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Delegation of Coordination and Outcomes in Cross-Sector Partnerships

The Case of Service Learning Partnerships

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This article furthers knowledge on cross-sector partnerships. It distinguishes between partnerships that produce predefined outcomes and those that produce co-defined ones. Predefined outcomes are defined by one partner prior to the formation of the partnership and could have been attained easily with alternative partners. Co-defined outcomes are defined by partners in mutual consultation and tailored to the resources and goals of the participants. The article identifies delegation as a factor that crucially defines whether partnerships produce pre- or co-defined outcomes. Delegation occurs when there is a clear-cut division between coordination and participation so that staff members engaged as coordinators are otherwise disengaged from the partnership. Delegated partnerships—those with coordinators engaged only in coordinating duties—are likely to produce predefined outcomes whereas undelegated partnerships are likely to produce co-defined outcomes. The article builds on a grounded theory study of 11 service learning partnerships formed by institutions of higher education and community organizations.

Keywords: *cross-sector partnerships; interorganizational relations; service learning; community–university partnerships*

The past two decades have seen a proliferation of cross-sector partnerships (Austin, 2000a, 2000b; Parker & Selsky, 2004). This increase is highly desirable. These partnerships marshal talent and resources from previously unconnected sources and can define and implement creative solutions to complex social problems (Brown, 1991; Brown & Ashman, 1996; Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002; Osborne, 2000; Parker & Selsky, 2004; Trist, 1983; Waddock & Post, 1995; Westley & Vredenburg, 1997). The achievement of these positive outcomes, however, is neither easy nor

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immediate, and most frequently, cross-sector partnerships remain circumscribed in scope and produce strategically marginal outcomes (Austin, 2000a).

This article identifies delegation as a structural factor that simultaneously supports the formation of cross-sector partnerships and prevents the staff members involved from defining outcomes beyond those agreed prior to the formation of the partnerships. Delegation occurs when a staff member, otherwise disengaged from the partnership, assumes the role of coordinator, creating a clear-cut separation between coordination responsibilities (e.g., identification of participants) and participation responsibilities (e.g., definition of outcomes). Such separation can expedite the formation of partnerships (see Weber, 1947), but it can also discourage their development. Most simply, this separation discourages participants from engaging in coordinating exchanges and coordinators from using their coordinating exchanges for anything other than coordination. The result is a decrease in the number of occasions that participants or coordinators can use to develop mutual trust and gain fine-grained information (see Uzzi, 1997).

The article builds on a study of 11 service learning (SL) partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHE) and community groups. SL is a pedagogical tool in which community work is intrinsic to the learning process (Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001, p. 445; also Bringle, Games, Ludlum, Osgood, & Osborne, 2000; Hinck & Brandell, 2000; Marullo, 1996; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mooney & Edwards, 2001). Most frequently, the implementation of SL requires the formation of partnerships between educational institutions and members of their surrounding communities (Cruz & Giles, 2000).

The partnerships we studied were clearly divided between those that produced predefined outcomes and those that produced co-defined ones, and there was an uncanny overlap between the type of outcomes these partnerships produced and whether they were delegated or not. Four of these 11 partnerships were delegated; they included a staff member of the IHE exclusively in charge of coordination (coordinator). These partnerships all produced predefined outcomes. Predefined outcomes were those defined prior to the identification of the partners and could easily be derived with alternative partners. The remaining seven partnerships were undelegated. Two did not include a coordinator, and five included a coordinator engaged beyond coordination. All seven of these partnerships produced co-defined outcomes. Co-defined outcomes were defined by members after the formation of the partnership and were tailored to the goals and needs of the organizations engaged.

The co-presence identified by our research between delegation and outcomes (pre- or co-defined) needs to be further explored and empirically tested in studies that can establish whether the connection is causal. It is timely, considering that administrative structures with the specific charge of forming and maintaining partnerships may be on the rise. A quick Internet search indicates that many corporations now have community outreach and external relations departments. Similar structures are also proliferating in government agencies (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004), nonprofit organizations (Smith, 1998), and IHEs (Dorado & Giles, 2004).

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Sl as an Arena for the Study of Cross-Sector Partnerships

Cross-sector partnerships are interorganizational collaborative arrangements linking organizations from fields dominated by logics (Thornton, 2004) of operation (e.g., profit, social service, vocational) that are frequently disparate and, at times, conflicting. SL partnerships involving IHEs and communities (Enos & Morton, 2003) provide an excellent arena to study these partnerships. In essence, an SL project is a volunteering opportunity (e.g., serving soup in a congregate feeding center, writing a technical report, doing community-based research, or teaching in an afterschool program) that is frequently mandatory for graduation or represents a percentage of a student's grade in a specific course. SL partnerships involve an instructor, a community partner, and (with increasing frequency) a university staff member (the *coordinator*) in charge of expanding SL and/or, more broadly, furthering the IHE's engagement in the surrounding community. These individuals provide the social infrastructure for students to engage in SL projects. Most basically, instructors are expected to define and supervise students' SL experience. Community partners are supposed to use students' volunteering work productively. Finally, coordinators are expected to identify and form (or facilitate the formation of) partnerships with community partners.

