Chinese gap year blogs selected from four popular online travel communities in China, Wu et al. (2015) found that 77% of Chinese gappers reported traveling abroad, and 4% reported doing a year of service. These Chinese gappers were predominately in their 20s and early 30s who were taking a break from university studies or their early career, and the average length of their gap experience was about five months. In follow-up interviews with 12 of the gap-year blog authors, Wu et al. (2015) found that personal growth and development were significant motivating factors for taking a gap year. In the Eastern European nation

of Lithuania, Leanovicius and Ozulinciute (2014) report that while still rare, growing numbers of Lithuanian emerging adults take a gap year before beginning university studies. In qualitative interviews with 10 Lithuanian college students who had taken a gap year, the authors found that two of the participants had spent their gap year volunteering abroad.

Although scholars agree that participation in a year of service is increasing in prevalence for emerging adults in diverse nations across the globe, there is vigorous debate about whether year of service programs foster positive outcomes for volunteers and the communities in which they serve, or whether they simply serve as a fun year off for participants, often at the expense of people in developing nations. In a review of public policy polling throughout South America, Nisley (2013) found that the presence of U.S. Peace Corps volunteers was associated with improved perceptions of the United States, and in a study of governmental partnerships, Teichert (2009) cited the Peace Corps as an effective model that should be replicated by other government agencies. In a review of blogs from 39 emerging adult gap year participants from the UK who spent a year doing a mixture of volunteering and travel, Snee (2014) found that positive moral and identity development occurred during the gap year for many participants. In interviews with 29 college students in the UK who had completed a gap year with a for-profit, international service organization prior to starting college, O'shea (2011) found that participants had gained valuable civic education, a greater appreciation for community and family life, cultural understanding, and improved intellectual development and decision-making capabilities. However, he found little evidence to

suggest that gap year volunteers were making significant impacts in the communities in which they serve, and he thus argued that the gap year of service should be considered as an experiential education pedagogy, rather than an international development tool. Going a step further, Calkin (2014) and Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, and Neil (2012), claim that service-related gap years typically amounted to little more than “voluntourism,” which they argued is a continuing manifestation of the long pattern of exploitation of the global south. Finally, Curtis’ (2014) review of data from 2,514 Australian college students who had taken a gap year between 1995 and 2006 and participated in an educational longitudinal study found that gap year participants actually exhibited lower academic performance compared to those who had not taken a gap year. It is important to note that this study did not differentiate between volunteer-related gap year experiences and those exclusively for travel.

One of the most comprehensive studies of the efficacy of a year of service program other than AmeriCorps is Amin’s (2014) review of 50 years’ worth of Peace Corps annual reports, intergovernmental memorandums, and volunteer and host community correspondence in Cameroon. On the positive side, the author quoted Cameroonians who spoke fondly of the commitment of volunteers and their willingness to embrace Cameroonian culture. Volunteers were quoted about the meaningful relationships they formed with their host families and other locals, and the valuable life lessons learned during their time. However, volunteers also complained about a lack of sufficient training, particularly in tribal languages and technical skills for their projects, a feeling of isolation and lack of supervision and support from the distant Peace Corps

staff, and sometimes apathetic local counterparts. For their part, Cameroonian counterparts complained about the lack of skills of young generalist volunteers fresh out of college, stating that older volunteers and more skilled volunteers such as engineers or nurses would have been more helpful. These Cameroonian counterparts also stated a concern that the work done by volunteers could have been done better by college-educated Cameroonians who were often underemployed. The author concluded that while progress appeared to have been made in the second and third Peace Corps goals of cross-cultural understanding, the first goal of capacity building remained elusive. Amin's findings thus suggest that there may be some elements of truth to the arguments of both those who suggest that a year of service fosters positive outcomes for volunteers and the communities in which they serve, and those who suggest the year of service simply serves as a fun year off for participants, often at the expense of people in developing nations.

Before drawing conclusions about the efficacy of a gap-year of service, however, one must consider that there are a wide variety of year of service programs in existence, and the efficacy and virtues of the year of service is largely dependent upon program design. Lyons et al. (2012) cite 289 organizations, working in 156 countries, offering year of service programs, and this number has very likely grown in recent years. Some year of service programs, such as AmeriCorps, the US Peace Corps and the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, are national entities (CNCS, 2017c; Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2016; Peace Corps, 2016), while others, such as the Brethren Volunteer Service, are faith-based organizations (Brethren Volunteer Service,

2016). Some programs, such as Jesuit Volunteer Corps, are highly competitive programs that pay a modest living stipend to volunteers (Jesuit Volunteer Corps, 2016), while others, such as Global Vision International, are open to virtually any prospective volunteer who is able to pay thousands of dollars to participate in an international volunteer experience (Global Vision International, 2016).

Much of the most vocal criticism of service-related gap years tends to center around these fee-based, shorter-term programs (Calkin, 2014; Lyons et al., 2012), as opposed to well-established service organizations which are selective in choosing their volunteers, such as AmeriCorps. Furthermore, a majority of research on the efficacy of year of service programs consists of qualitative review of small samples of participants. Further studies similar to the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, with its large sample size and longitudinal, quasi-experimental design, will therefore be important to better understand the effects of diverse year of service programs.

### **Present Status of AmeriCorps**

In 1994, shortly after taking office, President Bill Clinton created the Corporation for National and Community Service. This new entity expanded and incorporated the fledgling NCCC program within the AmeriCorps umbrella, together with AmeriCorps VISTA and a variety of AmeriCorps State and National programs (Bass, 2013). While funding for AmeriCorps as a whole would be threatened in congressional budgets multiple times over the next 15 years, the program received bipartisan support and a sense of ownership from Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama, as well as congressional

leaders such as John McCain (Bass, 2013). Currently, there are approximately 75,000 members participating each year across all AmeriCorps programs (CNCS, 2017b).

AmeriCorps programs fall into three major categories: AmeriCorps\*VISTA, AmeriCorps\*NCCC, and AmeriCorps\*State and National. AmeriCorps\*VISTA continues its original tradition of engaging individual volunteers in year-long, capacity building projects at community-based nonprofit organizations aiming to alleviate poverty (CNCS, 2017d). Likewise, AmeriCorps\*NCCC also continues in its original vein, engaging 18-24 year olds in a team-based, 10-month program providing service in the areas of disaster relief, environmental stewardship, education, and unmet human needs (CNCS, 2017e). The largest of the three categories, AmeriCorps\*State and National involves hundreds of local, state, and national organizations (CNCS, 2015). Nonprofits, faith and community-based organizations, public agencies, Indian tribes, and public agencies apply for grants from AmeriCorps\*State and National to engage AmeriCorps members in year of service programs. State and National programs range from small programs engaging a handful of volunteers at one local organization, such as Vincentian Volunteers of Cincinnati (Saint Vincent de Paul, 2017), to large, national programs such as City Year, which places hundreds of members in 28 high-need school districts throughout the country (City Year, 2016). AmeriCorps members within all three categories most commonly serve full-time for approximately one year, receive a modest living stipend, and an educational award of just under \$6,000 upon completion of their year of service.



A 2015 survey commissioned by CNCS reported AmeriCorps program and demographic information for a representative sample of 1,468 AmeriCorps members from all three program categories who served in 2004, 2009, and 2012 (Cardazone et al., 2015). Among the sample, 57% had served in an AmeriCorps State and National Program, 31% had served in AmeriCorps VISTA, and 16% had served in AmeriCorps\*NCCC. Participants were asked which of several AmeriCorps Focus Areas they worked on during their year of service. The most common Focus Area reported was Education (71%), followed by Healthy Futures (18%), Capacity Building (18%), Environmental Stewardship (17%), Economic Opportunity (14%), and Disaster Services (6%).

Among the sample, 77% of AmeriCorps alumni were female and 23% were male. Just under three fourths of AmeriCorps alumni were age 25 or younger when they began service (73%), 16% were ages 26 through 35, and 11% were age 36 and over. More than three-fourths of AmeriCorps alumni in the sample were white (78%), while 13% were Black or African American, 14% were Asian, and 14% were in other racial groups. A large majority of AmeriCorps alumni (84%) reported they had a 4-year college degree or higher at the time they completed the survey, but it must be noted that survey did not ask what their highest level of education was when they began their year of service. About one-fifth of AmeriCorps alumni (22%) reported that they, or someone in their family, had received public income assistance before beginning their year of service, and 13% of AmeriCorps alumni reported that they were parents or primary caregivers during their year of service.

While there is great diversity among AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps programs, both in how they are structured and the immediate needs they seek to meet, all AmeriCorps programs share a common goal of developing members into civically engaged leaders with improved educational opportunities and work skills (CNCS, 2017b). Upon swearing-in, all AmeriCorps members take the following AmeriCorps Pledge:

I will get things done for America - to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.

(CNCS, 2017a)

As evidenced in this pledge, the goals of AmeriCorps programs extend beyond the work provided by members during their year of service. AmeriCorps seeks to produce alumni with a strong sense of civic engagement, education and employment aptitudes, and life skills, who will lead positive change in their communities as beyond the year of service.

Yet beyond the readily apparent goals of meeting pressing, immediate needs in communities and fostering leaders in the long-term, AmeriCorps programs also take on broader goals. In their early review of AmeriCorps programs, Perry, Thomson,

Tschirhart, Mesch, and Lee (1999) identified five distinct goals of AmeriCorps programs, including meeting social needs, promoting individual development of members, enhancing civic ethic, reinvigorating beauracracies, and bridging race and class in America. This breadth of objectives has at times created tension or uncertainty in the focus of AmeriCorps programs, and Perry et. Al (1999) made a call for broad research in order to determine the outcomes of AmeriCorps programs, both in the communities in which members serve, as well as on members themselves.

### **Outcomes of AmeriCorps Service**

A growing number of program evaluations and scholarly publications point to the success of AmeriCorps programs in their short-term missions for serving communities in areas ranging from education, to community development, to health. In a study of 869 first through third grade students who received tutoring services, Moss, Swartz, Obeidallah, Stewart, and Greene (2001) found that students demonstrated gains in their reading performance significantly higher than the gain expected for the typical child at their grade level, and male students also showed significant gains in positive classroom behavior. In a review of 22 AmeriCorps programs in Florida, Brower and Stokes Berry (2006) found that AmeriCorps programs were associated with an increase in community volunteers and community partnerships, and that community partners believed AmeriCorps programs positively influenced the community. In a comparative study of two community health centers, one which employed AmeriCorps members tasked with promoting Medicaid enrollment and the other which did not, Stipelman, Pariera, Pruhs, Serr, and Young (2014) found that 74% of eligible children who were patients at the

AmeriCorps-affiliated health center were enrolled in Medicaid, whereas only 26% of eligible children who were patients at the non-AmeriCorps affiliated health center were enrolled.

Beyond the immediate impact of AmeriCorps programs in the communities in which members serve, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) sought to measure the long-term impact of service in AmeriCorps programs on alumni through the 1999-2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study (Jastrzab et al., 2007). The study consisted of a treatment group of approximately 2,000 AmeriCorps members who served in either AmeriCorps State and National programs or AmeriCorps\*NCCC, as well as a comparison group of approximately 2,000 individuals who had expressed an interest in either AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps\*NCCC, but ultimately did not join. Study participants were tracked over an eight-year period starting at the beginning of their year of service. The study utilized a variety of measures to track outcomes among AmeriCorps members in the areas of civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education. A more detailed description of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study sample and procedures can be found in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

In addition to reports released by Abt Associates, which was commissioned to conduct the study (Jastrzab et al., 2007), there have been peer-reviewed publications that have used data from the study to analyze the long-term impact of AmeriCorps service on members. The following section will outline five of these studies.

### **Study 1- Frumkin et al. (2009)**

With a team of authors including the Principal Investigators of Abt Associates' report, this article can be thought of as the scholarly, peer-reviewed summary version of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study. The authors utilized survey items to develop composite measures for a variety of outcomes in the areas of civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills. The authors then assessed possible significant differential change in outcomes over the eight-year study period between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members. The authors conducted two sets of comparative analyses among participants who participated in all waves of the study: one comparing treatment and comparison group members from the AmeriCorps State and National samples (treatment  $n = 882$ , comparison  $n = 696$ ), the other comparing treatment and comparison group members from AmeriCorps\*NCCC samples (treatment  $n = 289$ , comparison  $n = 194$ ).

Among AmeriCorps State and National members, the authors found significant, positive effects of AmeriCorps service over the eight-year study period for 9 out of 12 civic engagement outcome measures tested (connection to community, community problem identification, neighborhood obligations, civic obligations, personal effectiveness of community service, personal growth through community service, local civic efficacy, grassroots efficacy, and community based activism were significant; volunteering participation, engagement in the political process, and national voting participation were non-significant). Significant, positive effects of AmeriCorps service were also found for three out of four employment outcome measures tested (basic work

skills, acceptance of responsibility for employment success, and public service employment were significant; importance of service-oriented careers was non-significant). There were no significant effects of AmeriCorps service for the education outcome measures (confidence in ability to obtain an education, acceptance of responsibility for educational success, educational progress) or the life skills outcome measures (appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity, constructive group interactions, constructive personal behavior in groups) tested among the AmeriCorps State and National samples.

Among AmeriCorps\*NCCC members, the authors found significant, positive effects of AmeriCorps service over the eight-year study period only in the area of civic engagement, where 6 out of 12 outcome measures tested were significant (connection to community, community problem identification, personal growth through community service, local civic efficacy, community based activism, and volunteering participation were significant; neighborhood obligations, civic obligations, personal effectiveness of community service, grassroots efficacy, engagement in the political process, and national voting participation were non-significant). Additionally, the authors found one significant, negative outcome associated with service in AmeriCorps\*NCCC, which was a significant decline in appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity relative to comparison group members. The decline, however, was only significant from the baseline to post-program wave of the study (one year after baseline), and there was no significant effect remaining by the follow-up wave of the study (eight years after baseline). The authors speculated that, in accordance with social identity theory, this short-term decline in

appreciation for diversity may have resulted from the formation of a strong sense of “in-group” due to AmeriCorps\*NCCC’s close-knit, team atmosphere.

Based on these findings, the authors argued that overall, AmeriCorps creates an opportunity for young people to serve their communities, and that through this experience AmeriCorps members undergo positive growth in numerous areas. The authors recommended future research to identify the impact of program design on AmeriCorps outcomes, given the difference in findings between AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps\*NCCC, where a broader range of significant, positive growth was associated with participation in AmeriCorps State and National than AmeriCorps\*NCCC. These authors also recommended future research on how the racial composition of AmeriCorps programs influence outcomes.

## **Study 2- Epstein (2009)**

Epstein (2009) utilized data from the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, as well as qualitative interviews with 30 AmeriCorps alumni, to identify salient AmeriCorps program characteristics that promote positive outcomes. In her analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study data, she found that support from mentors, strong relationships between members, focused training, leadership opportunities, projects where members feel they made a difference, and exposure to new and unique situations were associated with positive outcomes for members over the eight-year study period. Through qualitative interviews, she also found that the impact of service in AmeriCorps varied based upon the member’s background and motivation for serving. In particular,

she found that members who served as young adults tended to report bigger, more life-changing effects resulting from AmeriCorps service than older members.

Epstein used the findings of this study to argue that given the key role positive relationships appeared to play in outcomes of AmeriCorps service, AmeriCorps programs should ensure that quality staff are hired, and adequate room for relationship building and mentoring should be in place. Furthermore, she argued that while civic engagement is considered a key outcome of AmeriCorps service, in her assessment of programs, it was not typically a central component of program design, and deserved more attention. Finally, Epstein (2009) recommended that, building upon her findings from qualitative interviews, future analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study should include subgroup analyses based on demographics and motivation to serve in order to assess how AmeriCorps affects diverse members differently.

### **Study 3- Flanagan, Finlay, Gallay, & Kim (2012)**

Flanagan et al. (2012) combined a secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study with a review of data from the MacArthur Foundation's qualitative Transitions to Adulthood Study. The authors sought to identify causes of the decline in public participation among younger Americans, draw attention to the class divide in civic participation in the United States, and identify institutional interventions that can foster future civic engagement.

The MacArthur Foundation's Transitions to Adulthood Study consisted of interviews with 424 diverse Americans between the ages of 21 and 38. The study covered the contemporary process of transition to adulthood, with an emphasis on



political participation, involvement in community organizations, religious participation, and voluntary organizations. The authors' analysis of data from the study revealed that the transition to adulthood is more protracted in America today, and aside from college, there is a lack of institutional opportunities to practice and promote civic engagement. This has in effect created a class divide in citizen participation, where those who could afford college are more likely to be civically engaged than those who could not.

In their secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, the authors restricted the sample to AmeriCorps treatment and comparison members who were under age 30 during their year of service and were legally eligible to vote. They found that civic engagement outcomes were even more pronounced for AmeriCorps members in this category than the total sample, and that AmeriCorps participation demonstrated some potential for streamlined transition to adulthood and positive civic engagement outcomes for alumni.

Based upon their findings, the authors made two policy recommendations. First, because four-year college is not attainable for all Americans, the authors argued it cannot be the default transition to adulthood and sole institution to teach and foster civic engagement. They argued that additional institutions, such as AmeriCorps, are needed to facilitate this transition and foster civic engagement. Second, the authors concluded that AmeriCorps is an important institution in America today because it demonstrates potential as an alternative institution for the transition to adulthood in addition to its potential impact on civic engagement.

#### **Study 4- Ward (2014)**

Ward (2014) conducted a secondary data analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study to determine how public service motivation is cultivated and changes over time. The study sought to determine if AmeriCorps participation leads to an increase in public service motivation, and if public service motivation can be sustained in the long-term.

The author isolated 13 variables from the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study that measured the public service motivation (PSM) construct. Public service motivation variables were compared between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members at the baseline and post-program wave (one year) in order to determine the short-term impact of AmeriCorps service on public service motivation. These public service motivation levels were then compared between the two groups at the long-term follow-up wave of the study (eight years) to determine how public service motivation is sustained over time. Members of AmeriCorps\*NCCC and AmeriCorps State and National Programs were combined into a single treatment group for the analysis, as were members of the two comparison groups.

Findings of the study revealed that PSM composite levels were similar between the two groups at baseline, but increased among AmeriCorps participants during their year of service while remaining flat for the comparison group. While the difference between the two groups for the public service motivation construct as a whole did not retain significance seven years later, significant differences remained for two specific

components: civic awareness and commitment to the public interest (a third PSM component, attraction to public policy making, was non-significant).

The author discussed an impending shortage of staff in the public and nonprofit sectors due to an upcoming retirement wave among baby boomers. With its demonstrated potential for cultivating positive growth in public service motivation, the author argued that AmeriCorps could play an important role as a talent pipeline for future public and nonprofit leaders.

#### **Study 5- Ward (2013)**

In a separate study, Ward (2013) used data from the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study to determine if AmeriCorps\*NCCC members were more likely than comparison group members to get involved in relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. In the long-term follow-up survey wave (eight years) of the study, participants were asked to indicate if they had made a donation or volunteered their time to these hurricane relief efforts. The author chose to focus his analyses on AmeriCorps\*NCCC treatment and comparison group members because disaster relief is one of the key focus areas of the program. All AmeriCorps\*NCCC members receive Red Cross disaster relief trainings, and in the event that disasters occur, AmeriCorps\*NCCC teams may be pulled from their projects in order to respond.

Using logistic regression, the author found that while there was no significant difference between AmeriCorps\*NCCC members and comparison group members in donating money to the hurricane relief efforts, AmeriCorps\*NCCC members were significantly more likely to give their time to hurricane relief volunteer efforts. In

follow-up analyses, the author found that, consistent with prior literature, age and income were better predictors of donating money to the hurricane relief efforts than AmeriCorps service, with older and more prosperous study participants more likely to donate, regardless of whether they had served in AmeriCorps. The author argued that, while AmeriCorps service may not affect an individual's ability to donate money in the future, the increased likelihood of volunteering found in the study suggests that service in AmeriCorps may instill a sense of civic duty and promote civic engagement.

### Summary of Key Longitudinal Evaluations

The methodology, objectives, and key findings of the five studies outlined above are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

<i>Summary of longitudinal AmeriCorps studies</i>	
<i>Study 1- Frumkin et al. (2009) Inside National Service: AmeriCorps' Impact on Participants</i>	
Methodology and Objectives	Primary peer-reviewed article base on the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, an 8-year longitudinal study of approximately 4,000 AmeriCorps and comparison group members that assessed long-term outcomes in Civic Engagement, Education, Employment, and Life Skills.
Key Findings	AmeriCorps members reported significant, long-term, positive change in the areas of connection to community, community problem identification, neighborhood obligations, civic obligations, personal effectiveness of community service, personal growth through community service, local civic efficacy, grassroots efficacy, community based activism, and volunteer participation.
<i>Study 2- Epstein (2009) Evaluating the Long-Term Impacts of AmeriCorps Service on Participants</i>	

Methodology and Objectives	Secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, combined with qualitative interviews, to determine which AmeriCorps program characteristics lead to positive outcomes.
Key Findings	Salient program design characteristics include mentors, strong relationships, focused training, leadership opportunities, projects where members feel they made a difference, and exposure to new and unique situations. AmeriCorps service has the most profound impact on emerging adults.
<hr/> Study 3- Flanagan et al. (2012) <i>Political Incorporation and the Protracted Transition to Adulthood: The Need for New Institutional Inventions</i> <hr/>	
Methodology and Objectives	Secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study and the Transitions to Adulthood Study to identify the causes of decreased civic participation and identify alternative institutions to foster the transition to adulthood and foster civic engagement.
Key Findings	The transition to adulthood is more protracted in America today, and four-year college is the default institution marking this transition and fostering civic engagement, leading to a class divide in citizen participation. AmeriCorps demonstrates evidence of streamlining the transition to adulthood and fostering civic engagement.
<hr/> Study 4- Ward (2014) <i>Cultivating Public Service Motivation through AmeriCorps Service: A Longitudinal Study</i> <hr/>	
Methodology and Objectives	Secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study to determine if AmeriCorps participation increases Public Service Motivation (PSM), and if PSM is sustained over time.
Key Findings	AmeriCorps participants demonstrated an increase in PSM during their year of service, and some aspects of PSM were sustained in the long-term. Among the comparison group, PSM slightly decreased during the transition from young adulthood to adulthood.
<hr/> Study 5- Ward (2014) <i>Does service beget service? Examining the impact of participation in AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps on disaster relief activity later in life</i> <hr/>	
Methodology and Objectives	Secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study to determine if former AmeriCorps*NCCC members were more likely to be involved in disaster relief than comparison group members later in life.

