

AmeriCorps VISTA

Sponsor Meeting

November 18, 2020

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Agenda



- Welcome and Introductions
- VISTA Director Remarks
- VISTA Updates
- National Service Programs, Community Well-Being, Volunteers, and Donations: A Review of Two Studies
 - Guest speaker: Dr. Pamela Paxton
- Q&A
- Webinar Evaluation
- Closing Remarks

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Tech Check



Access the audio through the computer or on the phone: 669-254-5252 or 646-828-7666, meeting ID 161 500 0017, passcode 279870



The Chat will be monitored throughout our meeting; please test it now with a short greeting.



The recording and slides will be posted on the VISTA Campus in the next week.

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Welcome!



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VISTA Director Updates



- Xqfhwldq#Wp hv#
- Frqwbqrxv#R s srwqqlhv
- Dp huFrusv#Y LVWD #Exgjhw
- Vshfldq#xhw#Vshdnhu



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AmeriCorps VISTA FY2021 Budget



1. Currently, AmeriCorps does not have a full year budget. We are operating under a Continuing Resolution until December 11, 2020.
2. Due to economic stress, some sponsors are unable to support Cost Share members.
3. The VISTA Living Allowance was significantly increased for FY2021.
4. To help sponsors, VISTA increased funds for Support Grants.
5. More VISTA members are choosing the end of year stipend instead of the education award. The end of year stipend is funded from VISTA's budget; the education award has a different funding stream.

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Dr. Pamela Paxton



Dr. Paxton is the
Linda K. George and John Wilson
Professor of Sociology at
The University of Texas at Austin.

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National Service Programs, Community Well-Being, Volunteers, and Donations

A Review of Two Studies

Pamela Paxton, Kristopher Velasco, Andrew Messamore, Robert Ressler



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The Issue: What We Know and Don't Know

- Do national service programs have an impact?
 - AmeriCorps/VISTA members help *provide services*
 - AmeriCorps/VISTA members help *themselves* over the life course as a result of their service
- But do national service programs also affect the *community*?
- Our research: Do national service programs improve community well-being?



Research Design: How can we answer the question?

- How do we define community? Community = *County*
- National Service: Presence of AmeriCorps programs
 - Overall / AmeriCorps State / AmeriCorps National / AmeriCorps VISTA / AmeriCorps “Other” (Promise Fellows, Tribal, etc.)



Research Design: How can we answer the question?

- Third, how do we define community well-being?
- Subjective well-being
 - Increasing interest
 - Example: Healthy People 2020, Gross Domestic Happiness
 - Typically measured via surveys



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Research Design: How can we answer the question?

- How do we measure subjective well-being?
- Data source: Twitter
 - 1) Engagement; 2) Disengagement; 3) Positive Relations; 4) Negative Relations; 5) Positive Emotions; 6) Negative Emotions
 - Disengagement Words/Total Words Tweeted



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Using Twitter to Measure Subjective Well-Being

Dictionary	Top Words	Example Tweets*
Engagement	Learn Interesting Awake	Alive Interested Learning
		"I'm properly <i>learning</i> Chinese from a babys program called Ni Hao, Kai Lan! Ha," - November 9, 2009
		"A weekend full of flying, crashing, chatting with flier friends (some super folks) rain winds storm...total excitement...felt so <i>alive</i> ," September 15, 2010
Disengagement	Meh Tired Bored	Lazy Blah Sleepy
		"Listening to the game on my phone because I can't seem to get myself out of bed to go watch. <i>meh</i> ," July 9, 2010
		"I'm so <i>bored</i> ...literally nothing to do in this town," August 14, 2010



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Research Design: How can we answer the question?

- How do we connect these?



- Linear regression
 - Shows *association*
 - Allows for broad overview
- Results? Significant effects!



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Research Design: How can we answer the question?

What could be wrong about these results?