SL partnerships are highly valued because of their potential to bring "academics and practitioners into closer relationships" (Ostrander, 2004, p. 74) and to engage IHEs' rich resources in addressing pressing social, civic, and ethical problems (Boyer, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Moreover, as is common in cross-sector partnerships, SL partnerships link organizations with different access to resources and power (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Maurrasse, 2001a, 2001b), which increases the risk of failure by affecting the parties' ability to reciprocate (Ostrom, 1990).

Emerging Theoretical Model

Research on cross-sector partnerships is characterized by its fragmentation and diversity of theoretical frameworks (Gray & Wood, 1991). The result is lack of consistent and cumulative progress. Luckily, recent research is converging on a theoretical model that provides a solid foundation for studying differences among partnerships (see Austin, 2000a; Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). This model frames the formation and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships in terms of *drivers* and *enablers* (see Austin, 2000a). Figure 1 provides a graphic summary.

Drivers are those factors that motivate participants to begin and support the development of cross-sector partnerships. The traditional and most widely held view on drivers focuses on shared goals and explains the formation and development of cross-sector partnerships, and in general all interorganizational partnerships, in terms of participants' expectations of the outcomes they will produce. From this

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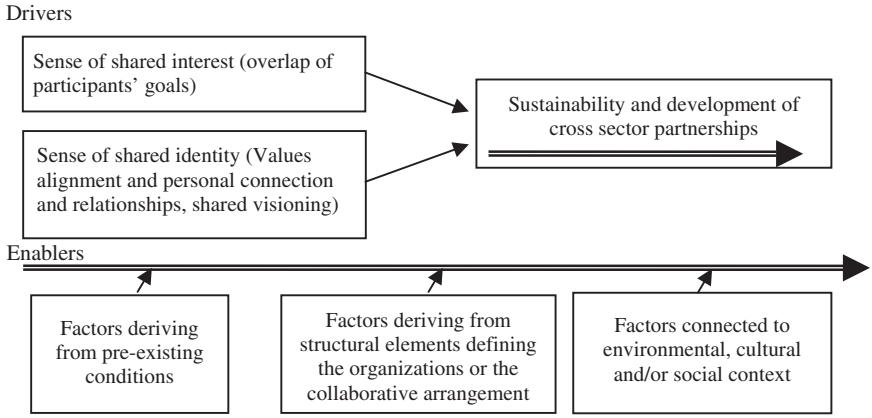
Figure 1
Current Theoretical Framework of Cross-Sector Partnerships



Based on Austin, 2000; Anthony, 2005; Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004.

perspective, the formation and endurance of partnerships depends on whether the balance of benefits derived and costs incurred exceeds a certain level expected by the participants (Brass et al., 2004). This balance can be threatened by the anticipation that, once they derived their benefits, organizations cannot be trusted to remain in the partnership and reciprocate (Coleman, 1990).

Social identity theory provides an alternative and paradigmatically different view of the formation and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships. The crucial insight from this perspective is that "individuals are more willing to cooperate in a group if they feel part of the group" (Anthony, 2005; Tajfel, 1981), regardless of whether they already know the benefits they can derive from working together. Among individuals, this sense of shared identity may emerge from shared external characteristics (such as gender, race, or age) and/or internal psychological ones (such as values, beliefs, and norms; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). More interesting, this sense of shared identity or destiny can develop through social contact as participants interact, become engaged, and eventually experience a sense of "common fate" (Brewer & Kramer, 1986). In organizations, a sense of shared identity may derive from factors such as similarities in purpose and commonality of challenges. It can also develop as the relational dynamics generated in the partnership lead the staff involved to identify a sense of shared destiny among their organizations.

Researchers have assumed that there is a direct connection between the outcomes expected by participating organizations and whether the staff members representing

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them have or develop a sense of common fate over time. This is consistent with recent research on interpersonal collaboration (see Anthony, 2005). The identification of an overlap in interests among staff members encourages them to engage and interact and hence develop a shared sense of identity. In turn, participants are far more likely to identify and/or develop shared interests and goals when they engage in mutual influence and joint learning. A growing body of work, however, indicates that, when partnerships involve organizations, structural factors framing the relationship of the staff members involved crucially define whether partnerships evolve beyond an initially identified goal.