Key Findings	AmeriCorps*NCCC members were more likely to volunteer in response to hurricanes Rita and Katrina than comparison group members, but were not more likely to donate. Age and income were significant predictors of donating to hurricane relief efforts.
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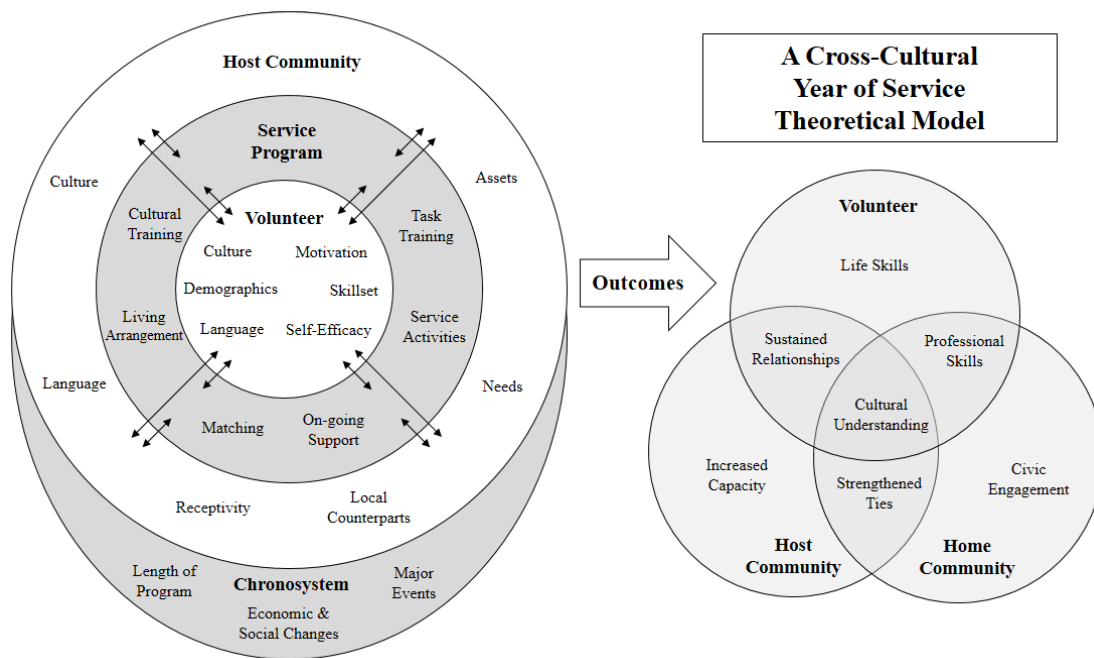
Taken together, these analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study have identified numerous positive, long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service. However, it must be noted that, with the exception of Epstein's (2009) qualitative interviews, Flanagan et al.'s (2012) comparison between members under and over 30, and Ward's (2013) inclusion of age and income as long-term predictors, the bulk of these analyses have considered outcomes for AmeriCorps members as one homogenous group. However, members of AmeriCorps are diverse in terms of age, education, and motivation to serve, and existing analyses have not yet examined the impact of AmeriCorps service across these diverse groups. Epstein (2009) recommended that, "with the existing longitudinal data set, additional research could include sub-group analyses by socio-economic status, education, age, motivation to join, etc." (p. 102). Sub-group analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the impact of service on diverse groups of participants, and could inform AmeriCorps recruitment and member satisfaction efforts.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This dissertation used the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model (Hudson-Flege, 2017) as a theoretical framework. The model outlined in Figure 2.1 draws upon three foundational theories: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging

adulthood, and Cone and Harris' (1996) lens model of service learning. Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical model contends that a year of service consists of interconnected levels including the individual volunteer, the year of service program (in this case, AmeriCorps), the community in which the volunteer serves, and changes over time. The model suggests that the volunteer enters the year of service having been influenced in several important ways by their previous environment, and that during the year of service, the volunteer enters a new environment with differing systems at the micro (volunteer), meso (service program), and exo-levels (host community).

Figure 2.1. *A Cross-Cultural year of service theoretical model*



It is important to note that in Bronfenbrenner's model, there is a two-way influence between the individual and their environment. It should be expected, then, that in a cross-cultural year of service, the volunteer has an impact on their host-community,

and that the community, in turn, has an impact on the volunteer. At the conclusion of the year of service, assuming that the volunteer returns to their home culture, the ecological model comes into play yet again as the volunteer influences their home community based upon the changes undergone and lessons learning during their year of service, and the home community has new impacts upon the volunteer as the re-integrate.

At the level of the individual volunteer, the model draws upon Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, which posits that in developed nations, as well as upper-income groups in developing nations, a distinct period known as emerging adulthood has been recognized for people in the approximate ages of 18-25, during which emerging adults explore and solidify their identity in the areas of love, work, and worldviews before settling into the more permanent roles and responsibilities of adulthood. While older adults, such as mid-career professionals or retirees, may participate in a year of service through many AmeriCorps programs, and are often some of the most successful members, the vast majority of year of service participants fall in age ranges of emerging adulthood (Cardazone et al., 2015; Jastrzab et al., 2007). The theory of emerging adulthood thus provides a helpful frame of reference for examining members' motivations to serve, and the impacts of service later in life.

The final theoretical framework influencing the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model is Cone and Harris' (1996) lens model for service-learning. While distinct from a year of service program such as AmeriCorps because they are typically shorter, part-time service experiences with an explicit educational focus, service-learning is similar to the subject of the present study in that it engages young people in service



with the goal of creating lasting change for the student volunteer. The Cross-Cultural Year of Service Model contends that a year of service will lead to internalized changes experienced by the volunteer, translating into long-term outcomes that affect both the volunteer and their community.

In this proposed dissertation, the programmatic level of interest from the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model is the individual AmeriCorps member. Individual characteristics in the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

*Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Individual characteristics of the volunteer*

Demographics	Age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and other demographic factors of the volunteer
Motivation	Motivation for participating in a year of service, which may consist of some combination of desire to help others, sense of adventure, career exploration, search for meaning, or delaying further studies or entry into the workforce
Self-efficacy	The volunteer's sense of confidence to identify needs and implement projects, or conversely their need for strong guidance and direction
Skill set	The technical skills of the volunteer (engineer, nurse, teacher, etc.), as well as "soft skills" such as emotional intelligence and relationship building
Language	The language(s) that a volunteer speaks, as well as the volunteer's capacity to learn a new language or dialect
Culture	The volunteer's cultural background, their cultural competency in identifying and adapting to cultural differences, and their level of cultural humility

Individual constructs from the model measured at baseline of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study include demographics and motivation. Within the model, demographics are defined as "age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and

other demographic factors of the volunteer,” and motivation is defined as the volunteer’s “motivation for participating in a year of service, which may consist of some combination of desire to help others, sense of adventure, career exploration, search for meaning, or delaying further studies or entry into the workforce,” (Hudson-Flege, 2017). In the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, demographic measures at baseline included age, gender, race and ethnicity, and family income, and motivation measures included three scales of public service motivation.

Characteristics of the host-community and service program elements included in the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model are outlined in Table 2.3 and Table 2.4. Underlying each of these layers is the chronosystem, or changes over time, consisting of the length of the service program, economic and social changes, and major events. Regarding the length of the service program, the impact of the year of service will likely be greater on both the volunteer and the community for longer programs, and the nature of interactions will change over the course of the program. Over time, the year of service program must also adapt to changing economic and social realities, which may impact the supply and qualifications of interested volunteers, as well as the needs to be addressed within communities. Finally, major events can have a profound impact on year of service programs. As an example, the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks resulted in a significant expansion of AmeriCorps as a result of increased patriotism and sense of civic responsibility (Bass, 2013), yet at the same time led to challenges for the Peace Corps in numerous countries in response to global perceptions of the resulting Global War on Terror.

Table 2.3

<i>Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Host community characteristics</i>	
Assets	Strengths of the community, including both human and physical capital, which can aid in development efforts
Needs	Needs within the community, some of which may be directly addressed by the work of the volunteer, others which fall outside the direct scope of the volunteer's work
Language	Language(s) and specific dialect(s) spoken in the community
Culture	Customs, beliefs, and traditions of the host community
Local Counterparts	Individuals who serve as cultural, personal, and professional liaisons between the volunteer and host community
Receptivity	Host community's openness to work with a year of service volunteer, which may be particularly impacted by experiences with past volunteers or the organization and culture the volunteer represents.

Table 2.4

<i>Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Service program elements</i>	
Matching	The program's volunteer recruitment and screening process, as well as the process for placing volunteers in projects and communities that match their skill sets
Task training	Training in the skills, both technical and "soft skills," which the volunteer will need to complete assigned projects
Cultural training	Training in the customs, beliefs, and traditions of the host community, as well as training in general cultural competency
Service activities	The specific projects to which the volunteer is assigned or identifies after being placed in the community
Living arrangement	Living situation of the volunteer which may include a host family, communal living with other volunteers, independent living arrangement, or in the case of a local program, continuing to live with the volunteer's own family
On-going support	Mentorship, continued training, counseling and other support over the course of the year of service; preparation for life after the year of service (such as career and education counseling or cultural reintegration training); formal alumni engagement programs and intentional engagement between the volunteer and their former host community

Outcome areas from the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model are outlined in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5

*Cross-cultural year of service theoretical model: Outcomes*

<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Primary Beneficiary(s)</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Example of Research Including Outcome</u>
Life skills	Volunteer	Life skills such as cultural competency and relationship building which benefit the volunteer after the year of service	Frumkin et al., 2009; Snee, 2014
Increased capacity	Host community	Improvements to human or physical capital facilitated by the work of the volunteer in the host community	Amin, 2014; Brower et al., 2006
Civic engagement	Home community	Volunteers who are more likely to vote, volunteer, and get involved in the home community after completing a cross-cultural year of service	Flanagan et al. 2012; Frumkin et al., 2009
Professional skills	Volunteer, Home community	Language, technical, and soft skills learned either during the year of service, or through education and training made possible through educational benefits after the year of service, which serve the volunteer in their future career, and benefit the volunteer's home community	O'Shea, 2011; Frumkin et al., 2009; Ward, 2014
Sustained relationships	Volunteer, Host community	On-going relationships between the volunteer and host-family members, counterparts, and friends which may bring richness and opportunity after the year of service	Amin, 2014

Strengthened ties	Host community, home Community	Improved formal ties and relationships between individual communities or nations fostered by the work of the volunteer and the service program	Teichert, 2009
Cultural understanding	Volunteer, Host community, Home community	Improved understanding and acceptance of the cultural differences and similarities between communities and nations	Amin, 2014; Frumkin et al., 2009

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Outcomes in the model were drawn from existing research on outcomes of AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, and other year of service programs. These outcomes may primarily benefit the individual volunteer, the host community in which the volunteer serves, the volunteers' home community, or a combination of the three.

Outcomes from the model that will be examined in this dissertation include civic engagement, life skills, and professional skills of the individual volunteer. Within the model, civic engagement outcomes are defined as "volunteers who are more likely to vote, volunteer, and get involved in the community," life skills are defined as "skills such as cultural competency and relationship building," and professional skills are defined as "technical and soft skills learned either during the year of service, or through education and training made possible through educational benefits after the year of service," (Hudson-Flege, 2017).

The Cross-Cultural Year of Service Model predicts that long-term outcomes in each of these areas will vary based on the individual characteristics of the volunteer at the beginning of the year of service. Therefore, it is hypothesized that while prior analyses have shown positive outcomes for AmeriCorps members when considered as a whole, outcome trajectories will significantly differ between diverse groups of members.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, AmeriCorps draws upon a rich history of national service programs over the past decade, and engages approximately 75,000 members in service in diverse communities throughout the United States each year. While there are many types of AmeriCorps programs, and the structure and short-term goals of each program are different, all AmeriCorps programs share the long-term goal of fostering civically-engaged leaders with improved professional skills, life skills, and educational opportunities. A growing body of research has identified positive, long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service in these areas. However, previous analyses have largely considered outcomes for AmeriCorps members as a whole, and the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model contends that these outcomes will vary based on the individual characteristics of diverse AmeriCorps members. This dissertation sought to identify diverse profiles of AmeriCorps members based on age, education level, and motivation to serve, and examine how outcome trajectories differed between these groups in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### **Participants**

Data for this dissertation came from the 1999-2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, which was commissioned by the Corporation for National and Community Service and conducted by Abt Associates (Jastrzab et. al., 2007). The study used a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design, with a nationally representative sample of 2,228 AmeriCorps\*NCCC and AmeriCorps\*State and National members, as well as two comparison groups totaling 1,925 individuals who expressed an interest in AmeriCorps, but ultimately did not serve. The AmeriCorps sample consisted of first-year, full-time members who enrolled in 108 AmeriCorps programs between September 1999 and January 2000. The first comparison group was drawn from individuals who contacted AmeriCorps' toll-free information line to request information about an AmeriCorps State and National program, but who ultimately did not join a program. The second comparison group was selected from individuals who applied for entry into NCCC during recruitment for Spring of 1999 and were eligible for the program, but did not enroll because of a limited number of slots in the program or because they declined to enroll due to another opportunity outside of AmeriCorps. For the current study, the AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps\*NCCC comparison groups were combined into one general comparison group. Additionally, in this study, the sample was limited to emerging adult participants who were between the ages of 17 and 25 during the

baseline survey, thus reducing the final sample to 1,424 AmeriCorps members and 1,216 comparison group members.

### **Procedures**

All participants were surveyed via phone interviews at three points over the course of the study. The baseline survey was completed during the Fall of 1999 through Winter of 2000. AmeriCorps members were surveyed during the initial days of their enrollment, and comparison group members were surveyed three to four months after inquiring about AmeriCorps, or roughly equivalent to the time they would have enrolled in AmeriCorps. Post-program surveys were completed during late Fall 2000 through Spring 2001. For AmeriCorps members, these surveys took place at the end of their year of service, and for comparison group members, the surveys took place 12 months after the baseline survey. Finally, a follow-up survey was completed in 2007, or approximately eight years after the baseline survey and seven years after AmeriCorps members completed their year of service.

As expected given the mobile nature of emerging adult study participants, and the length of time between the baseline and follow-up surveys, the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study had fairly high attrition rates in spite of exhaustive follow-up by the researchers. Of the 2,228 AmeriCorps members who completed the baseline survey, 1,350 completed post-program and follow-up surveys (39.4% attrition rate). Of the 1,925 comparison group members who completed the baseline survey, 890 completed post-program and follow-up surveys (53.8% attrition rate). Chi-square analyses revealed that there were



significant differences in gender ( $\chi^2(1) = 13.14, p < .001$ ) and race/ethnicity ( $\chi^2(3) = 90.77, p < .001$ ) between participants who completed all four waves of the study and those who did not, and one-way analyses of variance revealed that there were also significant differences in age ( $F = 24.66, p < .001$ ) and family income ( $F = 16.65, p < .001$ ) between those who completed all four waves of the study and those who did not. Participants who completed all four waves of the study were slightly older at baseline (average age 21.6 vs. 21.3 years), had a slightly higher family income score at baseline (mean score 7.96 vs. 7.24), had a higher representation of females (76.3% vs. 70.0%), and had a lower representation of blacks (10.5% vs. 17.7%) and Hispanics (7.8% vs. 15.5%) than participants who did not complete all four waves of the study.

## Measures

### Baseline Measures

Demographic variables in the baseline survey included *age*, *gender*, *race and ethnicity*, and annual *household income* of the participant's immediate family. The *age* variable was calculated by subtracting the participant's date of birth from the date of baseline survey completion. *Gender* was measured using a single-item, with responses including "male" and "female." *Race and ethnicity* were measured using a single item, with responses including "Hispanic," "Multiracial," "American Indian/Alaskan Native," "Asian," "Black/African American," "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander," and "White." Annual *household income* for the participant's immediate family was measured by a single item at baseline asking the approximate 1998 pretax income of the participant's

household, with 14 responses ranging from “Under \$5,000” to “\$100,000 or more.” Response ranges under \$30,000 increased in \$5,000 increments, whereas response ranges above \$30,000 increased in \$10,000 increments.

Participant’s *education* at baseline was measured with a single item asking the participant to indicate the highest level of education they had completed. There were 10 response options ranging from “8<sup>th</sup> grade or less” to “Ph.D., M.D., or other professional degree.” For the purpose of this study, baseline education was collapsed into four categories including “Less than high school diploma or GED,” “High school diploma or GED,” “Some college or Associate’s degree,” and “Bachelor’s degree or higher.”

*Public service motivation* was measured in the proposed study using three public service motivation scales compiled by Ward (2014) from baseline variables in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study. The first scale measured participants’ *commitment to the public interest*. The scale consisted of five Likert-scale items, including “I have a strong attachment to my community,” “I often discuss and think about how larger political and social issues affect my community,” “I am aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in my community,” “I feel I have the ability to make a difference in my community,” and “I try to find the time to make a positive difference in my community.” Response options ranged from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Standardized scores of the five items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of commitment to the public interest. The commitment to the public interest scale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of .68 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. The second scale measured participants’ *civic awareness*. The scale consisted

of five Likert-type items asking participants how much they knew about problems facing the community including “the environment,” “public health,” “literacy,” “crime,” and “lack of civic involvement.” Response options ranged from 1 = Nothing to 5 = A great deal. Standardized scores of the five items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of civic awareness. The civic awareness scale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of .76 in the proposed study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. The third scale measured participants’ *attraction to public policymaking*. This scale consisted of three items. The first two items were Likert-type items asking participants how often they “Vote in local elections,” and “Try to learn as much as I can about candidates or ballot questions before voting.” Response options ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Always. The third item was a Likert-type item asking participants about their view of the importance of “Voting in elections.” Response options ranged from 1 = Not an important obligation to 3 = Very important obligation. Standardized scores of the three items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of attraction to public policy making. The scale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of .76 in the proposed study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. Given the unique aspects of public service motivation measured by each of these scales, the three scales were included separately in each subsequent analyses, rather than using a composite measure consisting of all three scales.

### **Civic Engagement Outcome Measures**

Civic engagement outcomes were measured by eight composite measures created for the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study including *Connection to Community*, *Community Problem Identification*, *Neighborhood Obligations*, *Civic Obligations*, *Local Civic*

*Efficacy, Grassroots Efficacy, Community-Based Activism, and Engagement in the Political Process.* The *Community Problem Identification, Connection to Community, and Engagement in the Political Process* scales were excluded from the present analyses because items from these scales were also used to construct the *public service motivation* scales. Additionally, the *Civic Obligations* and *Local Civic Efficacy* measures were excluded from the present analyses because these scales demonstrated insufficient reliability in the study sample (*Civic Obligations*  $\alpha = .46$ , *Local Civic Efficacy*  $\alpha = .56$ ). Items for the three civic engagement measures which were included in the present analyses are outlined in Table 3.1.

*Neighborhood Obligations* represented the participant's opinion about the importance of being active in the community. Participants were asked to respond to five Likert-type items, where 1 = Not important, 2 = Somewhat important, and 3 = Very important. Sample items included "Participating in neighborhood organizations," "Helping keep the neighborhood safe," and "Helping keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful." Responses to the five items were averaged, with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of the importance of neighborhood obligations. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .60 in the proposed study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

*Grassroots Efficacy* represented the participant's opinion about the feasibility of working with other neighborhood residents to meet local needs. Participants were asked to respond to three Likert-type items, where 1 = I would not be able to get this done, 2 = I might be able to get this done, and 3 = I would be able to get this done. Items included "Organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization," "Starting an after-

school program for children whose parents work,” and “Organizing an annual cleanup program for the local park.” Responses to the three items were averaged, with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of local grassroots efficacy. The scale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of .67 in the study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

Table 3.1

<i>Civic engagement outcome measures</i>	
Measure	Items
<i>Initial Statement and Scoring</i>	
Neighborhood Obligations	Reporting a crime that you may have witnessed.
<i>Do you feel that each of the following is not an important obligation [1], a somewhat important obligation [2], or a very important obligation [3] that a citizen owes to the country?</i>	Participating in neighborhood organizations (school, religious, community, recreational organizations).
	Helping to keep the neighborhood safe.
	Helping to keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful.
	Helping those who are less fortunate.
Grassroots Efficacy	Organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization.
<i>Would you say that you would... not be able to get this done [1], might be able to get this done [2], or would be able to get this done [3]?</i>	Starting an after-school program for children whose parents work.
	Organizing an annual cleanup program for the local park.
Community Based Activism	Participate in events such as community meetings, celebrations, or activities in my community.
<i>How often do you do each of the following? Would you say you do this... never [1], not very often [2], sometimes [3], very often [4], or always [5]?</i>	Join organizations that support issues that are important to me.
	Write or e-mail newspapers or organizations that voice my views.