1. Counties with AmeriCorps programs may be *different* than those that do not receive such programs
2. Counties with greater levels of subjective well-being can *better attract* AmeriCorps



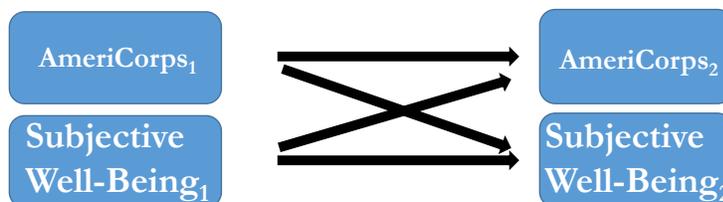
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Research Design: How can we answer the question?

Addressing these concerns:

1. Control variables: Income, racial/ethnic diversity, education level, rurality, age, state fixed effects.
2. Add in a second wave of data: Wave 1: 2006-2009; Wave 2: 2010-2013
 - Consider reverse effects



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Results

	Engagement	Disengagement
Overall Programs	+	-
AmeriCorps National		-
AmeriCorps State		-
AmeriCorps VISTA	+	-
AmeriCorps Other		-

• Note: small effect sizes



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Takeaways

- AmeriCorps programs help improve community subjective well-being
- Largely through the *buffering* against *negative* aspects
- VISTA has positive effect on engagement
- The reverse effects suggests that when considering applications, AmeriCorps should pay particular attention to “quiet” or atypical communities



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National Service Programs, Community Well-Being, Volunteers, and Donations

A Review of Two Studies

Pamela Paxton, Kristopher Velasco, Andrew Messamore, Robert Ressler



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Study 2: Background

The Issue: What We Know and Don't Know

- Do national service programs have an impact?
 - AmeriCorps/VISTA members help *provide services*
 - AmeriCorps/VISTA members help *themselves* over the life course as a result of their service
 - National service programs also affect *community* subjective well-being
- But do national service programs also affect the *nonprofits themselves*?
- Our research: Does VISTA help nonprofits get more donations and volunteers?



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Research Design: New Data

- (1) IRS Forms 990: More than 100,000 nonprofits from 2010-present
- (2) VISTA data from AmeriCorps: 92,000 service terms at 2,685 nonprofits from 2003-2019
- How do we connect these?



Questions

1. Is VISTA presence related to greater volunteering and donations two years after participation in the program?
2. Do nonprofits that have VISTA service members have higher levels of volunteering and donations in general over time?



Data: VISTA Interventions

- Data from CNCS VISTA placements
- VISTA Present
 - Indicator for whether or not an organization received VISTA service members
- VISTA Days (logged)
 - Continuous measure for the number of days of VISTA service received



Research Design: How can we answer the question?



What could go wrong?

1. Financially successful nonprofits may be more likely to apply for VISTA
2. Nonprofits that have more volunteers might apply for VISTA in order to help manage those programs



Methods

- **Matching**
 - Match organizations that received VISTA between 2010 and 2014 to very similar organizations that never participated in the program
 - Look at donations and volunteers two years later

- **Cross-Sectional Time Series with Two-Way Fixed Effects of VISTA receiving organizations**
 - 2010-2016



Results

Table 3. OLS Models Of 2-Year Lagged Volunteers on VISTA Member Presence from 2010 to 2016

	(1)	(2)	(3)
VISTA Present	0.534* (0.231)		
VISTA Days		0.108* (0.042)	0.062* (0.026)
Lagged Volunteers			0.775*** (0.018)

Table 4. OLS Models Of 2-Year Lagged Donations on VISTA Member Presence from 2010 to 2016

	(1)	(2)	(3)
VISTA Present	1.189** (0.435)		
VISTA Days		0.202* (0.079)	0.061 (0.049)
Lagged Donations			0.791*** (0.018)

*All controls in models



Results

Table 4. Cross-Sectional Time Series with Two-Way Fixed Effects of Volunteers and Donations on VISTA Days, 2010-2016

Model	1	2
	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Donations</i>
VISTA Days	0.034**	0.003
	(0.011)	(0.011)

*All controls in models

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Takeaways

- VISTA is associated with greater volunteering in later years
- The lack of an effect on donations? We do not track whether VISTA members worked on fundraising programs

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Nonprofit Open Data Collective



Collect. Document. Release.

Building open data assets to support the nonprofit sector.



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Research Design: How can we answer the question?