Enablers are factors that "deal with relationship management" (Austin, 2000a, p. 71), that enable the formation, maintenance, and/or development of partnerships beyond the parties' initial engagement (Austin, 2000a; Brass et al., 2004). Scholars have identified three sets of factors that crucially define the formation and development of relational dynamics supportive of cross-sector partnerships: (a) factors that define participants prior to their participation, (b) those connected either with the organizational structure of the organizations or the arrangements connecting them, and (c) those contextual to the partnership. Regarding prior experience, research has suggested that the likelihood of participants to identify overlapping goals or a shared identity increases when the staff involved has been engaged in prior partnerships (Li & Rowley, 2002), whether or not those partnerships included the current partner. It also increases when the staff members involved are connected through interpersonal relations and trust (Beckman, Haunschild, & Phillips, 2004; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998). On the negative side, scholars have argued that differentials in status and power among the organizations involved might undermine participants' willingness to engage and remain in a partnership (Ostrom, 1990; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992).

Regarding the organizational structure of the parties, Austin (2000a) has discussed the enabling impact of factors such as the visibility and perceived relevance of a partnership, the existence and frequent use of channels of communication, and the administrative integration of the partnership into the organizational structure of participants so that it becomes an explicit part of managers' job descriptions. Ashman (2001) has identified factors that hinder the development of partnerships, such as participating organizations' tendencies to rigidly adhere to procedures, their internal resistance to complying with partnership agreements, frequent turnover of personnel, and even their size. These factors, of course, hinder the development of mutual trust and understanding among participants. In turn, regarding the structure of arrangements linking the participants, most research has been directed toward understanding how the staff members involved develop shared understandings and goals (see, e.g., Westley & Vredenburg, 1991) that may eventually lead them to believe that they can better serve the mission of their organizations through collective action (Das & Teng, 2002; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Martin, 2004). This is not surprising. Cross-sector partnerships link organizations that inhabit societal sectors defined by

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disparate institutional logics (see Thornton, 2004). Processes and behaviors that facilitate active communication, mutual influence, and joint learning (Ashman, 2001, p. 77; also Brown & Ashman, 1996; Lewis, 1998) may help participants overcome initial differences. This can also be helped by the definition of clear expectations regarding responsibilities and accountability (see Austin, 2000a), which can even be formalized in documents governing the relationship among the parties (see Ashman, 2001). Finally, the engagement of conveners can also bridge differences among "unaware, unsure or skeptical actors to explore the possibilities of cooperation" (Kaleongakar & Brown, 2000, p. 9; see also Dorado & Vaz, 2003). Conveners are individuals who possess a set of qualities that encourage participants to overcome the initial distrust likely when there are differences in status, power, and access to resources among the parties involved (Dorado & Vaz, 2003).

Finally, regarding factors contextual to the partnerships, scholars have discussed the role of specific legislation favoring cooperation (see, e.g., Podolny & Page, 1998) and the favorable impact of generalized norms of reciprocity, whether because parties belong to a social network where these norms are dominant (Putnam, 1993) or because those norms are embedded in a national culture that supports them (Coleman, 1990; Ostrom, 1990).

In summary our current understanding of cross-sector partnerships suggests that they can begin when organizations identify overlapping goals and will develop only when the staff members involved gain a sense of shared goals and/or common ground (Austin, 2000a). This is assumed to be a process crucially dependent on the development of supportive interpersonal relations among the staff members involved (Parker & Selsky, 2004), which is facilitated by the presence of enabling factors.

Violations to the Model Identified in our Research

An iterative analysis of the literature and the partnerships studied for this article (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) supported this general framework but identified two relevant violations. First, there were differences in the outcomes of the partnerships studied, and the origin of those differences could not be explained by this model. Partnerships clustered into two sets: those that derived outcomes defined prior to the formation and even identification of the community partners and those that derived outcomes defined by participants in mutual consultation. Current research suggests that differences in the outcomes in cross-sector partnerships depend on differences in the development of the partnerships. Although our study was not longitudinal, our sample included some partnerships that had lasted more than 10 years and others that had lasted just a couple of semesters. As expected, only young partnerships produced predefined outcomes, but both young and old partnerships produced co-defined outcomes uniquely fitted to the participants in the partnerships.