*Community Based Activism* provided the participant's reports of the frequency with which he or she participates in community-based activities. Participants were asked to respond to three Likert-type items, where 1 = Never and 5 = Always. Items included "Participate in events such as community meetings, celebrations, or activities in my community," "Join organizations that support issues that are important to me," and "Write or e-mail newspapers or organizations that voice my views." Responses to the three items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of community based activism. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .63 in the proposed study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

Given the unique aspects of civic engagement measured by each of these scales, the three scales were included separately in each subsequent analyses, rather than using a composite measure consisting of all three scales.

### **Employment Outcome Measures**

Employment aptitude was measured by three composite measures created for the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study: *Importance of Service-Oriented Careers*, *Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment success*, and *Basic Work Skills*. The *Importance of Service-Oriented Careers* measure was excluded from the present study, however, because it demonstrated insufficient reliability in the current study sample ( $\alpha = .55$ ). Items for the two employment measures which were included in the present analyses are outlined in Table 3.2.

*Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success* represented the participant's judgment about the extent to which he or she is personally responsible for success in obtaining a job. Participants were asked to respond to five Likert-type items where 1 = Not at all true and 5 = Very true. Sample items included "There aren't enough jobs for me to get the kind of job I want," and "I don't know what it takes to get the kind of job I want." After reverse-coding responses, responses to the five items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels acceptance of responsibility for employment success. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .72 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. It should be noted that unlike the majority of outcome measures in the study, *Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success* was only measured at the baseline and post-program wave of the study, and was not measured at the follow-up wave.

*Basic Work Skills* provided the participant's report of the amount of experience he or she has had with fundamental work skills. Participants were asked to respond to 10 Likert-type items, where 1 = Little or none, 2 = Some, and 3 = A lot. Sample items included "Solving unexpected problems or finding new and better ways to do things," "Stopping or decreasing conflicts between people," and "Managing your time when you're under pressure." Responses to the 10 items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of experience with basic work skills. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .76 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. It should be noted that unlike the majority of outcome measures in the study, *Basic Work Skills* were

only measured at the baseline and post-program wave of the study, and was not measured at the follow-up wave.

Table 3.2

<i>Employment outcome measures</i>	
Measure	
<i>Initial Statement and Scoring</i>	Items
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success	There aren't enough jobs for you to get the kind of job you want. You can't get people to treat you fairly when you apply for the kind of job you want.
<i>Would you say this is not at all true for you [1], mostly not true for you [2], neither true nor untrue for you [3], mostly true for you [4], or very true for you [5]?</i>	You can't seem to try very hard to get a good job. You don't know what it takes to get the kind of job you want. If you can't get a good job, it's because people aren't fair to people like you. To get a good job you just have to try hard enough.
Basic Work Skills	Solving unexpected problems or finding new and better ways to do things.
<i>For each skill area, please indicate how much experience you have... Would you say you had... little or no experience [1], some experience [2], or a lot of experience [3] in this?</i>	Knowing how to gather and analyze information from different sources such as other people or organizations. Listening and responding to other people's suggestions or concerns. Stopping or decreasing conflicts between people. Leading a team by taking charge, explaining and motivating co-workers. Negotiating, compromising, and getting along with co-workers, supervisors. Learning new ways of thinking or acting from other people. Adapting your plans or ways of doing things in response to changing circumstances. Managing your time when you're under pressure. Dealing with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions.



Given the unique aspect of employment aptitude measured by each of these scales, the two scales were included separately in each subsequent analyses, rather than using a composite measure consisting of all three scales.

### **Life Skills Outcome Measures**

Life skills were measured by three composite measures created for the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, including *Constructive Group Interactions*, *Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups*, and *Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity*. Items for the three life skills measures are outlined in Table 3.3.

*Constructive Group Interactions* provided the participant's report of the frequency with which he or she participates in positive group behaviors. Participants were asked to respond to four Likert-type items, where 1 = Never and 5 = Always. Sample items included "You discuss issues and problems and share ideas" and "You take time to work out any conflicts." Responses to the four items were averaged, with higher scores indicating a greater frequency of constructive group interactions. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .67 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

*Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups* provided the respondent's report of the frequency with which he or she personally uses positive techniques in group settings. Participants were asked to respond to six Likert-type items, where 1 = Never and 5 = Always. Sample items included "You try to present my ideas without criticizing the ideas of others," and "You help find solutions when unexpected problems arise."

Responses to the six items were averaged, with higher scores indicating a greater frequency of constructive personal behavior in groups. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .77 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

Table 3.3

<i>Life skills outcome measures</i>	
Measure	Items
<i>Initial Statement and Scoring</i>	
Constructive Group Interactions	You discuss issues and problems and share ideas. You involve everyone and avoid favoritism.
<i>How often have you been in a group situation with others where the following things have occurred? Would you say you... never do this [1], do this not very often [2], sometimes [3], very often [4], or always [5]?</i>	You can disagree and be different from one another without fear. You take time to work out conflicts.
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	You try to understand other team members' ideas and opinions before arguing or stating your own. You try to present your ideas without criticizing the ideas of others. You encourage different points of view without worrying about agreement. You try to consider all points of view or possible options before forming an opinion or making a decision. You encourage the participation of other team members and support their right to be heard. You help find solutions when unexpected problems arise.
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	Diverse viewpoints bring creativity and energy to a work group. Multicultural teams can be stimulating and fun. People are more motivated and productive when they feel they are accepted for who they are.

<p><i>Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree [5], agree [4], neither agree nor disagree [3], disagree [2], or strongly disagree [1]?</i></p>	<p>Diversity improves the work of organizations</p> <p>You are afraid to disagree with members of other racial or ethnic groups for fear of being called prejudiced or racist.</p> <p>Diversity brings many perspectives to problem-solving.</p>
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*Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity* represented the participant's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural or ethnic background. Participants were asked to respond to six Likert-scale items, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items included "Diverse viewpoints bring creativity and energy to a work group" and "I am comfortable interacting with people from a different racial or ethnic background." Responses to the six items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .81 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability.

Given the unique aspect of basic life skills measured by each of these scales, the three scales were included separately in each subsequent analyses, rather than using a composite measure consisting of all three scales.

### **Education Outcome Measures**

Educational aptitude was measured by two composite measures created for the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, including *Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education* and *Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success*. The *Confidence in Ability to*

*Obtain an Education* measure was excluded from the proposed analyses, however, because it demonstrated insufficient reliability in the current study sample ( $\alpha = .54$ .)

*Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success* represented the participant's judgment about the extent to which he or she is responsible for academic achievements. Participants were asked to respond to four Likert-scale items, where 1=Strongly disagree and 5=Strongly agree. Sample items included "If I don't finish my education, it's because I didn't have the chances others had," and "I can't figure out what it takes to finish my education." After reverse-scoring the items, responses to the four items were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of acceptance of responsibility for educational success. The scale generated a Cronbach's alpha of .69 in the current study sample, indicating sufficient reliability. Items in the measure are outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

<i>Acceptance of responsibility for educational success</i>	
<i>Initial Statement and Scoring</i>	<i>Items</i>
<i>Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree [5], agree [4], neither agree nor disagree [3], disagree [2], or strongly disagree [5]?</i>	<p>If you don't finish your education, it is because you didn't have the chances others did.</p> <p>To get the education you need, you have to be lucky.</p> <p>When you have trouble with schoolwork, it's because teachers or other education staff don't like you.</p> <p>You can't figure out what it takes to finish your education.</p>

It should be noted that unlike the majority of outcome measures in the study, *Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success* was only measured at the baseline and post-program wave of the study, and was not measured at the follow-up wave.

## **Analysis Methods**

### **Data Preparation**

Cronbach's alphas were generated for each composite measure to ensure sufficient reliability before computing scale variables. Composite measures which demonstrated insufficient reliability were excluded from analyses. Descriptive statistics were run for composite measures to assess for skew, and skewed variables were appropriately transformed as described in the results section.

### **Testing Hypothesis 1**

In order to test Hypothesis 1, that participants in the sample can be grouped into four distinct profiles, a k-means cluster analysis with a four-level solution was conducted within the full sample, including both AmeriCorps and comparison group members. Age, highest level of education, and the three public service motivation scales (*commitment to the public interest, civic awareness, and attraction to public policy making*) were entered into the model as grouping variables. Discriminant function analysis was used to validate the cluster model, ensuring that each grouping variable significantly contributed to the discriminant functions, and a sufficient percentage of cases were grouped correctly.

Chi-square analyses were then conducted to assess for significant differences in race/ethnicity and gender between the four cluster groups, and one-way analysis of variance was conducted to assess for significant differences in household income between the four cluster groups. Demographic variables demonstrating significant differences were then controlled for in later analyses, as appropriate.

### **Testing Hypothesis 2**

In order to test Hypothesis 2, that there was significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes between member profiles in the AmeriCorps treatment group across the four waves of the study, a series of repeated measures analyses of variance were conducted for each outcome. Prior to running the analyses, the dataset was filtered to include only AmeriCorps members. The new member profile variable (created by the cluster analysis used to test Hypothesis 1) served as the between-groups factor, and the mean scores of one civic engagement, employment, life skills, or education measure over the three waves of the study served as the within-groups factor in each model. Models with significant differential change in the outcome measure were plotted on a line graph to demonstrate the nature of the outcome trajectory for each member profile.

### **Testing Hypotheses 3a-3d**

In order to test Hypotheses 3a-3d, that there was significant differential change in civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education outcomes within each member profile between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members, four series of

repeated measures analyses of variance were conducted for each outcome measure. For each series of analyses, the dataset was filtered to include only one member profile (*Young Idealists*, *Wanderers*, *Gappers*, or *Public Servants*), but both AmeriCorps members and comparison group members. Treatment group (AmeriCorps vs. comparison) served as the between-subjects factor, and mean scores of one civic engagement, employment, life skills, or education outcome measure over the three waves of the study served as the within-groups factors. Models with significant differential change in the outcome measure were plotted on a line graph to demonstrate the nature of the outcome trajectory for AmeriCorps members and comparison group members within each member profile.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Descriptive Statistics

The average age of participants in the sample at baseline was 21.44 years ( $SD = 2.02$ ). Nearly three-fourths of participants were females (73.1%;  $n = 1,931$ ), while 26.9% were males ( $n = 709$ ). Just over one-third of participants reported having a bachelor's degree or higher (35.2%;  $n = 926$ ), 36.9% reported some post high school education ( $n = 972$ ), 22.6% reported having a high school diploma or GED ( $n = 596$ ), and 5.2% reported having less than a high school diploma ( $n = 138$ ). Nearly two-thirds of the sample were white (64.4%;  $n = 1,686$ ), 14.1% were black ( $n = 370$ ), 11.7% were Hispanic ( $n = 306$ ), and 9.8% were another race ( $n = 255$ ). The frequency distribution of participants' family income is reported in Table 4.1. When treated as a continuous variable, with scores ranging from 1 to 14 where higher scores represent a higher family income, the mean household income score in the sample was 7.62 ( $SD = 3.87$ ), roughly corresponding to the \$40,000 - < \$50,000 annual income level.

Table 4.1

*Participants' reported family pre-tax income in 1999*

Income Category	<i>n</i>	%	Income Category	<i>n</i>	%
Under \$5,000	98	5.0	\$40,000 - < \$50,000	171	8.7
\$5,000 - < \$10,000	155	7.9	\$50,000 - < \$60,000	191	9.7
\$10,000 - < \$15,000	122	6.2	\$60,000 - < \$70,000	145	7.4
\$15,000 - < \$20,000	119	6.1	\$70,000 - < \$80,000	117	6.0
\$20,000 - < \$25,000	113	5.8	\$80,000 - < \$90,000	74	3.8
\$25,000 - < \$30,000	129	6.6	\$90,000 - < \$100,000	71	3.6
\$30,000 - < \$40,000	240	12.2	\$100,000 or more	215	11.0



Descriptive statistics of the three Public Service Motivation subscales measured at baseline are reported in Table 4.2. It should be noted that standardized scores were used to create the subscales, thus the mean score for each measure equals zero. Descriptive statistics of the individual items used to construct the scales are therefore also presented in the table for illustrative purposes. As demonstrated in the table, none of the composite Public Service Motivation measures demonstrated excessive skewness.

Table 4.2

*Descriptive statistics of Public Service Motivation subscales and individual items*

Subscale/Individual Item	Mean	SD	Range	Min.	Max.	Skew
Civic Awareness	0.00	0.71	4.00	-2.47	1.53	-0.23
Knowledge about the Environment	3.69	0.95	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.39
Knowledge about Public Health	3.41	0.98	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.22
Knowledge about Literacy	3.36	1.05	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.22
Knowledge about Crime	3.65	0.96	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.27
Knowledge about Civic Engagement	3.18	1.09	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.10
Commitment to the Public Interest	0.00	0.66	3.96	-2.68	1.28	-0.42
I find the time to make a positive difference in my community	3.82	0.85	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.65
I have the ability to make a difference in my community	4.20	0.70	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.83
I have a strong attachment to my community	3.58	0.90	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.41
I am aware of what can be done to meet community needs	3.74	0.82	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.63
Participating in neighborhood organizations is important	2.60	0.54	2.00	1.00	3.00	-0.89
Attraction to Public Policymaking	0.00	0.82	3.45	-2.24	1.21	-0.61

I vote in local elections	3.17	1.51	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.20
I try to learn about candidates or ballot questions before voting	3.39	1.33	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.46
Voting in elections is important	2.67	0.55	2.00	1.00	3.00	-1.39

Descriptive statistics of outcome measures at baseline are reported in Table 4.3. As illustrated in the table, the Civic Engagement, Grassroots Efficacy, Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success measures demonstrated moderate, negative skewness. Reflect and square root transformations were performed for each of these measures, and while the transformations slightly reduced the level of skewness, each item remained negatively skewed. The original version of each measure was therefore used in subsequent analyses in order to maintain consistent scoring scales with other outcomes in the study.

Table 4.3

<i>Baseline descriptive statistics of outcome measures</i>							
Category	Outcome	Mean	SD	Range	Min.	Max.	Skew
Civic Engagement	Neighborhood Obligations	2.78	0.27	2.00	1.00	3.00	-1.66
	Grassroots Efficacy	2.70	0.40	2.00	1.00	3.00	-1.47
	Community Based Activism	2.71	0.73	4.00	1.00	5.00	0.11
Employment Aptitude	Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success	4.27	0.68	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.99
	Basic Work Skills	2.45	0.32	1.90	1.10	3.00	-0.53

Life Skills	Constructive Group Interactions	3.98	0.57	4.00	1.00	5.00	-0.29
	Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	4.10	0.54	3.00	2.00	5.00	-0.32
	Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	4.48	0.41	2.64	2.36	5.00	-0.84
Educational Aptitude	Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success	4.34	0.62	4.00	1.00	5.00	-1.00

### Hypothesis 1- Participant Profiles

A k-means cluster analysis with a four-level solution was conducted using age, education level, and the three public service motivation subscales (Commitment to the Public Interest, Civic Awareness, and Attraction to Public Policymaking) as grouping variables. The cluster analysis generated four profiles, which were named by the researcher consistent with the names proposed in Hypothesis 1. The Young Idealist profile contained 423 participants (AmeriCorps  $n = 220$ ; comparison group  $n = 203$ ), the Wanderer profile contained 471 participants (AmeriCorps  $n = 297$ ; comparison group  $n = 174$ ), the Gapper profile contained 818 participants (AmeriCorps  $n = 471$ ; comparison group  $n = 347$ ), and the Public Servant profile contained 912 participants (420 AmeriCorps  $n = 420$ ; comparison group  $n = 492$ ).

Discriminant function analysis was then conducted in order to validate the cluster analysis. Wilks' Lambda tests of equality of group means indicated that each variable

significantly contributed to the cluster model (Age  $\lambda = .65, p < .001$ ; Education  $\lambda = .32, p < .001$ ; Commitment to the Public Interest  $\lambda = .77, p < .001$ ; Civic Awareness  $\lambda = .72, p < .001$ ; Attraction to Public Policymaking  $\lambda = .43, p < .001$ ), and the canonical discriminant function model correctly classified 96.5% of cases. Mean scores for each of the grouping variables by participant profile, are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

*Grouping variable mean scores for participant profiles*

	Age	Education	Commitment to Public Interest	Civic Awareness	Attraction to Public Policy making
Young Idealists	19.73	1.80	0.19	0.24	0.35
Wanderers	19.85	2.23	-0.26	-0.29	-1.17
Gappers	22.53	3.67	-0.35	-0.42	-0.15
Public Servants	22.10	3.41	0.36	0.42	0.58

As illustrated in the table, Young Idealists were younger members with a high school diploma and relatively high levels of public service motivation compared to the other profiles. Wanderers were also younger members who may have had some post-high school education, but had low levels of public service motivation relative to other profiles, particularly in the area of attraction to public policy making. Gappers were older members with at least some college or a bachelor's degree, and had low levels of public service motivation relative to other profiles. Finally, Public Servants were also older members with at least some college or a bachelor's degree, but had high levels of public service motivation compared to other profiles.

### **Demographic Differences between Profiles**

Prior to testing Hypothesis 2, that within the sample of AmeriCorps members there would be significant differential change in outcomes between the four member profiles, comparative analyses were conducted in a sample restricted to AmeriCorps members only in order to determine if there were significant differences in gender, race/ethnicity, and family income between the four member profiles. Chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency distribution of gender by participant profile,  $\chi^2(3) = 27.04, p < .001$ . Compared to the sample of AmeriCorps members as a whole (female  $n = 964$ ; 68.5%), females had higher representation in the Public Servant profile (female  $n = 31$ ; 75.0%), similar representation in the Gapper profile (female  $n = 327$ , 69.4%), and lower representation in the Young Idealist (female  $n = 141$ ; 64.1%) and Wanderer (female  $n = 181$ ; 60.9%) profiles. Given this significant difference, gender was controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcome trajectories between member profiles.

Chi-square analysis also revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency distribution of race/ethnicity by participant profile,  $\chi^2(9) = 154.11, p < .001$ . Race/ethnicity frequency distribution within the AmeriCorps sample by member profile is presented in Table 4.5. As illustrated by the table, the racial composition of the Public Servant profile was very similar to the sample of AmeriCorps members as a whole. The Young Idealist and Wanderer profiles had a higher representation of black and Hispanic participants than the AmeriCorps sample as a whole. Finally, the Gapper profile had a higher representation of white participants than the AmeriCorps sample as a whole.

Given this significant difference, race/ethnicity were controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcome trajectories between member profiles through the inclusion of three dummy-coded variables for black, Hispanic, and other race/ethnicity, with white as the reference category.

Table 4.5

*Frequency distribution of race/ethnicity within AmeriCorps sample by member profile*

	Black <i>n</i> (% of profile)	Hispanic <i>n</i> (% of profile)	Other <i>n</i> (% of profile)	White <i>n</i> (% of profile)
Young Idealist	47 (21.7%)	55 (25.3%)	24 (11.1%)	91 (41.9%)
Wanderer	68 (23.1%)	63 (21.4%)	23 (7.8%)	141 (47.8%)
Gapper	28 (6.0%)	24 (5.1%)	41 (8.7%)	376 (80.2%)
Public Servant	70 (16.7%)	52 (12.4%)	35 (8.4%)	261 (62.4%)
Total Sample	213 (15.2%)	194 (13.9%)	123 (8.8%)	869 (62.1%)

Finally, one-way analysis of variance revealed that there was a significant difference in family income between the four participant profiles,  $F(3, 855) = 23.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .08$ . Results of Bonferroni post-hoc tests are presented in Table 4.6, and show that the Young Idealists and Wanderers had significantly lower mean family income scores than Public Servants and Gappers, and Gappers had significantly higher mean family income scores than all other groups. Given this significant difference, income was controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcomes between participant profiles.