Six Dimensions of Subjective Well-Being

- Today, we focus on two: Engagement and disengagement

Engagement	Disengagement
Learning	Meh
Interesting	Tired
Alive	Bored
Alert	Blah
Involved	Sleepy
Creative	Exhausted

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Positive Emotions	Great Happy Awesome	Cool Amazing Glad	"Just ate an amazing salad at the Aroma Café! Mmmmm Sooo Good!!" November 12, 2009 "I am so happy right now. My dearest friends just came back from Africa with their new son!! He is so adorable! God is so good! :)," November 12 2009
Negative Emotions	Pissed Sad Mad	Terrible Horrible Sorry	"Didn't get to go to halloween world today... pissed ," October 12, 2009 "Good job making me feel horrible , like i'm worth nothing);," July 14, 2010
Negative Relations	Jealous Blame Alone	Hate Evil Rude	"really hate some men sometimes or maybe I just pick the crap ones lol," August 29, 2009 "Dealing with an astounding rude and unhelpful Sprint Store employee," August 29, 2009



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Introduction

Anti-Poverty Nonprofits and the U.S. Government

- The U.S. government relies heavily on nonprofit organizations to do anti-poverty work
- Nonprofits provide *civic infrastructure* (Lang and Hornburg 1998)
- The federal government supports by providing tax-emptions, grants, contracts, etc.
- They also use national service programs to provide human resource support:
 - Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)



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Threats to Inference

- We theorize that the presence of VISTA service members should build capacity at nonprofits, leading to more volunteers and donations later.
- However, confounding factors:
 - Financially successful nonprofits may be more likely to apply for VISTA
 - Nonprofits with more government relationships may have more VISTA members and more donations (“crowding-in,” de Wit and Bekkers 2017)
 - Nonprofits that have more volunteers might apply for VISTA in order to help manage those programs
- **Matching as a solution**



Data: Outcomes

- Data from IRS nonprofit reporting forms: Form 990 only
 - 2010 - 2016
- Donations (logged)
 - Membership dues, contributions from fundraisers, non-cash contributions, other contributions
- Volunteers (logged)



Methods

- Coarsened Exact Matching
 - Uses “binning” of continuous variables and levels of categorical variables to create bandwidth for exact matches
 - Observations are included if they can be exactly matched to another organization within a specific bin of all variables (there must be a VISTA receiving and non-VISTA receiving organization)
 - All organizations that do not appear in a matched bin are dropped
 - Match on: Volunteers and donations in year of VISTA initiation, as well as end-of-year net assets, total number of employees, government grants, program service revenue, field of service, length of mission statement reported in the Form 990, and start year
 - 1,196 single-site nonprofits, of which 80 are organizations that received incident VISTA service members between 2010 and 2014



Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Matched Sample

	VISTA Present (N=80)	Overall (N=1196)
Donation Price		
Mean (SD)	1.23 (0.276)	1.45 (2.99)
Median [Min, Max]	1.19 [1.00, 3.16]	1.16 [1.00, 79.1]
End of Year Assets (Logged)		
Mean (SD)	14.2 (1.93)	13.7 (2.46)
Median [Min, Max]	14.5 [7.06, 18.5]	13.5 [0, 19.8]
Number of Employees		
Mean (SD)	115 (198)	143 (361)
Median [Min, Max]	30.0 [0, 1220]	5.00 [0, 1880]
Total Functional Expenditures (Logged)		
Mean (SD)	8.69 (5.12)	5.96 (5.72)
Median [Min, Max]	11.0 [0, 14.4]	8.09 [0, 14.4]
Program Service Revenue (Logged)		
Mean (SD)	9.78 (5.75)	9.02 (6.47)
Median [Min, Max]	11.9 [0, 17.8]	11.4 [0, 18.8]
Government Grants (Logged)		
Mean (SD)	8.74 (6.94)	3.52 (6.07)
Median [Min, Max]	12.5 [0, 16.4]	0 [0, 16.4]



What questions do you have?



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Next VISTA Sponsor Meeting



**Wednesday,
January 13, 2021
3-4:00 p.m. ET**

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Meeting Evaluation



Please take a few minutes to provide feedback on today's meeting:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SponCallNov18>

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*Thank
You!*



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