Table 4.6

*Mean differences in family income between member profiles within the AmeriCorps sample*

Member Profile	vs.	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Young Idealist	Wanderer	-0.15	0.45	-1.33	1.04
	Gapper	-2.75***	0.40	-3.81	-1.69
	Public Servant	-1.44**	0.41	-2.51	-0.36
Wanderer	Young Idealist	0.15	0.45	-1.04	1.33
	Gapper	-2.60***	0.38	-3.59	-1.61
	Public Servant	-1.29**	0.38	-2.30	-0.28
Gapper	Young Idealist	2.75***	0.40	1.69	3.81
	Wanderer	2.60***	0.38	1.61	3.59
	Public Servant	1.31***	0.33	0.28	2.17
Public Servant	Young Idealist	1.44**	0.41	0.36	2.51
	Wanderer	1.29**	0.38	0.28	2.30
	Gapper	-1.31***	0.33	-2.17	-0.28

Notes: \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### **Hypothesis 2- Outcomes Among AmeriCorps Members**

In order to test Hypothesis 2, that within the sample of AmeriCorps members there would be significant differential change in outcomes between the four member profiles, the sample was restricted to AmeriCorps members only. A series of repeated measures analyses of variance were then conducted, with each model containing one outcome measure, assessed at each wave of the study, as the within-groups factor, member profile as the between-subjects factor, and gender, dummy-coded race/ethnicity variables, and income as covariates. It must be noted that for most models, the outcome was measured at all three waves of the study: baseline; post-program (end of the year of

service); and follow-up (seven years after the conclusion of the year of service). The exceptions were Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, Basic Work Skills, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success, which were only measured at the baseline and post-program waves in the study. Multivariate test results for each model are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

*Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps member profiles while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income*

Outcome Category/Measure	Interaction	Wilks' $\lambda$	$F$	$df$	$\eta^2p$
<b>Civic Engagement</b>					
Neighborhood Obligations	Member Profile	0.96	3.44**	6/964	.02
	Gender	1.00	0.59	2/482	.00
	Race: Black	0.99	2.27	2/482	.01
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.40	2/482	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.05	2/482	.00
	Income	1.00	1.14	2/482	.01
Grassroots Efficacy	Member Profile	0.96	3.28**	6/964	.02
	Gender	1.00	0.22	2/482	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.06	2/482	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.81	2/482	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.51	2/482	.00
	Income	1.00	0.01	2/482	.00
Community Based Activism	Member Profile	0.94	5.00***	6/968	.03
	Gender	1.00	0.01	2/484	.00
	Race: Black	0.99	1.84	2/484	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.66	2/484	.00
	Race: Other	0.99	2.37	2/484	.01
	Income	1.00	1.19	2/484	.01
<b>Employment Aptitude</b>					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success <sup>1</sup>	Member Profile	1.00	0.17	3/728	.00
	Gender	1.00	0.03	1/728	.00
	Race: Black	0.99	4.79*	1/728	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.02	1/728	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.48	1/728	.00
	Income	0.99	10.68**	1/728	.01
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>	Member Profile	0.99	2.43	3/723	.01



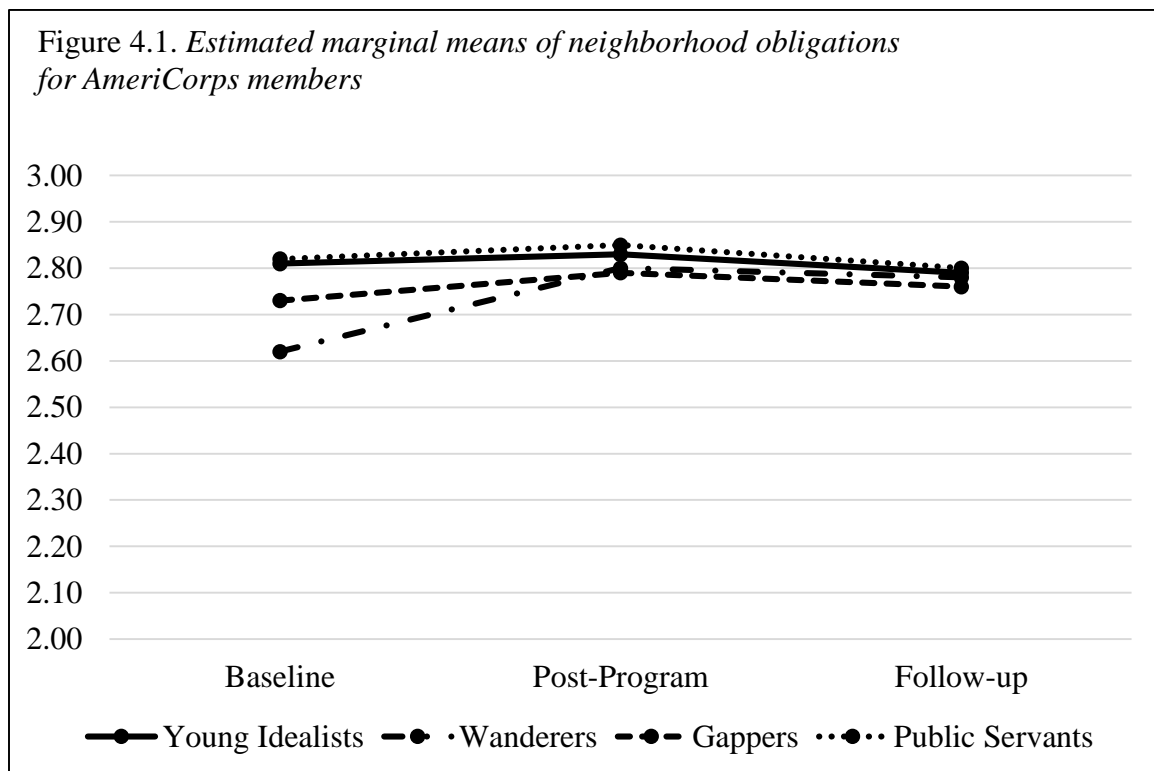
	Gender	0.99	8.71**	1/723	.01
	Race: Black	0.99	9.14**	1/723	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.13	1/723	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.00	1/723	.00
	Income	0.99	4.28*	1/723	.01
<hr/>					
Life Skills					
Constructive Group Interactions	Member Profile	0.98	1.41	6/968	.01
	Gender	1.00	1.00	2/484	.00
	Race: Black	0.97	7.74***	2/484	.03
	Race: Hispanic	0.98	6.24**	2/484	.03
	Race: Other	0.98	4.43*	2/484	.02
<hr/>					
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	Member Profile	0.98	1.98	6/968	.01
	Gender	0.99	3.31*	2/484	.01
	Race: Black	0.98	5.77**	2/484	.02
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.12	2/484	.00
	Race: Other	0.99	1.81	2/484	.01
	Income	1.00	0.81	2/484	.00
<hr/>					
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	Member Profile	0.98	1.83	6/972	.01
	Gender	1.00	1.27	2/486	.01
	Race: Black	0.98	3.88*	2/486	.02
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.17	2/486	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.00	2/486	.00
	Income	1.00	0.11	2/486	.00
<hr/>					
Education Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success <sup>1</sup>	Member Profile	0.99	2.08	3/729	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.68	1/729	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.29	1/729	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	3.31	1/729	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.30	1/729	.00
	Income	1.00	0.07	1/729	.00

*Notes:* \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>1</sup>measured at baseline and post-program study waves only

As illustrated in the table, significant between by within subjects interactions indicated there was significant differential change between member profiles for the three civic engagement measures: Neighborhood Obligations, Grassroots Efficacy, and Community Based Activism. None of the covariates in these three models were

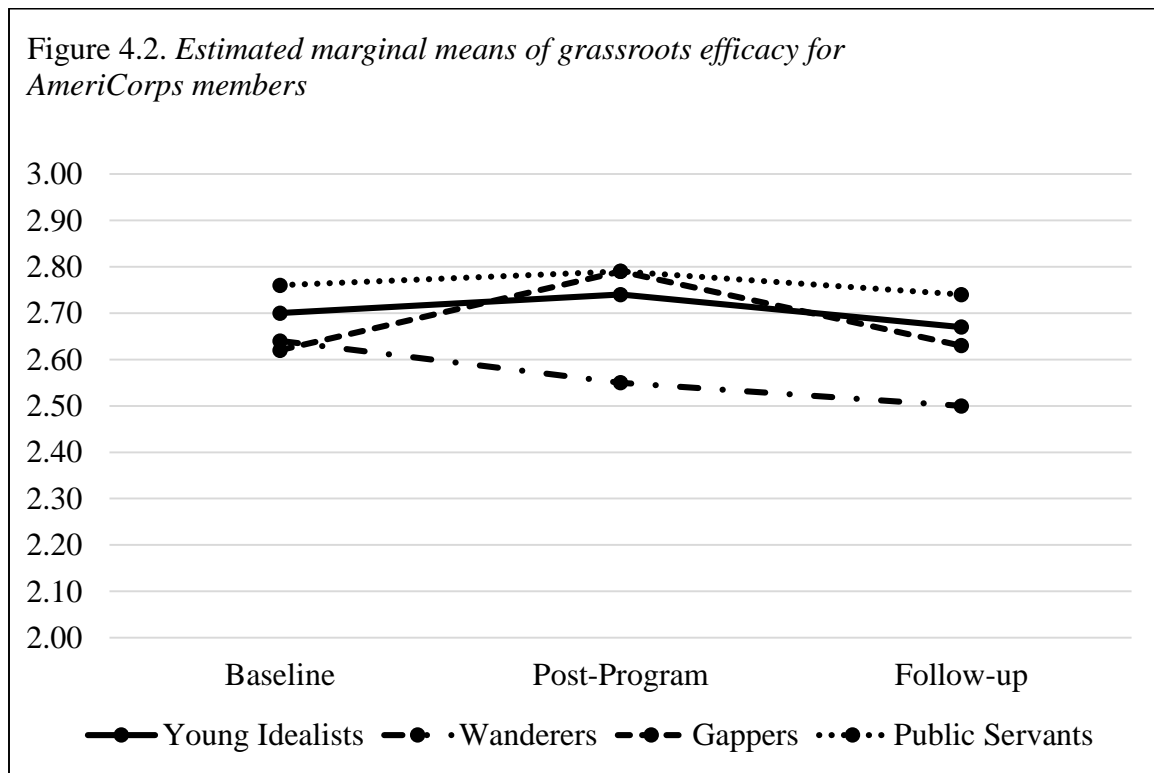
significant. There was no significant differential change between member profiles for any of the employment aptitude, basic life skills, or educational aptitude outcome measures.

Within the Neighborhood Obligations model, post-hoc analyses revealed that there was significant differential change between Wanderers and Young Idealists,  $F(2, 122) = 5.33, p = .006$ , between Wanderers and Gappers,  $F(2, 253) = 3.71, p = .026$ , and between Wanderers and Public Servants,  $F(2, 235) = 8.35, p < .001$ . Estimated marginal means from the model, which demonstrate the mean score for each profile at each study wave, while holding the covariates constant, are presented in Figure 4.1.



As illustrated by the figure, Wanderers demonstrated a large increase in sense of Neighborhood Obligations from baseline to post-program, relative to the other member profiles. All member profiles demonstrated a small decline in sense of Neighborhood Obligations from post-program to the long-term post-program wave, measured seven years after completion of their term of AmeriCorps service.

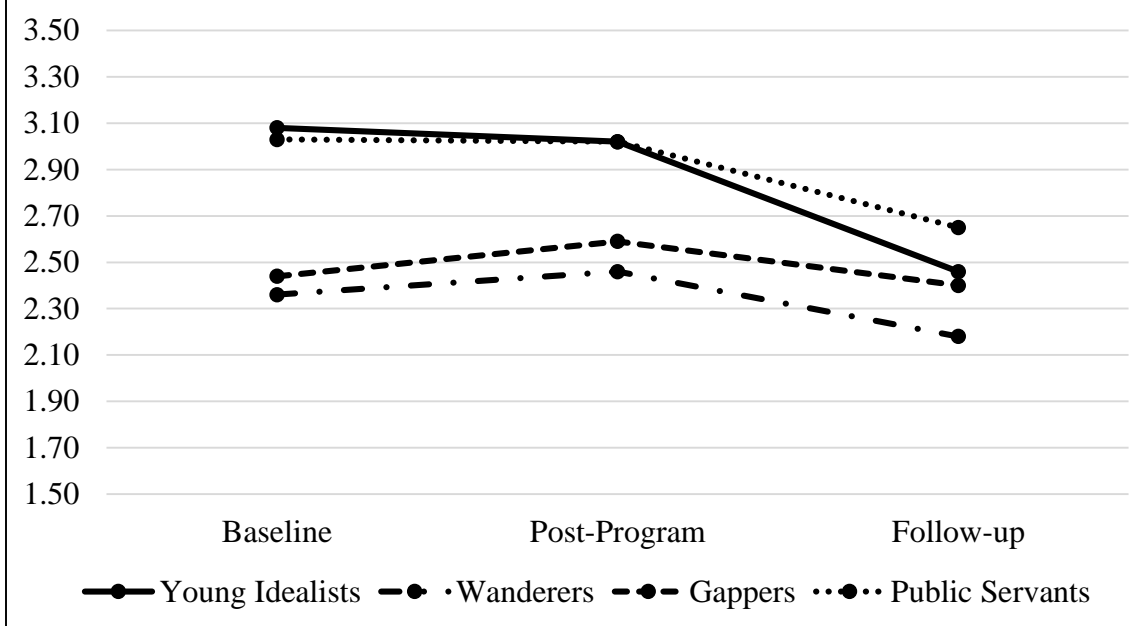
Within the Grassroots Efficacy model, post-hoc analyses revealed that there was significant differential change between Gappers and Young Idealists,  $F(2, 241) = 3.22$ ,  $p = .042$ , between Gappers and Wanderers,  $F(2, 251) = 7.62$ ,  $p = .001$ , and between Gappers and Public Servants,  $F(2, 352) = 5.32$ ,  $p = .005$ . Estimated marginal means from the model are presented in Figure 4.2.



As illustrated by the figure, Gappers demonstrated a large increase in Grassroots Efficacy from baseline to post-program relative to the other member profiles. However, while the other member profiles demonstrated a small decline in Grassroots Efficacy from post-program to long-term post-program, Gappers demonstrated a larger decrease, making their mean score at the final wave of the study nearly identical to their mean score at baseline. Finally, Wanderers were the only group to demonstrate a decline in Grassroots Efficacy from baseline to post-program, but it should be noted that their overall trajectory was not significantly different than the Young Idealists' and Public Servants' trajectories.

Finally, within the Community Based Activism model, post-hoc analyses revealed that there was significant differential change between Young Idealists and Wanderers,  $F(2, 124) = 4.23, p = .017$ , between Young Idealists and Gappers,  $F(2, 243) = 12.47, p < .001$  and between Public Servants and Gappers  $F(2, 354) = 7.34, p = .001$ . Estimated marginal means from the model are presented in Figure 4.3. As illustrated by the figure, Wanderers and Gappers demonstrated an increase in Community Based Activism from baseline to post-program, while Young Idealists and Public Servants, who reported higher scores at baseline, demonstrated a slight decrease from baseline to post-program. All groups demonstrated a decline in Community Based Activism from post-program to long-term post-program, with Young Idealists demonstrating the largest decrease.

Figure 4.3. *Estimated marginal means of community based activism for AmeriCorps members*



### Demographic Differences Between AmeriCorps and Comparison Group Members

Prior to testing Hypotheses 3a – 3d, that within each profile there would be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members, comparative analyses were conducted to determine if there were significant differences in gender, race/ethnicity, and family income between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members. Chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency distribution of gender between AmeriCorps and comparison group members,  $\chi^2(1) = 35.44, p < .001$ . While females were a large majority in both samples, the sample of AmeriCorps members had a lower representation of females ( $n = 974$ ; 68.4%) than the sample of comparison group

members ( $n = 957$ ; 78.7%). Given this significant difference, gender was controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcome trajectories between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members.

Chi-square analysis also revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency distribution of race/ethnicity between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members,  $\chi^2(3) = 19.57, p < .001$ . The sample of AmeriCorps members contained a higher representation of black and Hispanic members (black  $n = 216$ ; 15.3%; Hispanic  $n = 195$ ; 13.8%) than the comparison group (black  $n = 154$ ; 12.8%; Hispanic  $n = 11$ ; 9.2%), whereas the comparison group contained a higher representation of white participants (comparison group white  $n = 808$ ; 67.2%; AmeriCorps members white  $n = 878$ ; 62.1%). Given this significant difference, race/ethnicity were controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcome trajectories between AmeriCorps and comparison group members through the inclusion of three dummy-coded variables for black, Hispanic, and other race/ethnicity, with white as the reference category.

Finally, one-way analysis of variance revealed that there was no significant difference in family income between AmeriCorps and comparison group members,  $F(1, 1,958) = 1.64, p = .200, R^2 = .00$ . However, due to the potential relationship between family income and the outcome measures being tested in Hypotheses 3a-d, and in order to remain consistent with the analytic approach used in testing Hypothesis 2, family income was controlled for in subsequent analyses comparing outcome trajectories between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members.

## Hypotheses 3a-3d- Differential Change in Outcomes Between AmeriCorps and Comparison Group Members

### Hypothesis 3a- Differential Change in Outcomes within the Young Idealist Profile

In order to test Hypothesis 3a, that there would be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Young Idealist profile, the sample was restricted to Young Idealists only. A series of repeated measures analyses of variance were then conducted, with each model containing one outcome measure, assessed at each wave of the study, as the within-groups factor, treatment group as the between-subjects factor, and gender, dummy-coded race/ethnicity variables, and family income as covariates. It must be noted that for most models, the outcome was measured at all three waves of the study (baseline, post-program, and follow-up), with the exceptions being Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, Basic Work Skills, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success, which were only measured at the baseline and post-program waves in the study.

Multivariate test results for each model are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

*Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Young Idealist profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income*

Outcome Category/Measure	Interaction	Wilks' $\lambda$	$F$	$df$	$\eta^2p$
Civic Engagement	Treatment Group	0.98	1.63	2/125	.01
Neighborhood	Gender	0.99	0.51	2/125	.01
Obligations	Race: Black	0.93	4.99**	2/125	.07
	Race: Hispanic	0.98	1.40	2/125	.02

	Race: Other	0.99	0.59	2/125	.01
	Income	0.99	0.44	2/125	.01
Grassroots Efficacy	Treatment Group	0.93	4.71*	2/127	.07
	Gender	0.96	2.41	2/127	.04
	Race: Black	0.97	2.16	2/127	.03
	Race: Hispanic	0.96	2.78	2/127	.04
	Race: Other	0.99	0.98	2/127	.02
	Income	1.00	0.23	2/127	.00
Community Based Activism	Treatment Group	1.00	0.03	2/127	.00
	Gender	0.94	4.05*	2/127	.06
	Race: Black	0.99	0.46	2/127	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.27	2/127	.00
	Race: Other	0.99	0.99	2/127	.02
	Income	1.00	0.04	2/127	.00
Employment Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	0.01	1/220	.00
	Gender	1.00	0.01	1/220	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.01	1/220	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.03	1/220	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.55	1/220	.00
	Income	0.98	4.77*	1/220	.02
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	0.99	2.40	1/214	.01
	Gender	1.00	1.14	1/214	.01
	Race: Black	0.99	2.39	1/214	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.18	1/214	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.46	1/214	.00
	Income	0.99	2.68	1/214	.01
Life Skills					
Constructive Group Interactions	Treatment Group	0.99	0.58	2/126	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.33	2/126	.01
	Race: Black	0.97	2.31	2/126	.04
	Race: Hispanic	0.96	2.81	2/126	.04
	Race: Other	0.98	1.22	2/126	.02
	Income	1.00	0.04	2/126	.00
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	Treatment Group	0.98	1.25	2/127	.02
	Gender	0.99	0.78	2/127	.01
	Race: Black	0.93	4.66*	2/127	.07
	Race: Hispanic	0.98	1.18	2/127	.02
	Race: Other	0.99	0.57	2/127	.01
	Income	0.99	0.35	2/127	.01
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	Treatment Group	0.98	1.36	2/127	.02
	Gender	1.00	0.26	2/127	.00
	Race: Black	0.99	0.95	2/127	.02

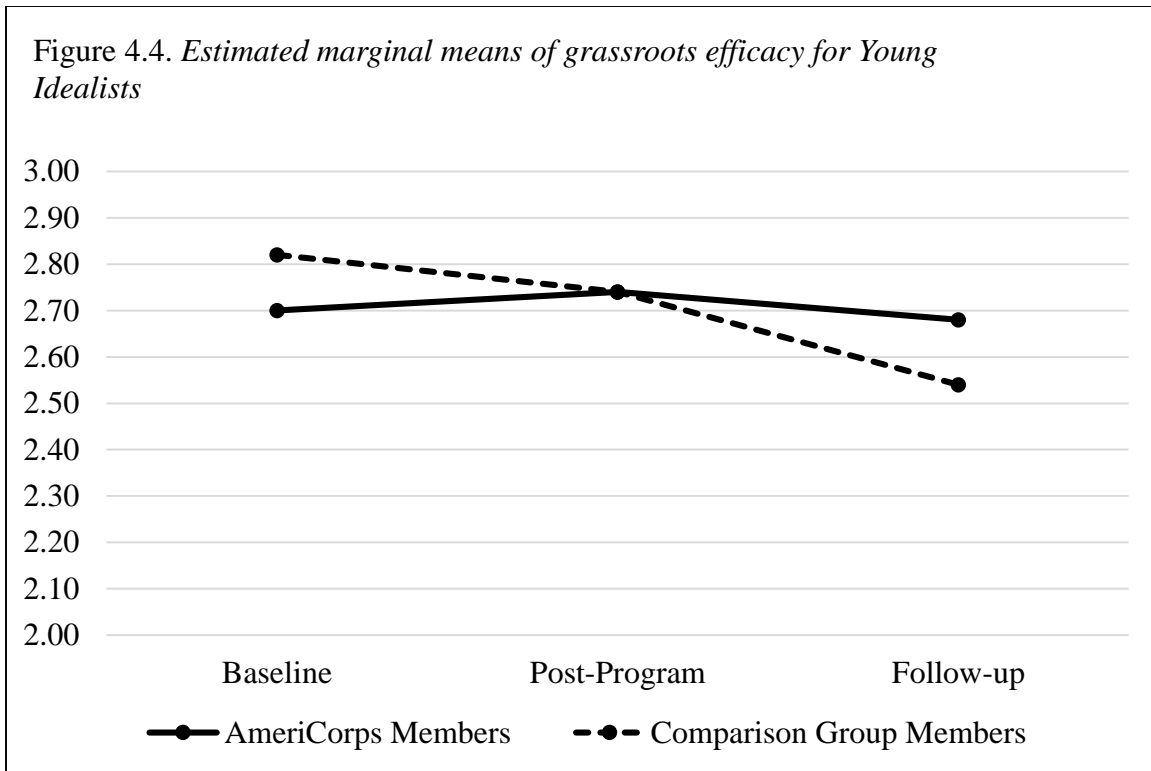


	Race: Hispanic	0.94	4.02*	2/127	.06
	Race: Other	1.00	0.14	2/127	.00
	Income	0.98	1.35	2/127	.02
<hr/>					
Education Aptitude					
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	Treatment Group	1.00	0.86	1/220	.00
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success <sup>1</sup>	Gender	1.00	0.09	1/220	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.01	1/220	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.35	1/220	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.11	1/220	.00
	Income	0.99	1.68	1/220	.01

*Notes:* \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; <sup>1</sup>measured at baseline and post-program study waves only

As illustrated in the table, significant between by within subjects interactions indicated there was significant differential change in Grassroots Efficacy between AmeriCorps and comparison group members, with no significant covariates in the model. There was no significant differential change in any of the remaining outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Young Idealist profile.

Estimated marginal means for the Grassroots Efficacy model, which demonstrate the mean score for AmeriCorps and comparison group members at each study wave, while holding the covariates constant, are presented in Figure 4.4. As illustrated in the figure, comparison group members reported higher scores than AmeriCorps members at baseline, but their scores decreased at each wave of the study. AmeriCorps members' scores, on the other hand, increased from baseline to post-program, and then decreased from post-program to follow-up. Given their increase in Grassroots Efficacy scores during their year of service, and their smaller decrease from the post-program to follow-up, AmeriCorps members reported higher scores in Grassroots Efficacy than comparison group members at the follow-up wave of the study.



### **Hypothesis 3b- Differential Change in Outcomes within the Wanderer Profile**

In order to test Hypothesis 3b, that there would be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Wanderer profile, the sample was restricted to Wanderers only. A series of repeated measures analyses of variance were then conducted, with each model containing one outcome measure, assessed at each wave of the study, as the within-groups factor, treatment group as the between-subjects factor, and gender, dummy-coded race/ethnicity variables, and family income as covariates. It must be noted that for most models, the outcome was measured at all three waves of the study (baseline, post-program, and follow-up), with the exceptions being Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, Basic Work Skills, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success, which were only

measured at the baseline and post-program waves in the study. Multivariate test results for each model are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

*Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Wanderer profile while controlling for gender and race/ethnicity, and income*

Outcome Category/Measure	Interaction	Wilks' $\lambda$	$F$	$df$	$\eta^2p$
Civic Engagement					
Neighborhood Obligations	Treatment Group	0.93	4.76*	2/120	.07
	Gender	0.98	1.14	2/120	.02
	Race: Black	1.00	0.09	2/120	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.98	1.36	2/120	.02
	Race: Other	0.98	1.14	2/120	.02
	Income	1.00	0.31	2/120	.01
Grassroots Efficacy					
Grassroots Efficacy	Treatment Group	1.00	0.29	2/120	.01
	Gender	0.96	2.85	2/120	.05
	Race: Black	0.99	0.46	2/120	.01
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	2.46	2/120	.04
	Race: Other	1.00	0.24	2/120	.00
	Income	1.00	0.21	2/120	.00
Community Based Activism					
Community Based Activism	Treatment Group	1.00	0.08	2/120	.00
	Gender	0.99	0.44	2/120	.01
	Race: Black	0.99	0.37	2/120	.01
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	0.73	2/120	.01
	Race: Other	0.99	0.65	2/120	.01
	Income	0.98	1.09	2/120	.02
Employment Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	0.03	1/218	.00
	Gender	1.00	0.45	1/218	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.34	1/218	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.11	1/218	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.00	1/218	.00
	Income	0.98	4.53*	1/218	.02
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>					
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	0.04	1/217	.00
	Gender	0.99	1.30	1/217	.01
	Race: Black	0.99	3.14	1/217	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.22	1/217	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.76	1/217	.00
	Income	1.00	0.23	1/217	.00

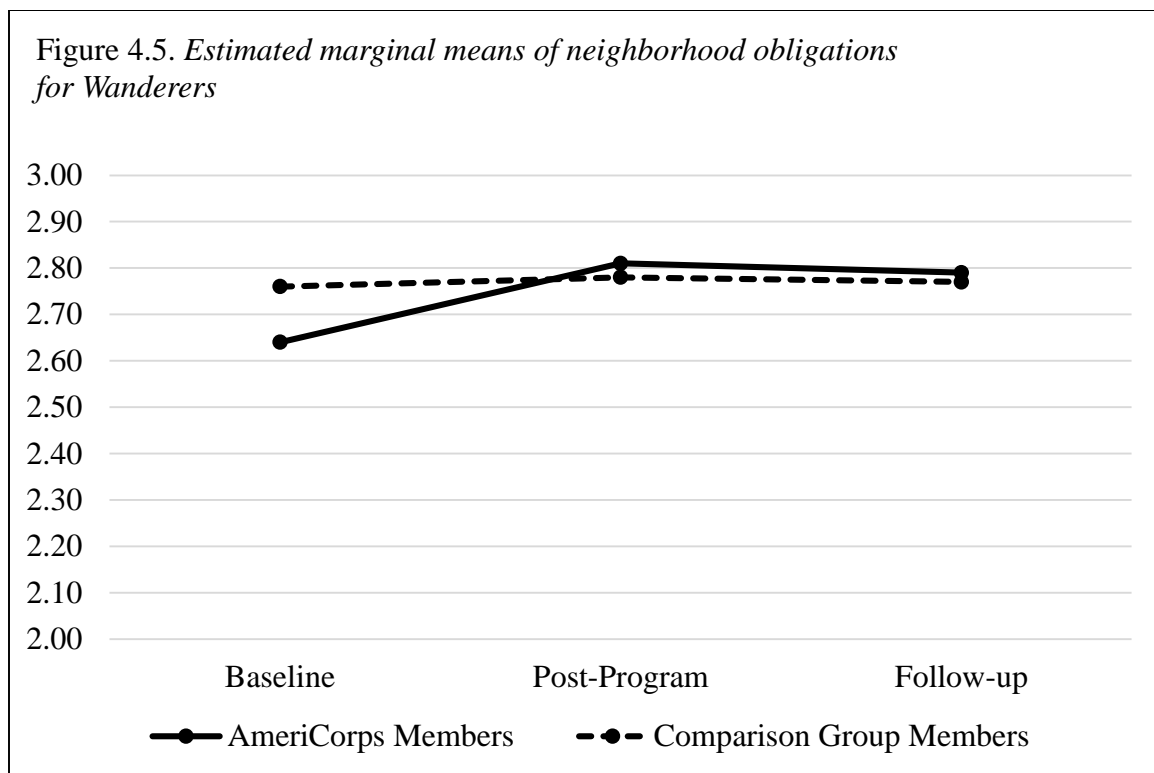
Life Skills					
Constructive Group Interactions	Treatment Group	0.99	0.39	2/120	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.14	2/120	.00
	Race: Black	0.97	1.83	2/120	.03
	Race: Hispanic	0.97	1.84	2/120	.03
	Race: Other	0.99	0.73	2/120	.01
	Income	0.96	2.63	2/120	.04
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	Treatment Group	0.97	2.03	2/120	.03
	Gender	0.98	1.51	2/120	.02
	Race: Black	1.00	0.24	2/120	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.98	1.51	2/120	.02
	Race: Other	1.00	0.30	2/120	.01
	Income	1.00	0.10	2/120	.00
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	Treatment Group	0.99	0.66	2/120	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.23	2/120	.00
	Race: Black	0.93	4.54*	2/120	.07
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.13	2/120	.00
	Race: Other	0.99	0.56	2/120	.01
	Income	1.00	0.14	2/120	.00
Education Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	1.10	1/218	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.04	1/218	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.03	1/218	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	1.18	1/218	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.00	1/218	.00
	Income	1.00	0.25	1/218	.00

Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; <sup>1</sup>measured at baseline and post-program study waves only

As illustrated in the table, significant between by within subjects interactions indicated there was significant differential change in sense of Neighborhood Obligations between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Wanderer profile, with no significant covariates in the model. There was no significant differential change between AmeriCorps and comparison group members for any of the remaining outcomes.

Estimated marginal means for the Neighborhood Obligations model are presented in Figure 4.5. As illustrated in the figure, comparison group members' scores on

Neighborhood Obligations remained flat across all waves of the study. AmeriCorps members, on the other hand, started with lower scores at baseline, but reported an increase in sense of Neighborhood Obligations during their year of service. Their scores stayed flat from the post-program to follow-up waves, so that AmeriCorps members reported slightly higher Neighborhood Obligations scores than comparison group members at the follow-up wave of the study.



### **Hypothesis 3c- Differential Change in Outcomes within the Gapper Profile**

In order to test Hypothesis 3c, that there would be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Gapper profile, the sample was restricted to Gappers only. A series of repeated measures

analyses of variance were then conducted, with each model containing one outcome measure, assessed at each wave of the study, as the within-groups factor, treatment group as the between-subjects factor, and gender, dummy-coded race/ethnicity variables, and family income as covariates. It must be noted that for most models, the outcome was measured at all three waves of the study (baseline, post-program, and follow-up), with the exceptions being Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, Basic Work Skills, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success, which were only measured at the baseline and post-program waves in the study. Multivariate test results for each model are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

*Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Gapper profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income*

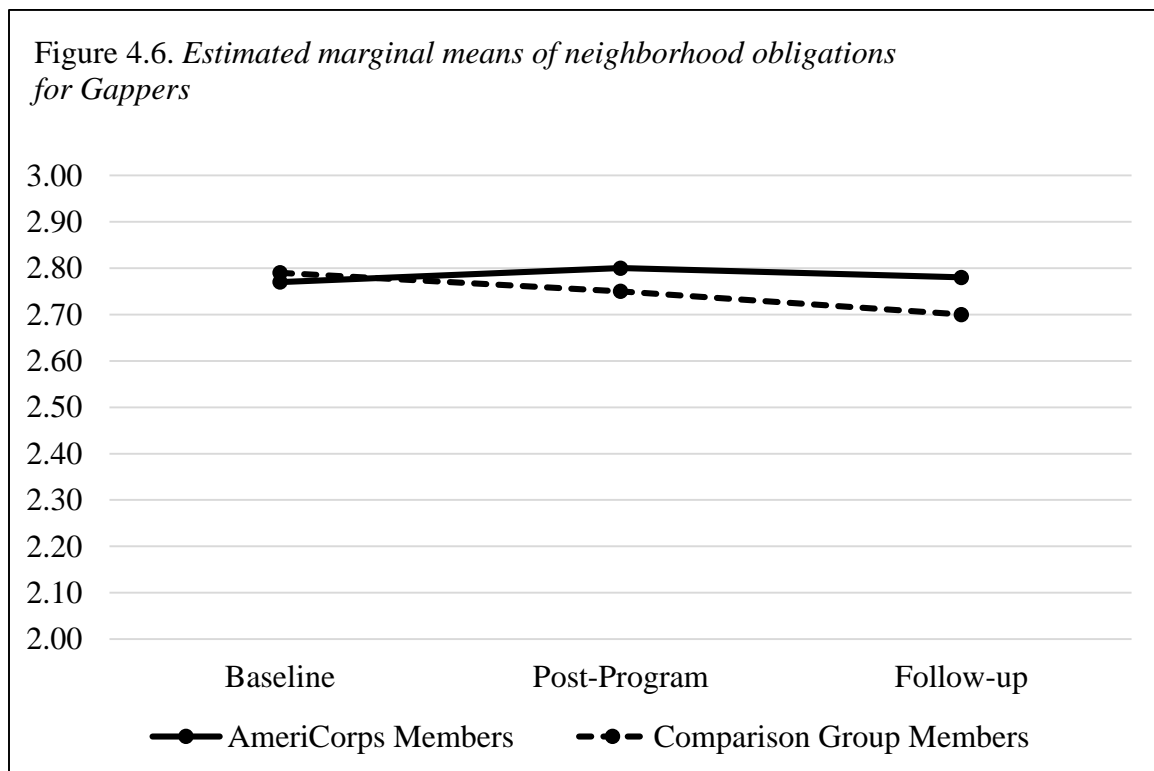
Outcome Category/Measure	Interaction	Wilks' $\lambda$	$F$	$df$	$\eta^2p$
Civic Engagement	Treatment Group	0.97	6.71**	2/434	.03
Neighborhood Obligations	Gender	1.00	0.20	2/434	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.48	2/434	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	2.24	2/434	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.34	2/434	.00
	Income	0.99	1.29	2/434	.01
Grassroots Efficacy	Treatment Group	0.91	21.35***	2/434	.09
	Gender	1.00	0.95	2/434	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.48	2/434	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.32	2/434	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.99	2/434	.01
	Income	1.00	0.80	2/434	.00
Community Based Activism	Treatment Group	0.99	1.54	2/435	.01
	Gender	0.99	1.26	2/435	.01
	Race: Black	1.00	0.74	2/435	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.16	2/435	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.14	2/435	.01

	Income	1.00	0.19	2/435	.00
Employment Aptitude					
	Treatment Group	1.00	0.72	1/650	.00
Acceptance of	Gender	1.00	0.02	1/650	.00
Responsibility for	Race: Black	1.00	2.47	1/650	.00
Employment Success <sup>1</sup>	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.00	1/650	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.35	1/650	.00
	Income	1.00	0.51	1/650	.00
	Treatment Group	0.98	16.75***	1/651	.03
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>	Gender	1.00	0.29	1/651	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	2.98	1/651	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	1.35	1/651	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.19	1/651	.00
	Income	1.00	0.35	1/651	.00
Life Skills					
	Treatment Group	0.99	1.32	2/434	.01
Constructive Group	Gender	1.00	0.67	2/434	.00
Interactions	Race: Black	0.98	5.13	2/434	.02
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.43	2/434	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.25	2/434	.00
	Income	1.00	0.22	2/434	.00
	Treatment Group	0.99	3.17*	2/433	.01
Constructive Personal	Gender	0.99	2.86	2/433	.01
Behavior in Groups	Race: Black	1.00	0.61	2/433	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.23	2/433	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.52	2/433	.00
	Income	1.00	0.85	2/433	.00
	Treatment Group	0.97	6.16**	2/435	.03
Appreciation of Cultural	Gender	1.00	1.07	2/435	.01
and Ethnic Diversity	Race: Black	0.98	4.28*	2/435	.02
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.33	2/435	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.10	2/435	.01
	Income	0.99	1.28	2/435	.01
Education Aptitude					
	Treatment Group	0.99	4.96*	1/650	.01
Acceptance of	Gender	1.00	1.81	1/650	.00
Responsibility	Race: Black	1.00	3.15	1/650	.01
for Educational Success <sup>1</sup>	Race: Hispanic	1.00	1.28	1/650	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	1.57	1/650	.00
	Income	1.00	0.62	1/650	.00

Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>1</sup>measured at baseline and post-program study waves only

As illustrated by the table, significant between by within subjects interactions indicated there were significant differential changes in Neighborhood Obligations, Grassroots Efficacy, Basic Work Skills, Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups, Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Gapper profile. Black race/ethnicity was a significant covariate in the Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity model.

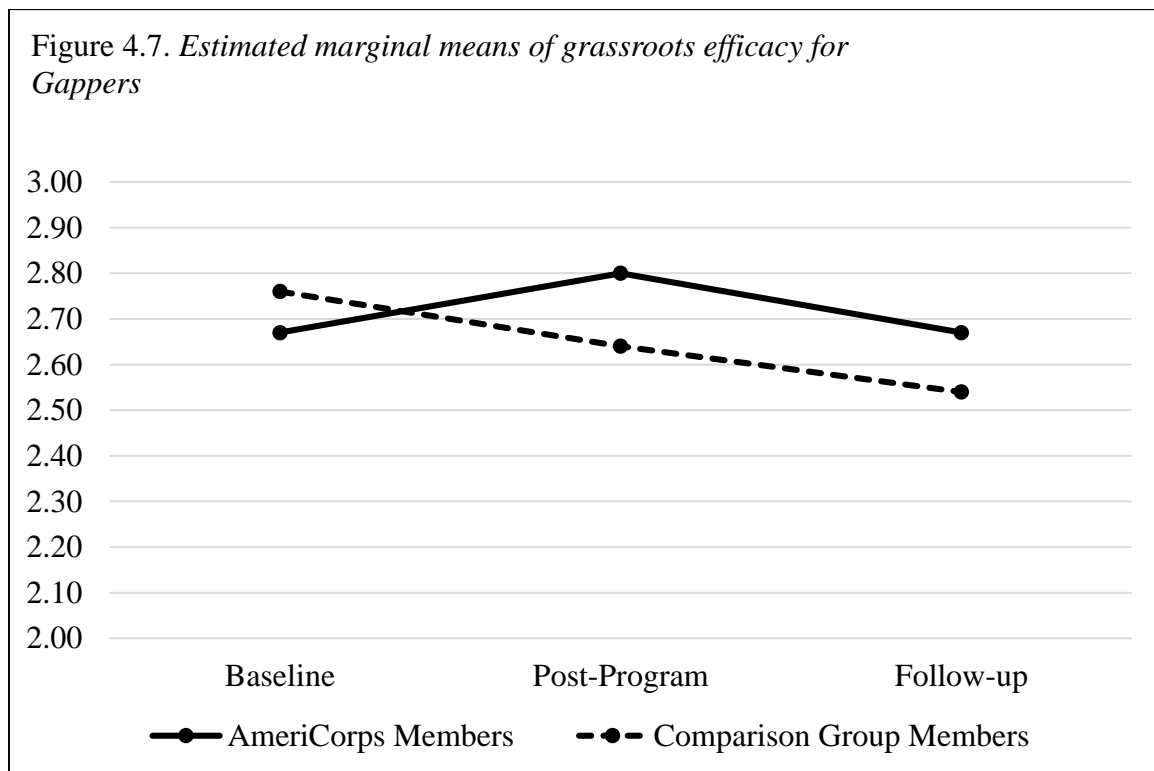
Estimated marginal means for the Neighborhood Obligations model are presented in Figure 4.6.



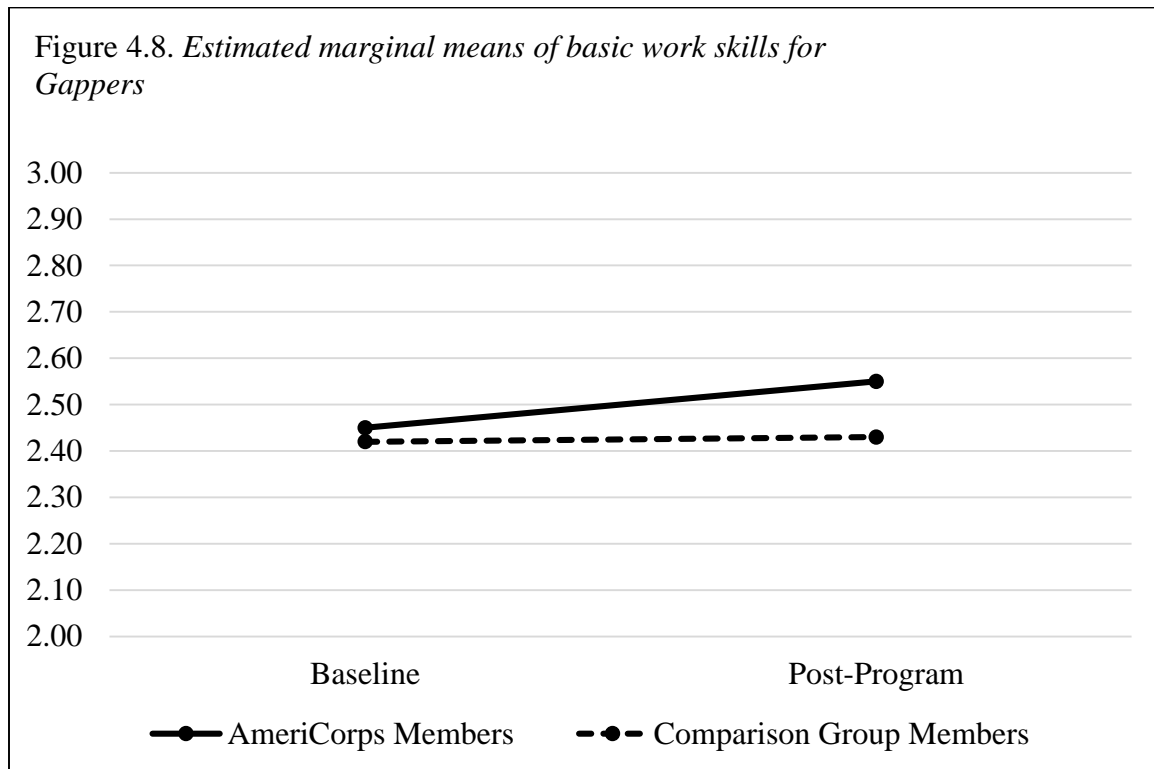


As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure increased slightly from baseline to post-program, and then decreased slightly from post-program to follow-up. Comparison group members' scores, on the other hand, decreased at each wave of the study, so that AmeriCorps members reported higher scores for Neighborhood Obligations than comparison group members in the final wave of the study.

Estimated marginal means for the Grassroots Efficacy model are presented in Figure 4.7. As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure increased from baseline to post-program, and then decreased from post-program to follow-up. Comparison group members' scores, on the other hand, decreased at each wave of the study, so that AmeriCorps members reported higher scores for Grassroots Efficacy than comparison group members in the final wave of the study.

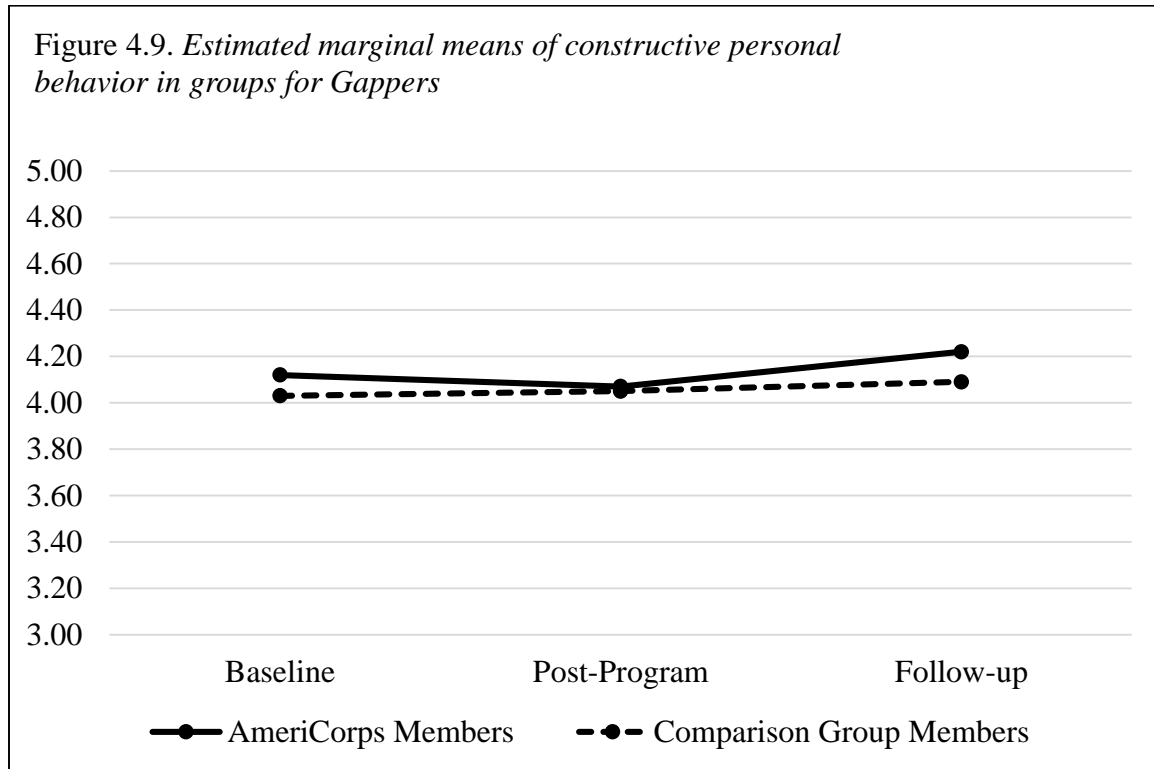


Estimated marginal means for the Basic Work Skills model are presented in Figure 4.8. As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps members reported an increase in basic work skills during their year of service, while comparison group members' scores stayed flat, so that AmeriCorps members reported higher scores on the measure during the post-program wave of the study.

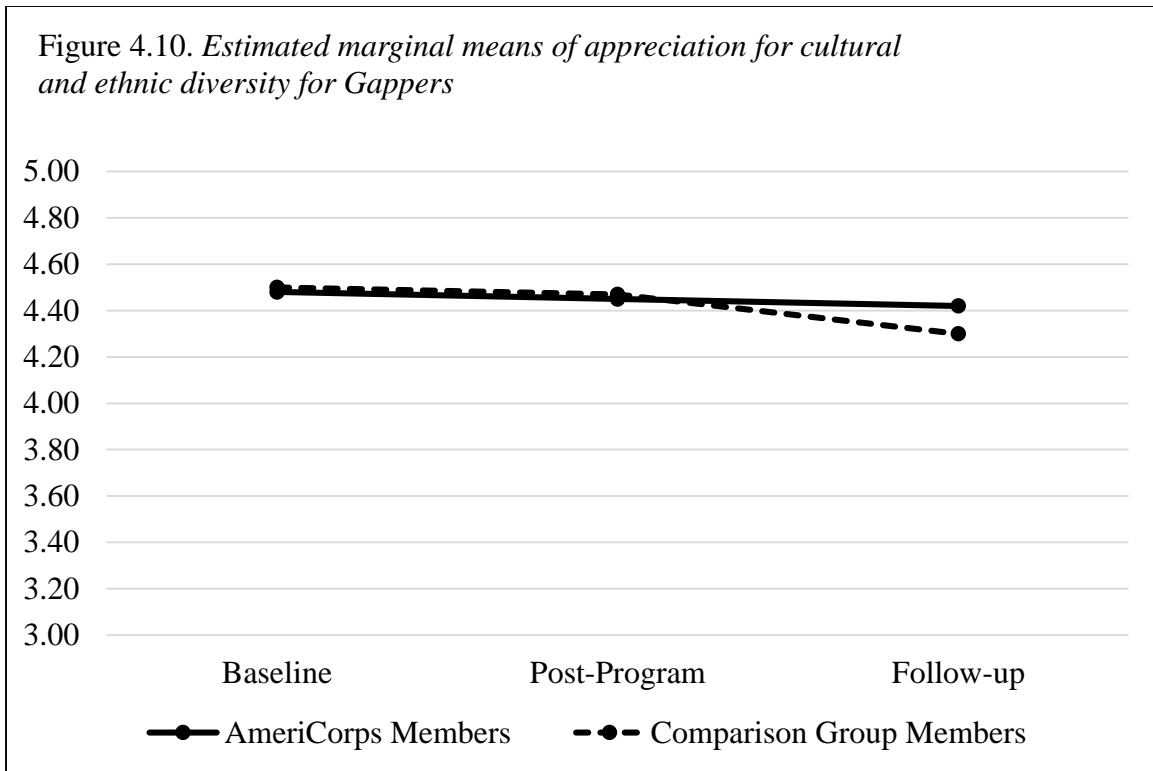


Estimated marginal means for the Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups model are presented in Figure 4.9. As illustrated by the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure decreased slightly from baseline to post-program, but then increased from post-program to follow-up. Comparison group members' scores, on the other hand, increased very slightly at each wave of the study. Due to the larger increase from post-program to follow-up, AmeriCorps members reported higher levels of

Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups than comparison group members during the final wave of the study.

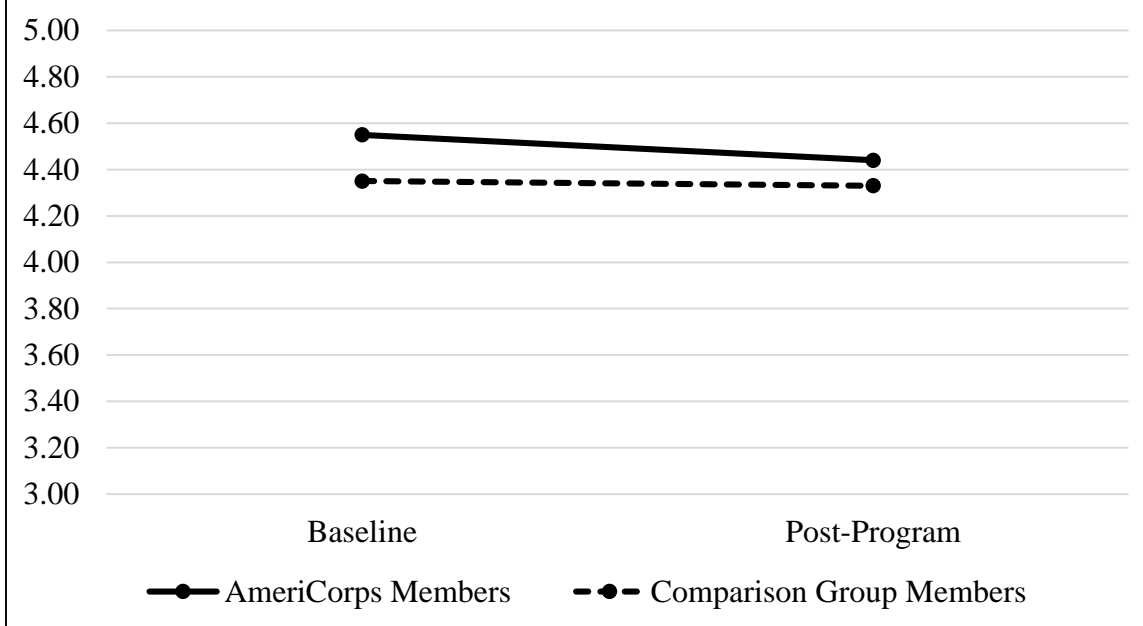


Estimated marginal means for the Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity model are presented in Figure 4.10. As illustrated by the figure, both AmeriCorps and comparison group members' scores on the measure decreased slightly at each wave of the study. However, comparison group members' decrease was more pronounced than AmeriCorps members' decrease from post-program to follow-up, so that AmeriCorps members reported a higher level of Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity than comparison group members during the final wave of the study.



Finally, estimated marginal means for the Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success model are presented in Figure 4.11. As illustrated by the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure decreased during their year of service, while comparison group members' scores remained flat. However, because AmeriCorps members reported higher scores on the measure at baseline, their scores for Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success were still slightly higher than comparison group members' scores at the post-program wave of the study.

Figure 4.11. *Estimated marginal means of acceptance of responsibility for educational success for Gappers*



### Hypothesis 3d- Differential Change in Outcomes within the Public Servant Profile

In order to test Hypothesis 3d, that there would be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Public Servant profile, the sample was restricted to Public Servants only. A series of repeated measures analyses of variance were then conducted, with each model containing one outcome measure, assessed at each wave of the study, as the within-groups factor, treatment group as the between-subjects factor, and gender, dummy-coded race/ethnicity variables, and family income as covariates. It must be noted that for most models, the outcome was measured at all three waves of the study (baseline, post-program, and follow-up), with the exceptions being Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success, Basic Work Skills, and Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success,

which were only measured at the baseline and post-program waves in the study.

Multivariate test results for each model are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

*Repeated measures analyses of variance multivariate tests- Differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and group members within the Public Servant profile while controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and income*

Outcome Category/Measure	Interaction	Wilks' $\lambda$	$F$	$df$	$\eta^2p$
Civic Engagement					
Neighborhood Obligations	Treatment Group	0.98	4.10*	2/366	.02
	Gender	1.00	0.40	2/366	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.06	2/366	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.68	2/366	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.14	2/366	.00
	Income	1.00	0.15	2/366	.00
Grassroots Efficacy	Treatment Group	0.94	12.73***	2/366	.07
	Gender	0.99	1.60	2/366	.01
	Race: Black	1.00	0.01	2/366	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.07	2/366	.00
	Race: Other	0.99	1.88	2/366	.01
	Income	1.00	0.60	2/366	.00
Community Based Activism	Treatment Group	0.99	1.09	2/366	.01
	Gender	0.99	1.86	2/366	.01
	Race: Black	0.98	3.71*	2/366	.02
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	1.59	2/366	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.28	2/366	.00
	Income	1.00	1.00	2/366	.01
Employment Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	0.54	1/555	.00
	Gender	1.00	0.57	1/555	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	1.74	1/555	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.06	1/555	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	2.36	1/555	.00
	Income	0.99	3.76	1/555	.01
Basic Work Skills <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	1.02	1/566	.00
	Gender	1.00	0.11	1/566	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.08	1/566	.00
	Race: Hispanic	0.99	3.69	1/566	.01
	Race: Other	1.00	0.28	1/566	.00
	Income	1.00	2.05	1/566	.00

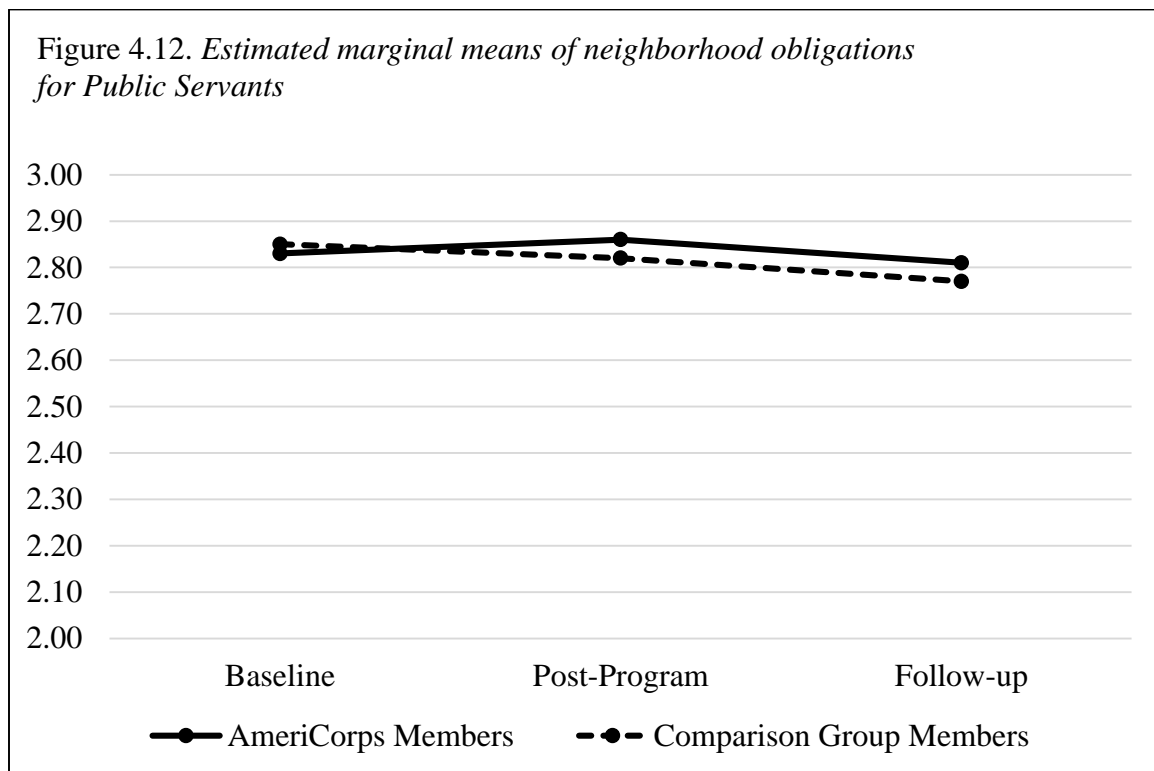
Life Skills					
Constructive Group Interactions	Treatment Group	0.99	2.63	2/367	.01
	Gender	1.00	0.03	2/367	.00
	Race: Black	0.96	7.61**	2/367	.04
	Race: Hispanic	0.96	6.79**	2/367	.04
	Race: Other	1.00	0.83	2/367	.00
	Income	0.99	1.12	2/367	.01
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	Treatment Group	0.97	6.50**	2/366	.03
	Gender	0.98	3.33*	2/366	.02
	Race: Black	0.98	3.50*	2/366	.02
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.08	2/366	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.39	2/366	.00
	Income	1.00	0.99	2/366	.01
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	Treatment Group	0.95	9.83***	2/367	.05
	Gender	0.99	1.98	2/367	.01
	Race: Black	1.00	0.93	2/367	.01
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.20	2/367	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.98	2/367	.01
	Income	1.00	0.09	2/367	.00
Education Aptitude					
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success <sup>1</sup>	Treatment Group	1.00	1.04	1/556	.00
	Gender	1.00	1.21	1/556	.00
	Race: Black	1.00	0.30	1/556	.00
	Race: Hispanic	1.00	0.36	1/556	.00
	Race: Other	1.00	0.54	1/556	.00
	Income	1.00	1.25	1/556	.00

Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>1</sup>measured at baseline and post-program study waves only

As illustrated by the table, significant between by within subjects interactions indicated there were significant differential changes in Neighborhood Obligations, Grassroots Efficacy, Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups, and Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Public Servant profile.

Estimated marginal means for the Neighborhood Obligations model are presented in Figure 4.12. As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure

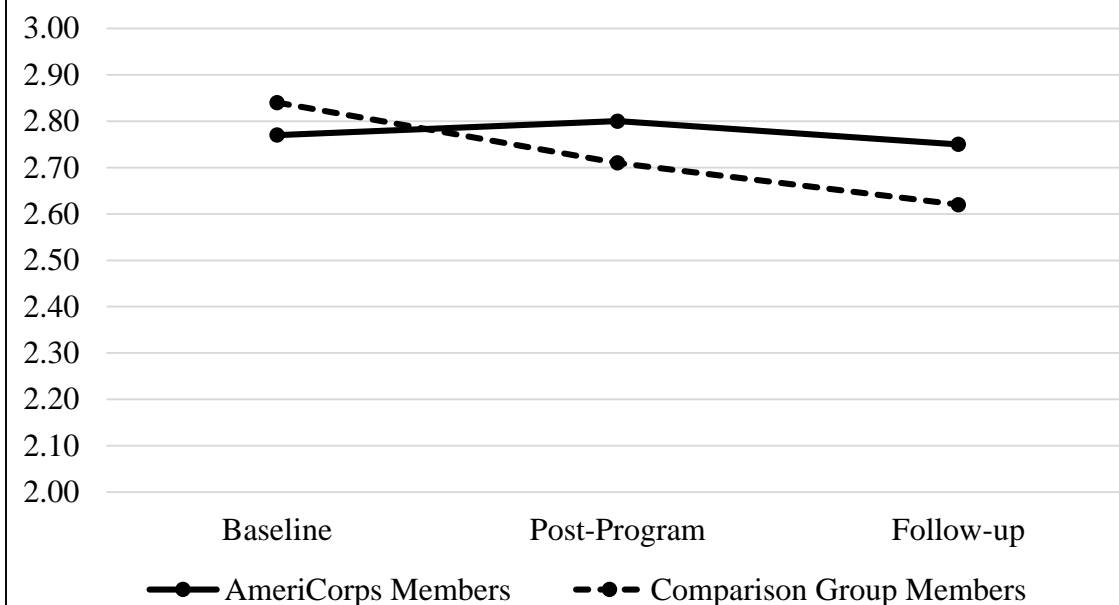
increased from baseline to post-program, and then decreased from post-program to follow-up. Comparison group members' scores, on the other hand, decreased at each wave of the study, so that AmeriCorps members reported slightly higher scores for Neighborhood Obligations than comparison group members in the final wave of the study.



Estimated marginal means for the Grassroots Efficacy model are presented in Figure 4.13. As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps members' scores on the measure increased from baseline to post-program, and then decreased from post-program to follow-up. Comparison group members' scores, on the other hand, decreased at each wave of the study, so that AmeriCorps members reported higher scores for Grassroots Efficacy than comparison group members in the final wave of the study.

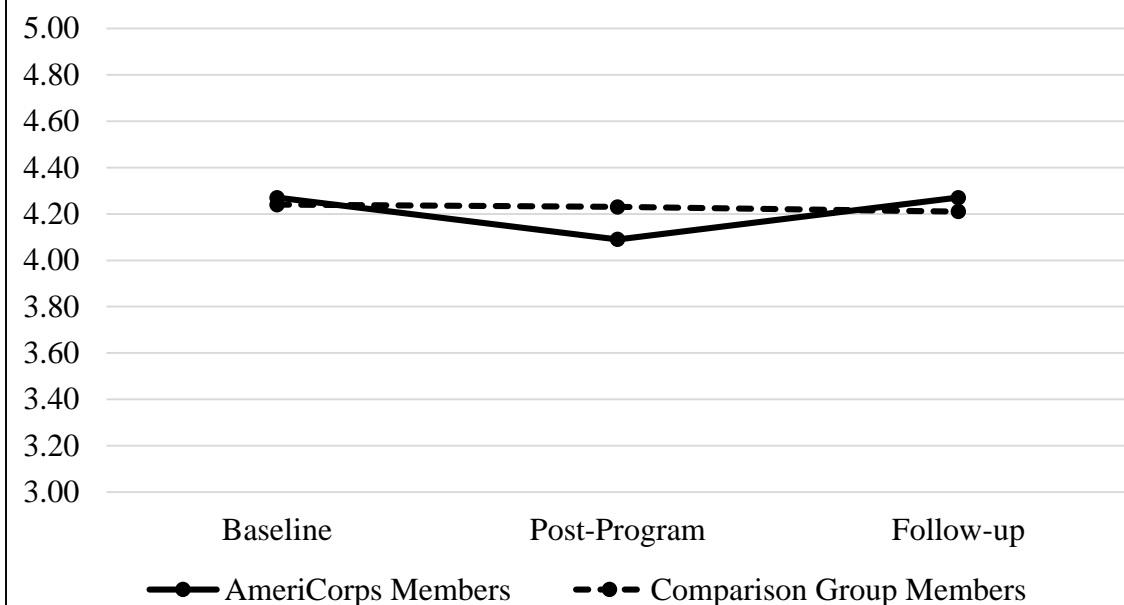


Figure 4.13. *Estimated marginal means of grassroots efficacy for Public Servants*



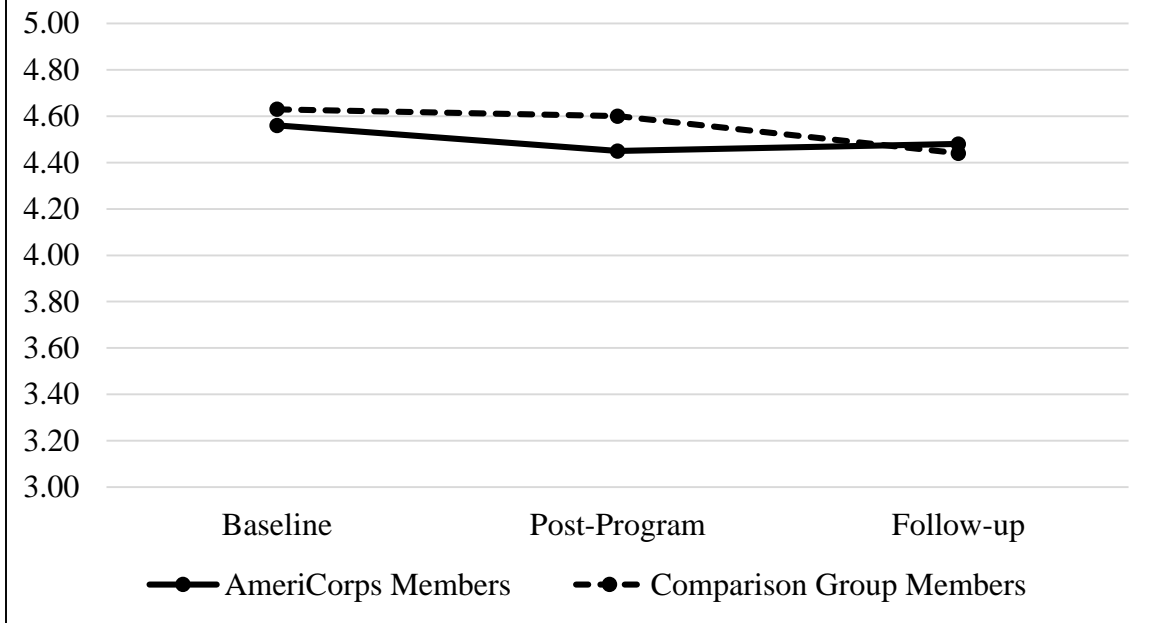
Estimated marginal means for the Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups model are presented in Figure 4.14. As illustrated in the figure, AmeriCorps and comparison group members reported nearly identical scores at baseline. Comparison group members' scores remained flat from baseline to post-program, and then decreased slightly from post-program to follow-up. AmeriCorps members' scores, however, decreased during their year of service, but then increased from the post-program to follow-up waves, AmeriCorps members' Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups scores were slightly higher than comparison group members' scores during the final wave of the study.

Figure 4.14. *Estimated marginal means of constructive personal behavior in groups for Public Servants*



Finally, estimated marginal means for the Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity model are presented in Figure 4.15. As illustrated in the figure, comparison group members reported higher scores on the measure than AmeriCorps members, but their scores decreased slightly from baseline to post-program and then demonstrated a more pronounced decrease from post-program to follow-up. AmeriCorps members, on the other hand, reported a decrease during their year of service, but then a slight increase from post-program to follow-up, so that at the end of the study, AmeriCorps members reported slightly higher levels of Appreciation for Cultural and Ethnic Diversity than comparison group members.

Figure 4.15. *Estimated marginal means of appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity for Public Servants*



### Summary of Results

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, cluster analysis generated four distinct participant profiles based on age, education level, and public service motivation. Young Idealists were younger members with a high school diploma and relatively high levels of public service motivation compared to the other profiles. Wanderers were also younger members who may have had some post-high school education, but had low levels of public service motivation relative to other profiles. Gappers were older members with at least some college or a bachelor's degree, and had low levels of public service motivation relative to other profiles. Finally, Public Servants were also older members with at least some college or a bachelor's degree, but they had high levels of public service motivation compared to other profiles.

Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as repeated measures analyses of variance showed significant differential change on the three civic engagement outcome measures between member profiles within the AmeriCorps member sample (*Neighborhood Obligations*, *Grassroots Efficacy*, and *Community Based Activism*). Estimated marginal means for these models, which illustrate mean scores for each measure at each wave of the study while holding demographic covariates constant, are presented in Figures 4.1 – 4.3. Young Idealists and Public Servants tended to report higher scores than Wanderers and Gappers on these measures at baseline, but Wanderers and Gappers typically exhibited more positive growth during the year of service, helping to close the gap in civic engagement outcomes between the four member profiles at the post-program wave of the study. However, contrary to Hypothesis 2, no significant differential change was detected between member profiles for any of the life skills, employment aptitude, or educational aptitude measures.

Hypotheses 3a-3c were all partially supported, as repeated measures analyses of variance showed significant differential change on several outcome measures between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members in the Young Idealist, Wanderer, and Gapper profiles. AmeriCorps members in the Gapper profile demonstrated the most positive growth relative to comparison group members, with significant differential change detected for six out of nine outcomes tested. Significant differential change was detected for one out of nine outcomes tested within both the Young Idealist and Wanderer profiles. In all but one of these models, AmeriCorps members demonstrated a more positive growth trajectory than comparison group members over the full course of

the study. The lone exception was Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success within the Gapper profile, where AmeriCorps members actually reported a decline in the measure from baseline to post-program. However, because AmeriCorps members had reported higher scores on the measure at baseline, they still reported higher scores than comparison group members at the post-program wave.

Hypothesis 3d, which predicted that there would not be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members in the Public Servant profile, was unsupported, as significant differential change was detected for four out of nine outcomes tested. For two of these outcomes, Neighborhood Obligations and Grassroots Efficacy, AmeriCorps members demonstrated a more positive growth trajectory than comparison group members over the full course of the study. For the remaining significant outcomes, Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups and Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, AmeriCorps members reported declines in the measures from baseline to post-program relative to comparison group members, but then reported increases from post-program to follow-up so that they reported higher scores on the measures than comparison group members at the end of the study.

Estimated marginal means for each of the significant models testing Hypotheses 3a – 3d, which demonstrate mean scores for each measure while holding demographic covariates constant, are presented in Figures 4.4 – 4.15. A summary of all the models testing Hypotheses 3a – 3d is presented in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12

*Summary of significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members by participant profile*

Category/Outcome	Participant Profile			
	Young Idealists	Wanderers	Gappers	Public Servants
<u>Civic Engagement</u>				
Neighborhood Obligations	-	^	^	^
Grassroots Efficacy	^	-	^	^
Community Based Activism	-	-	-	-
<u>Employment Aptitude</u>				
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success	-	-	-	-
Basic Work Skills	-	-	^	-
<u>Life Skills</u>				
Constructive Group Interactions	-	-	-	-
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	-	-	~	~
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	-	-	^	~
<u>Educational Aptitude</u>				
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success	-	-	V	-

*Notes:* - = no significant change detected between AmeriCorps and comparison group members over the course of the study; ^ = AmeriCorps members demonstrated significant, positive change relative to comparison group members over the course of the study; V = AmeriCorps members demonstrated significant, negative change relative to comparison group members over the course of the study; ~ = AmeriCorps members demonstrated significant, negative change from baseline to post-program, but positive change from post-program to follow-up relative to comparison group members.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### **Key Findings**

##### **Member Profiles**

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, cluster analysis generated four distinct participant profiles based on age, education level, and public service motivation. *Young Idealists* were the youngest study participants (average age at baseline = 19.7 years), who typically had only a high school diploma/GED, but they reported the second highest scores of any profile on each of the three public service motivation scales. It therefore seems likely that these individuals were drawn to AmeriCorps due to their strong desire to be of service. Subsequent analyses also revealed that, while still majority female, *Young Idealists* had a lower representation of females, a higher representation of minority individuals, and a lower average household income than *Gappers* and *Public Servants*. *Young Idealists'* lower household income may also suggest that the AmeriCorps education award and living stipend were bigger incentives than for other individuals. With 423 participants (220 AmeriCorps members [15.5%] and 203 comparison group members [16.7%]) fitting this profile, the *Young Idealists* were the smallest group in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study sample.

*Wanderers* were also young participants (average age at baseline = 19.9 years) who typically had a high school diploma/GED or perhaps some college. Unlike the *Young Idealists*, however, *Wanderers* reported the second lowest scores of any profile on

two of the public service motivation scales (commitment to the public interest and civic awareness) and the lowest score of any profile on the attraction to public policy making scale. Given their lower level of public service motivation, younger age, and low education level, it seems likely that *Wanderers* had other motivations for serving in AmeriCorps beyond being of service, such as finding a sense of purpose and direction or increasing educational opportunities through an AmeriCorps education award. Subsequent analyses also revealed that, while still majority female, *Wanderers* had a lower representation of females, a higher representation of minority individuals, and a lower average household income than *Gappers* and *Public Servants*. *Wanderers*' lower household income may also suggest that the AmeriCorps education award and living stipend were bigger incentives than for other individuals. With 471 participants (297 AmeriCorps members [20.9%] and 174 comparison group members [14.3%]) fitting this profile, *Wanderers* were the second smallest group in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study sample. Because a bachelor's degree is a requirement or expressed preference for many AmeriCorps positions, and because the concept of a gap year prior to college is not as prevalent in the United States as in some Western European countries, it is unsurprising that *Young Idealists* and *Wanderers* were the smallest profiles in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study sample.

*Gappers* were the oldest participants in the study (average age at baseline = 22.5 years), and typically had a bachelor's degree or higher. However, *Gappers* reported the lowest scores of any profile on two of the public service motivation scales (commitment to the public interest and civic awareness) and the second lowest score on attraction to



public policymaking. Given their low public service motivation, coupled with their higher age and advanced education, it seems likely that *Gappers* had other motivations for serving in AmeriCorps beyond being of service, such as exploring new career interests or taking a break between college and career or graduate studies. Subsequent analyses revealed that *Gappers* had a higher representation of females than *Young Idealists* and *Wanderers*, a lower representation of minority individuals than all other groups, and a higher household income than all other groups. *Gappers'* higher household income may suggest that the AmeriCorps education award and living stipend were not as strong incentives as they were for other individuals. With 818 participants (471 AmeriCorps members [33.1%] and 347 comparison group members [28.5%]) fitting this profile, *Gappers* were the second largest profile in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study.

Finally, *Public Servants* were older members (average age at baseline = 22.1 years) who typically had at least some college or a bachelor's degree or higher. *Public Servants* reported the highest scores on all three public service motivation scales, suggesting that these individuals were primarily drawn to AmeriCorps as an opportunity to serve. Subsequent analyses revealed that *Public Servants* had a higher representation of females, a lower representation of minority individuals, and a higher household income than *Young Idealists* and *Wanderers*. *Public Servants'* higher household income may suggest that the AmeriCorps education award and living stipend were not as strong incentives as they were for other individuals. With 912 participants (420 AmeriCorps members [29.5%] and 492 comparison group members [40.5%]) fitting this profile, *Public Servants* were the largest profile in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study.

Interestingly, *Public Servants* were the only profile in which there were more comparison group members than AmeriCorps members. It is possible that given their advanced education and apparent sense of identity as evidenced by their high public service motivation scores, individuals in this profile may have had a broader range of career or graduate education options to choose from than members of other profiles.

### **Differential Outcomes among AmeriCorps Members**

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, repeated measures analyses of variance revealed that among AmeriCorps members participating in the study, there were significant differential changes in the three civic engagement outcome measures between the member profiles over the eight-year study period. In the *neighborhood obligations* model, *Wanderers* reported significantly lower scores than all other member profiles at baseline. However, they demonstrated the largest increase on the measure between the baseline and post-program waves, such that they reported comparable *neighborhood obligations* scores to the other member profiles during both the post-program and follow-up waves of the study. It thus appears that AmeriCorps service had an equalizing effect on sense of *neighborhood obligations* for *Wanderers*, as they caught up to their peers during the year of service and maintained a similar trajectory over the next seven years.

In the *grassroots efficacy* model, *Wanderers* and *Gappers* reported lower scores on the measure at baseline than *Young Idealists* and *Public Servants*. While their baseline scores differed, *Gappers*, *Young Idealists*, and *Public Servants* demonstrated similar trajectories over the course of the study, with an increase in *grassroots efficacy*

scores from the baseline to post-program waves of the study, and then a small to medium decline over the next seven years at the follow-up wave of the study. *Wanderers*, however, reported a decrease in *grassroots efficacy* scores at both the post-program and follow-up waves of the study. It thus appears that while for most AmeriCorps members, serving in AmeriCorps was associated with an increase in their self-confidence in being able to get things done at the grassroots level, for *Wanderers*, serving in AmeriCorps was actually associated with a decrease in their sense of *grassroots efficacy*. A potential explanation for this may be that given *Wanderers*' young age, limited education, and low public service motivation, they were exposed to situations or tasks for which they were not adequately prepared, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed and a decrease in self-confidence.

Finally, in the *community based activism* model, *Gappers* and *Wanderers* reported lower scores than *Young Idealists* and *Public Servants* at baseline. *Young Idealists*' and *Public Servants*' scores remained essentially flat from the baseline to post-program wave of the study, likely because their scores on the measure were already very high at baseline. *Gappers*' and *Wanderers*' scores, on the other hand, demonstrated a small increase. After the year of service, from the post-program to follow-up waves of the study, all groups demonstrated a decrease in community based activism, with *Young Idealists* demonstrating the largest decrease. A potential explanation for this large decrease is that because *Young Idealists* started with the highest scores on *community based activism*, and had yet to go through the period of emerging adulthood where there is evidence that civic awareness and commitment to the public interest may decline upon

entry into a career (Ward, 2014), their high level of *community based activism* was not sustainable as they transitioned into college and career after completing their service with AmeriCorps.

Beyond differential change in civic engagement outcomes, however, Hypothesis 2 was not supported because there were no significant differential changes in employment, life skills, or education outcomes between profiles within the sample of AmeriCorps members. While members may have started their year of service at different levels of each outcome, their trajectories did not differ, suggesting that AmeriCorps did not have the same differential impact on these other outcome areas as it did on civic engagement. As identified by Epstein (2009), program design varies widely across AmeriCorps programs, and program design elements play a significant role in outcomes for volunteers. It is possible that more distinctive outcome measures for employment aptitude, life skills, and education aptitude in the present study because these are not as universally recognized as central goals of AmeriCorps as other outcomes (Perry, 1999), and therefore may not have been consistently emphasized in study participants' programs.

### **Differential Outcomes within the Young Idealist Profile**

Consistent with Hypothesis 3a, repeated measures analyses of variance revealed that there was a significant differential change in sense of *grassroots efficacy* between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Young Idealist profile. AmeriCorps members demonstrated positive growth in *grassroots efficacy* during their

year of service, which was sustained through the follow-up period of the study, whereas comparison group members' scores on the measure declined across all waves of the study. This finding suggests that among Young Idealists, AmeriCorps members became more confident than comparison group members in their ability to “get things done” at the grassroots level during their year of service and beyond.

Beyond differential change in this civic engagement outcome, however, Hypothesis 3a was unsupported because there was no significant differential change detected between AmeriCorps and comparison group members in the Young Idealist profile for any of the employment, life skills, or education outcomes. A potential explanation for this lack of differential change is that given their high level of public service motivation, Young Idealists in the comparison group may have pursued other options, such as another year of service program, high volunteer or activism involvement while in college, or entry level work in service-related areas, that provided experiences similar to those they would have encountered as AmeriCorps members.

### **Differential Outcomes within the Wanderer Profile**

Consistent with Hypothesis 3b, repeated measures analyses of variance revealed that there was a significant differential change in sense of *neighborhood obligations* between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Wanderer profile. AmeriCorps members demonstrated positive growth in *neighborhood obligations* during their year of service, which was sustained through the follow-up period of the study, whereas comparison group members' scores on the measure remained flat across all

waves of the study. This finding suggests that among Wanderers, AmeriCorps members adopted a greater sense of the importance of “getting things done” at the at the neighborhood level during their year of service and beyond than comparison group members.

Beyond differential change in this civic engagement outcome, however, Hypothesis 3b was unsupported because there was no significant differential change detected between AmeriCorps and comparison group members in the Wanderer profile for any of the employment, life skills, or education outcomes. This lack of findings was particularly surprising because it was hypothesized that, given Wanderers’ young age, limited education, and low public service motivation, they would be the group that had the most potential for growth through a year of service. However, as evidenced by the decline in *grassroots efficacy* among Wanderers’ in the AmeriCorps sample, it is plausible that in addition to providing opportunities for growth, a year of service in AmeriCorps may also have presented challenges that Wanderers were not adequately prepared to handle. This balance between opportunities that lead to positive growth and challenges that can overwhelm members may therefore wash out when comparing outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Wanderer profile.

### **Differential Outcomes within the Gapper Profile**

Consistent with the Hypothesis 3c, repeated measures analyses of variance revealed significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and

comparison group members within the Gapper Profile on six outcomes spread across the areas of civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education. Within the civic engagement category, AmeriCorps members demonstrated positive growth in both *neighborhood obligations* and *grassroots efficacy* relative to comparison group members during their year of service, and their scores remained higher than comparison group members' scores during the follow-up wave of the study. These findings suggest that within the Gapper profile, AmeriCorps members adopted a greater sense of the importance of "getting things done" in their communities, as well as a greater confidence in their ability to do so, than comparison group members, and that this change was sustained in the long run.

Regarding employment, AmeriCorps and comparison group members reported nearly identical levels of *basic work skills* at baseline, but AmeriCorps members reported an increase during their year of service, while comparison group members' scores remained flat. This finding may suggest that a year of service with AmeriCorps provided greater training and experiential opportunities than entry-level post-college jobs obtained by Gappers. However, two caveats should be mentioned. First, it is likely that a certain percentage of Gappers in the comparison group pursued graduate studies in lieu of serving in AmeriCorps, which would likely provide fewer opportunities for growth in *basic work skills* than AmeriCorps service or another entry-level job. Second, because basic work skills were only measured at the baseline and post-program waves of the study, it cannot be determined if AmeriCorps members maintained a higher level of *basic work skills* in the long-term, or if comparison group members would have eventually

caught up.

Within the life skills category, AmeriCorps members showed significant differential change in both *constructive personal behavior in groups* and *appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity* relative to comparison group members. For *constructive personal behavior in groups*, AmeriCorps members reported slightly higher scores than comparison group members at baseline, but their scores decreased during the year of service, such that they were nearly identical to comparison group members' scores at the post-program wave. However, over the next seven years, AmeriCorps members' scores increased while comparison group members' scores stayed flat, such that AmeriCorps members reported a higher level of *constructive personal behavior in groups* at the follow-up wave of the study. AmeriCorps and comparison group members reported nearly identical scores for *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity* at baseline, and both groups' scores remained flat during the first year of the study. However, AmeriCorps members' scores also remained flat over the next seven-year period, whereas comparison group members' scores declined, such that AmeriCorps members reported a higher level of *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity* during the post-program wave of the study. Taken together, these findings suggest that while the challenging interpersonal situations encountered by AmeriCorps members in the Gapper profile during their year of service may limit short-term growth in positive group behavior and appreciation for diversity, these challenging experiences may also lay a foundation for positive long-term development in these areas relative to comparison group members.



Finally, regarding education, significant changes in *acceptance of responsibility for educational success* were also found between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Gapper profile. AmeriCorps members reported higher scores at baseline than comparison group members, but comparison group members' scores remained flat over the next year while AmeriCorps members' scores decreased slightly. While AmeriCorps members still reported a higher level of *acceptance of responsibility for educational success* than comparison group members at the follow-up wave of the study, this differing trajectory may suggest that AmeriCorps service is associated with a decrease in educational self-confidence among Gappers. However, as with the *basic work skills* measure, two important caveats should be mentioned. First, the likelihood that a certain percentage of Gappers in the comparison group were pursuing graduate studies during the first year of the study may have impacted the difference in the two groups' scores. Second, because *acceptance of responsibility for educational success* was only measured during the first two waves of the study, it is unclear whether this differing trajectory between AmeriCorps and comparison group members was sustained in the long-term, or was simply a short-term effect that may have washed out over time.

Of particular interest is the comparison between findings for the Gapper and Wanderer profiles. While both profiles exhibited low levels of public service motivation at baseline, AmeriCorps members in the Gapper profile demonstrated positive growth relative to comparison group members in five outcome areas, while AmeriCorps members in the Wanderer profile demonstrated positive growth relative to comparison group members in only one outcome. This discrepancy may suggest that while both

groups had a high potential for positive growth, Gappers may have been better prepared to benefit from a year of AmeriCorps service given their slightly older age and the higher level of experience, responsibility, and maturity represented by their attainment of a bachelor's degree.

### **Differential Outcomes within the Public Servant Profile**

Hypothesis 3d stated that, given Public Servants' older age, advanced education, and more solidified identity as evidenced by their high public service motivation, there would not be significant differential change in outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within the Public Servant profile. However, contrary to this hypothesis, repeated measures analyses of variance revealed significant differential change in two civic engagement outcomes and two life skills outcomes. No significant changes were detected for employment or education outcomes.

Within the civic engagement category, AmeriCorps members demonstrated positive growth in both *neighborhood obligations* and *grassroots efficacy* relative to comparison group members during their year of service, and their scores remained higher than comparison group members' scores during the follow-up wave of the study. These findings suggest that within the Public Servant profile, AmeriCorps members adopted a greater sense of the importance of "getting things done" in their communities, as well as a greater confidence in their ability to do so, than comparison group members, and that this change was sustained in the long run. Interestingly, these civic engagement-related findings within the Public Servant profile were nearly identical to those in the Gapper Profile, suggesting that AmeriCorps service has the potential to promote civic

engagement even among recent college graduates who already possess a high level of public service motivation.

Within the life skills category, AmeriCorps members showed significant differential change in both *constructive personal behavior in groups* and *appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity* relative to comparison group members. For *constructive personal behavior in groups*, AmeriCorps members reported nearly identical scores as comparison group members at baseline, but their scores decreased during the year of service, such that they were lower than comparison group members' scores at the post-program wave. However, over the next seven years, AmeriCorps members' scores increased while comparison group members' scores stayed flat, such that AmeriCorps members reported a higher level of *constructive personal behavior in groups* at the follow-up wave of the study. AmeriCorps members reported slightly lower scores for *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity* than comparison group members at baseline, and their scores decreased slightly during their year of service while comparison group members' scores remained flat. However, AmeriCorps members' scores increased slightly over the next seven-year period, whereas comparison group members' scores declined, such that AmeriCorps members reported a slightly higher level of *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity* during the post-program wave of the study. As with similar findings for these outcomes within the Gapper profile, these findings suggest that while the challenging interpersonal situations encountered by AmeriCorps members in the Public Servant profile during their year of service may limit short-term growth in positive group behavior and appreciation for diversity, these challenging experiences may

also lay a foundation for positive long-term development in these areas relative to comparison group members.

Hypothesis 3d was still partially supported given the lack of significantly different outcome trajectories between AmeriCorps and comparison group members in the areas of employment and education. This lack of findings contrasts with the Gapper profile, where outcome trajectories did differ between AmeriCorps and comparison group members in these areas. A potential explanation is that given Public Servants' high level of public service motivation, many comparison group members within the Public Servant profile may have ended up pursuing opportunities such as another year of service program, entry level work in the nonprofit or public sector, or graduate studies in a relevant field that provided similar experiences as a year of service in AmeriCorps. Conversely, Gappers' low level of public service motivation may have meant that comparison group members in the Gapper profile pursued more disparate opportunities.

Also of interest is the comparison between findings for the Public Servant and Young Idealist profiles. While both profiles exhibited high levels of public service motivation at baseline, AmeriCorps members in the Public Servant profile demonstrated positive growth relative to comparison group members in four outcome areas, while AmeriCorps members in the Young Idealist profile demonstrated positive growth relative to comparison group members in only one outcome. While it was hypothesized that Young Idealists' younger age and more limited education would represent a higher potential for growth, whereas Public Servants higher age and more advanced education would limit their potential for growth, the opposite appeared to be true. In spite of being

toward the upper age of the period of emerging adulthood, having a bachelor's degree, and having a more developed sense of identity as expressed by high public service motivation, Public Servants' sense of civic engagement and life skills were still quite malleable. Additionally, their advanced age and education relative to Young Idealists may in fact have made them better prepared to benefit from a year of service in AmeriCorps, as evidenced by the higher prevalence of significant, positive findings within the Public Servant profile.

### **Contribution to the Literature**

The significant, positive differential changes detected in civic engagement, employment, and life skills outcomes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members identified in this dissertation are consistent with the original analyses of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study which found that AmeriCorps was associated with positive outcomes in the areas of civic engagement and employment (Frumkin et al., 2009). However, by examining how outcome trajectories differed between diverse member profiles, the findings of this study also make two important new contributions to the literature on long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service.

First, the unique outcome trajectories observed between Young Idealists, Wanderers, Gappers, and Public Servants in the present study replicates Epstein's (2009) qualitative interview findings, that the impact of service in AmeriCorps varied based upon the member's background and motivation to serve, but in a longitudinal, quantitative study with a robust sample. The Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model (Hudson-Flege, 2017) posits that outcomes of the year of service will differ based

on characteristics of the individual volunteer, including age, education, and motivation to serve. By observing significant differential change in civic engagement outcomes between the four profiles within the sample of AmeriCorps members, and by demonstrating that significant changes between AmeriCorps and comparison group members differ across the four profiles, this study provides evidence in support of this notion.

Second, by dividing the study sample into distinct member profiles, the present study found significant outcomes of AmeriCorps service that were not previously identified in Frumkin et al.'s (2009) analyses that considered outcomes for AmeriCorps members as a whole. Whereas Frumkin et al. (2009) only identified significant, positive outcomes in the areas of civic engagement and employment, the present study also identified that both Gappers and Public Servants experienced significant differential change in the life skills outcome areas of *constructive personal behavior in groups* and *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity*. For both of these areas, while AmeriCorps members reported apparent declines in the short-term, their long-term trajectory was more positive than comparison group members'. As the two largest profiles, representing 63% of AmeriCorps members in the sample, these findings are especially important in providing evidence that AmeriCorps service is associated with positive life skill development for some members.

### **Policy Implications**

Findings of the present study also have implications at the policy level. First, to the extent that national leaders, both those within CNCS as well as congressional leaders,

wish to address concerns about declining civic participation in America today, this study adds to the body of evidence that AmeriCorps is effective at promoting a life-long commitment to civic engagement. While previous studies have found that AmeriCorps is associated with positive civic engagement outcomes (Flanagan et al., 2012; Frumkin et al., 2009; Ward, 2014), findings of the present study indicate that this is true for AmeriCorps members from diverse walks of life. Indeed, AmeriCorps members within all four profiles identified in this study demonstrated positive growth on at least one civic engagement measure relative to their peers in the comparison group. These findings support the contention that public investment in AmeriCorps can yield both short-term benefits for communities in which members serve, but also the long-term benefit of helping members grow into civic-minded leaders.

Findings of the present study also support the contention that AmeriCorps programs can support improved employment aptitude and life skills among members, as positive outcomes in these areas were identified for *Gappers* and *Public Servants*, who together represent more than 60% AmeriCorps members. However, it is important to note that these positive findings were not universal for all types of AmeriCorps members, and that positive educational outcomes were not identified in the present study for any group. Therefore, if employment, life skills, and education outcomes are truly a policy priority for national AmeriCorps leaders, additional attention and innovative approaches to these areas may be warranted.

Finally, a word of caution is warranted in how findings of this study may be related to AmeriCorps eligibility guidelines. Given the more modest positive outcomes

identified for AmeriCorps members in the *Young Idealist* and *Wanderer* profiles, it may be tempting to suggest that AmeriCorps programs should be limited to college graduates. However, such a policy change may be unwarranted for a few important reasons. First, because this study only examined outcomes for AmeriCorps members themselves, it cannot be used to infer that younger members are less effective in serving communities through AmeriCorps. Second, to the extent that AmeriCorps strives to maintain a diverse corps of members who are somewhat representative of the communities in which they serve, it must be noted that within the present study, *Young Idealists* and *Wanderers* represented the greatest source of economic and racial diversity. Finally, Flanagan et al.'s (2012) findings that AmeriCorps service can serve as an effective transition to adulthood in an era where such opportunities are becoming more limited, should be considered as an additional benefit of AmeriCorps programs for younger members.

### **Programmatic Implications**

#### **Member Recruitment**

Findings of the present study can help to inform AmeriCorps programming in the areas of member recruitment, support, and retention. Regarding member recruitment, it may be especially beneficial for AmeriCorps to develop promotional materials that speak to the unique background and motivation of each of the four member profiles identified in this study. While messaging about the central mission and benefits of AmeriCorps should remain present in all recruitment efforts, incorporating additional messaging and targeting efforts at each of the four member profiles may generate greater interest from prospective members.



For *Young Idealists*, messaging should especially emphasize opportunities for immediate, hands-on opportunities to make a positive difference. A line from a recent AmeriCorps\*NCCC promotional video, which states that, “You’re not *Help is on the Way*, you’re *Help is Here*,” (CNCS, 2017f) may especially speak to these young members who are eager for action. Additionally, because Young Idealists have not yet attended college, but may wish to do so in the future, and because their household income is lower than other members’, the educational benefits of AmeriCorps should be emphasized in recruitment efforts geared at Young Idealists. This could include both communication about the AmeriCorps education award, as well as testimonials of AmeriCorps alumni who achieved collegiate success after completing a year of service as a high school graduate. Finally, given Young Idealists’ age, promotional materials targeted at this group should include images and videos of younger members so that they will not have the sense that they are too young to join, and high schools could be an ideal outlet for reaching this group.

For *Wanderers*, messaging should emphasize opportunities for self-discovery and personal development provided through a year of service with AmeriCorps. For example, video or written testimonials from former members who joined AmeriCorps while trying to identify their goals and found a sense of purpose and direction during their year of service could be especially relevant. As with *Young Idealists*, given their limited education and lower household income, messaging about the educational benefits of AmeriCorps service may also be especially appealing to *Wanderers*. Given their intermediate age and education level, target areas for recruiting *Wanderers* may not be as

clear-cut as for other member profiles, but could include community colleges and job training centers, in addition to online and social media platforms.

For *Gappers*, messaging should emphasize the helpful role that a year of service with AmeriCorps can play in discerning career or graduate studies pathways after college. For example, in a short video about FEMA Corps, a relatively new AmeriCorps program providing disaster relief services, a member who joined the program after college stated that, “I figured it was a good way to take time from undergrad to grad school or a possible job, this would be a good experience to fill in that space while I do that,” (CNCS, 2016). Testimonials that describe AmeriCorps alumni who served in AmeriCorps after college, identified a new career direction, and succeeded in graduate school or their new profession could be especially interesting to *Gappers*. As recent college graduates, college campuses are likely the best recruiting ground for this group.

Finally, recruitment efforts targeting *Public Servants* should emphasize both the ability to make an immediate, positive impact through a year of service with AmeriCorps, as well as opportunities to springboard a career in the nonprofit or public sectors. For example, the brochure for AmeriCorps VISTA states that members can “Gain a Professional Edge: Make a tangible difference in the community while gaining professional skills to advance your career,” (CNCS, 2017g, pg. 6) and also describes how members receive non-competitive eligibility status which aids in federal government employment after the year of service. Testimonials showing AmeriCorps alumni who are now in leadership positions in the nonprofit or public sector may be especially interesting

to prospective members in this profile. As with *Gappers*, college campuses are likely the best recruiting ground for *Public Servants*.

Given this variety of messaging, on AmeriCorps websites it may be helpful to add a function that asks for some brief information from prospective members before directing them to recruitment pages. For example, a very brief survey asking the individual's age, their education level, and a multiple choice item asking why they want to serve could be used to direct prospective members to recruitment information that will be most relevant to them. For each profile, short video testimonials from AmeriCorps members and alumni to whom they can relate should be prominent on recruitment pages.

### **Member Support and Retention**

Findings of the present study can also be used to help inform AmeriCorps program leaders' efforts to support and retain members. Given the diversity and relative autonomy of individual AmeriCorps programs, training, support, and retention efforts vary widely. However, each AmeriCorps program may allow members to devote up to 20% of their service hours to training and professional development, and the CNCS website provides several training resources (CNCS, 2017i). While it is not possible to make specific recommendations relative to each individual AmeriCorps program, findings of the present study can be used to highlight areas where AmeriCorps program leaders may wish to pay special attention and make broad recommendations. Of particular interest, the present analyses revealed four outcome areas where members in one or more profiles demonstrated a decline during the year of service relative to either

their AmeriCorps peers in other profiles, or members of their same profile who were in the comparison group. These outcomes included *grassroots efficacy*, *constructive personal behavior in groups*, *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity*, and *acceptance of responsibility for educational success*. AmeriCorps program leaders may therefore wish to ensure that additional training and support are provided to members in each of these areas.

Regarding *grassroots efficacy*, while most profiles within the sample of AmeriCorps members demonstrated an increase in their scores on the measure during the year of service, *Wanderers* actually demonstrated a decrease. This decline may have been due in part to their younger age, limited education, and their lower level of public service motivation at baseline. Taken together, these characteristics point to the possibility that they may have been unprepared for some of the challenging experiences they would encounter or have had unrealistic expectations of what they would accomplish during their year of service. Increased training at the beginning of the year of service that prepares *Wanderers* for the challenges they will face, and equips them with skills to better respond to them, could be beneficial. Additionally, given the higher *grassroots efficacy* of other member profiles throughout the study, particularly *Public Servants*, formal peer mentoring relationships between members may be helpful. Matching a *Wanderer* and a *Public Servant*, under the oversight from program staff, might offer valuable support to the *Wanderer* as they encounter new challenges and experiences during their AmeriCorps service, while at the same time providing an important leadership development opportunity to the *Public Servant*. Given the centrality

of promoting civic engagement to the AmeriCorps mission, coupled with the promising results for other civic engagement measures identified in this study, addressing the concern of decreasing *grassroots efficacy* among *Wanderers* may be a top priority for AmeriCorps leadership.

For *constructive personal behavior in groups*, both *Gappers* and *Public Servants* reported declines in the measure from the baseline to post-program waves of the study, while their peers in the comparison group remained essentially flat. This same pattern held true for *appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity* within the *Public Servant* profile. While these declines were outweighed by gains from the post-program to follow-up waves, such that AmeriCorps members in both profiles reported higher scores on the measures than comparison group members at the end of the study, these short-term findings are still a cause for concern that AmeriCorps leaders may wish to address. Regarding group dynamics, while both *Gappers* and *Public Servants* likely had exposure to working in group settings in college, it is likely that living and working with peers in often stressful new situations during their AmeriCorps service represented a new level of challenging group dynamics. Additionally, because *Public Servants* and *Gappers* had a lower representation of minority individuals and a higher household income than other profiles, it is likely that they were exposed to a new level of racial and economic diversity during their year of service. This new diversity may have been present among both their fellow AmeriCorps members in other profiles and the communities in which they served. At the beginning of the year of service, additional training on group dynamics and diversity may be beneficial, coupled with formal avenues for members to seek support

and guidance when encountering difficult group situations. Regarding appreciation for diversity, it is plausible that short-term declines among Public Servants resulted from a gap between their own cultural background and the new community in which they are serving, as suggested by the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model (Hudson-Flege, 2017). Formal peer mentoring relationships between diverse AmeriCorps members may offer promise in this area. For example, a *Wanderer* or *Young Idealist*, who may be better attuned to the diverse community in which they are serving, could be matched with a *Public Servant* coming from a less racially or economically diverse background. This pairing could create a more comfortable, informal bridge between the *Public Servant*'s own background and their new community, and at the same time provide important leadership development opportunities for the *Wanderer* or *Young Idealist*.

Finally, AmeriCorps members in the *Gapper* profile demonstrated a decline in *acceptance of responsibility for educational success* during the year of service, while comparison group members' scores remained flat. While this finding should be interpreted with caution given reasons discussed earlier in this chapter (the item was only measured during the first two waves of the study, and a percentage of comparison group members were likely enrolled in graduate school during the first year of the study), AmeriCorps program leaders may still wish to explore how additional supports could be put in place for *Gappers* as they consider their future educational options. While the education award is certainly an important financial benefit to support *Gappers*' future studies, another pressing concern for this group may be a lack of clarity and direction in

their career and educational goals. Additional career and educational exploration opportunities early in the year of service may be especially beneficial for *Gappers*, as well as their younger counterparts, *Wanderers*. As members consider their educational options after the year of service, more formal partnerships between AmeriCorps and colleges and universities may be helpful. AmeriCorps does have a Matching Institutions program, which lists colleges and universities that will provide a matching scholarship of at least \$1,000 to AmeriCorps members' education award (CNCS, 2017h). However, AmeriCorps may wish to take this program a step further by working with colleges and universities to establish more clear-cut, formal pathways for AmeriCorps members to continue their education at partnering institutions such as special admissions tracks, paid internship opportunities, or additional scholarship and fellowship opportunities. The Peace Corps' Coverdell Fellowship Program, which offers these opportunities for Peace Corps alumni entering graduate school (Peace Corps, 2017b), may be a foundation for a model to be adapted by AmeriCorps programs. Given the prevalence of AmeriCorps members who have not yet completed a bachelor's degree, such a program could also be expanded to undergraduate or technical education programs.

The key programmatic takeaway from the present study is that AmeriCorps members are diverse in terms of their background and motivation to serve, and this diversity plays a role in the impact of AmeriCorps service on members. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, AmeriCorps program leaders, from the national to local level, should incorporate this diversity into member recruitment, training, and support efforts wherever possible. Furthermore, while the programmatic implications

listed above have been specific to AmeriCorps, other year of service program leaders may also wish to consider how they can take a more nuanced approach to recruiting and supporting their members. Doing so may allow more diverse volunteers in AmeriCorps and other year of service programs to have a positive experience and ensure that they will “get things done” for life.

### **Limitations**

The present study possessed many strengths by using a large, longitudinal sample with a quasi-experimental design. However, there are two major limitations which must be noted. First, while this study extended the literature by examining how outcomes differ among diverse groups of AmeriCorps members, the study was not able to account for other types of diversity outlined in the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model, including individual service program characteristics (i.e. team based vs. individual service program or direct vs. indirect service program), community characteristics (i.e. urban vs. rural), and changes over time that have affected the perception, design, and outcomes of AmeriCorps programs (i.e. the Great Recession). Variance at these levels may in some cases have outweighed individual member differences, possibly explaining some of the non-significant models in the study. In other cases, where significant differences in outcomes were identified in the present study, the inclusion of variables at the program, community, or chronosystem levels may have caused member profile to become a non-significant predictor. Nonetheless, given the availability of the data, identifying even limited differences in outcome trajectories among diverse groups of AmeriCorps has helped to extend the current literature and



inform future research that may wish to incorporate more elements of the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model.

Second, because baseline surveys in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study were conducted from 1999 to 2000, member characteristics and outcomes may not be representative of AmeriCorps members serving today. As indicated in the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model, changes over time such as major events or economic and social changes may effect year of service programs and their outcomes. For example, there may be important differences between Millennial AmeriCorps members who joined AmeriCorps in an economy that was drastically altered by the Great Recession and late Generation X volunteers who chose to serve in AmeriCorps during the robust economy of the late 1990s. A more recent AmeriCorps Alumni Survey was conducted among members who served in 2004, 2009, and 2012, which would likely be more representative of current AmeriCorps members. Unfortunately, this study employed a less rigorous design (cross-sectional survey including only AmeriCorps members) and fewer measures, limiting the ability of the research questions proposed in the present study to be examined. However, findings of this dissertation may potentially be used to inform more limited analyses of the more recent AmeriCorps Alumni Survey which could identify differences and similarities between volunteers in the two datasets.

Additional limitations include the reliance on self-reported data, the lack of a true experimental design with random assignment, and the omission of several outcome measures due to insufficient reliability. Nonetheless, by using the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, with its eight years of data, comparison group, large sample,

numerous baseline variables measuring member demographics and motivation to serve, and several valid and reliable outcome measures, this dissertation makes an important contribution to the literature by examining the long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service among diverse groups of members.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In light of both the findings of the present study and its limitations, several recommendations for future research are suggested. First, given the age of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, similar analyses to those in the present study should be conducted within the AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Survey, which interviewed AmeriCorps members who served in 2004, 2009, and 2012 (Cardazone et al., 2015). While the data and methodology are not as robust as that of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, comparative analyses could still be useful in determining if the profiles and outcomes identified in the present study look similar among AmeriCorps members who served in more recent years.

Second, an additional wave of the data collection among participants in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study could be particularly instructive in identifying the longer-term impacts of AmeriCorps service. Now that nearly 20 years have passed since the baseline data collection, the emerging adult AmeriCorps and comparison group members tracked in this study have now moved into full adulthood, likely passing numerous important professional, family, and personal milestones along the way. Examining whether the positive outcomes identified during the first eight years of the

study are still present 20 years later, and identifying whether any new positive outcomes emerge, could be invaluable in improving the understanding of the long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps service.

Third, new longitudinal research is needed for AmeriCorps, as well as for other year of service programs. Particularly absent is rigorous, longitudinal research evaluating the effectiveness of the Peace Corps, the oldest and best known national service program in the United States. New longitudinal research could shed light on the impacts of a year of service on today's volunteers. Additionally, new longitudinal research could also incorporate additional layers (service program, community, and chronosystem) and outcomes (individual, host community, and home community) of the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model in order to more thoroughly assess the impact of year of service programs.

Finally, qualitative research seeking to validate and better understand the member profiles and outcomes in the present study is needed. Interviews with alumni of AmeriCorps and other year of service programs who fit each profile could be instructive in more fully understanding their motivation to serve the ways their year of service impacted them in the long-run. Findings from such research could be particularly helpful for AmeriCorps and other year of service program leaders seeking to develop more nuanced member recruitment, support, and retention strategies for diverse volunteers.

## Conclusion

As evidenced by the AmeriCorps pledge (CNCS, 2017a), a long-term goal of AmeriCorps programs is to foster civic-minded leaders who will “get things done” in their communities long after their year of service comes to an end. While previous studies have identified positive long-term outcomes for AmeriCorps members, the present study expanded this literature by examining how outcomes differ among diverse groups of members. Using data from the 1999-2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study (Jastrzab et al., 2007), which tracked samples of approximately 2,000 AmeriCorps members and 2,000 comparison group members, four distinct member profiles were identified. These profiles included *Young Idealists* (recent high school graduates with high public service motivation), *Wanderers* (19-20 year-olds with a high school diploma and possibly some college who had a low public service motivation), *Gappers* (recent college graduates with low public service motivation), and *Public Servants* (recent college graduates with high public service motivation). The study then examined how outcome trajectories in the areas of civic engagement, employment, life skills, and education differed between these four profiles within the sample of AmeriCorps members, as well as between AmeriCorps and comparison group members within each profile. Consistent with the Cross-Cultural Year of Service Theoretical Model (Hudson-Flege, 2017), analyses in the present study revealed that outcome trajectories differed for each of the four profiles, indicating that members’ background and motivation plays an important role in the long-term impact of AmeriCorps service.

Each profile demonstrated positive growth in civic engagement relative to comparison group members over the eight-year period, supporting the contention that AmeriCorps programs help to foster civic-minded leaders. Findings in the areas of employment, life skills, and education, however, were mixed among the profiles. AmeriCorps program leaders may therefore wish to adopt a more nuanced approach to member recruitment, retention, and support that can better account for the diversity of AmeriCorps members and ensure that more diverse members will have a positive experience and “get things done” for life. More current and comprehensive research is needed to better understand the background and motivation of AmeriCorps members and other year of service volunteers today, and to better understand the long-term outcomes of AmeriCorps and other year of service programs on individual volunteers and the communities in which they serve.

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