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Second, the evidence suggests a connection between the difference in outcomes identified and delegation in these partnerships. Nine out of the 11 partnerships studied included coordinators. These individuals were employees in the IHEs involved, but like the conveners studied in the literature, they were expected to facilitate the formation and development of the partnerships. In all nine partnerships where they were present, coordinators facilitated the formation of the partnerships by making it easier for instructors to identify community partners. But four of these nine partnerships produced predefined outcomes, and the only two partnerships in our sample that did not include coordinators produced co-defined outcomes. Our current understanding of the role of conveners provided no guidance to explain this difference. But research on bureaucratization (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Glisson & Martin, 1980) suggests that the impact of coordinators on any organizational arrangement can dramatically change depending on whether there is delegation, that is, bureaucratization of coordination (clear-cut separation between coordination and participation). Delegation brings effectiveness to individual performance, but it also brings rigidity to relational dynamics (Burns & Stalker, 1961), which may irreparably hinder discussions among participants and hence their ability to co-define projects.

Research Method

This article builds on a study of 11 SL partnerships in New England. Research on these partnerships included an initial brief phone conversation with one of the participants. In this initial conversation, we asked for a summary description of the partnership, specifying aspects such as how long it had been functioning, who the partners were, and what the SL project was. We also solicited help to identify and invite partners to participate in the study. We followed up these short conversations with 27 open-ended interviews with these initial contacts and the other participants in these partnerships. In most cases, we spoke with all participants; in a few, we interviewed only one participant (see Table 1). Interviews lasted approximately 90 min and were done in the interviewees' workplace, taped, and subsequently transcribed. The interviews followed a predefined protocol of questions, which included items such as (a) describe your personal involvement in the project, (b) describe your motivation to participate in the project, and (c) discuss the use of any strategy that helped initiate, implement, gain commitment from the partners, and in general further the goals of the project.

The 11 partnerships were selected from a search using multiple sources, including participant lists from SL workshops, Internet searches of university Web sites, and personal referrals. We also had some help from state directors of Campus Compact.[1] Our goal was also to study similar partnerships, and hence we limited our selection with the following three criteria: (a) Candidate partnerships needed to be at least minimally successful, which we defined as willingness of participants to reengage

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Table 1
Interviewees

		Interviewees				
		University Partner		Community Partner		
Partnership	Project	Instructor	Coordinator	Volunteers Coordinator	Other Staff Member	Director
Del-PrPU-afterschool	Volunteers in community agency		1	1		
Del-PrPU-writing	Cookie cutter project in a community agency	1	1			1
DelegateDel-PrU-ComHIV	Volunteers in community agency	1	1	1		
Del-PbU-ComHIV	Volunteers in community agency		1			1
Undel-CC-school	Specially designed project involving a K-12 school	1				1[b]
Undel-PbU-afterschool	Volunteers in community agency	1				
Undel-PC-govp	Specially designed project involving a government agency	1	1		1	
Undel-PC-govh	Specially designed project involving a government agency (coordinator from IHE partner)		1		1	1
Undel-PrPU-gove	Specially designed project involving a government agency (coordinator from IHE partner)		1		1	1
Undel-PC-Comviolence	Specially designed project involving a community agency (coordinator from IHE partner)	1	1	1		1
Undel-PC-integrated	Volunteers in afterschool program		1[a]	1[a]		
Total		15		13		

Note: "Del" identifies delegated partnerships, and "undel," undelegated ones. Subsequent letters identify the partnership on the basis of the type of educational institution, service-learning project, and/or profile of community partner. The markers have been kept purposefully obscure to guarantee that individual interviewees cannot be identified.
a. Same individual counted under coordinator.
b In this case, it was an instructor who also became founder of the school that finished partnering with the Community College.

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at least once. All the partnerships studied then had lasted for at least two semesters. (b) They provided the social infrastructure to projects that were a major part of a curriculum course, so most observers would agree to describe them as SL projects (there is disagreement in the field regarding what should be labeled SL). (c) Finally, they should all have occurred within the past 18 months.

Consistent with grounded theory, we identified the partnerships and interviewees, including the highest level of variance possible (see Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The pool of interviewees comprised a balanced number of instructors, SL coordinators, and community representatives. It also included a wide variety of IHEs (such as community colleges, large public and private universities, and elite private colleges). Finally, the pool contained a variety of community partners, including K-12 schools, community-based organizations, religious organizations, and government agencies. We conducted interviews until we reached saturation in categories, meaning the information derived from interviews showed repetition. We fulfilled these two conditions (variance and saturation) with the 27 interviews conducted. In addition, it is important to mention that because of budgetary constraints, we restricted our study to partnerships located in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. A wider geographical variation, however, is unlikely to have changed the conclusions derived from this study.

Interviews were analyzed through grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initially, we looked for patterns in the data that might indicate differences and similarities regarding the outcomes derived from participation. The analysis highlighted a difference in the outcomes derived by the partnerships studied. In some partnerships, the outcomes had been defined prior to the formation of the partnership and could have been derived from working with multiple partners. As an instructor engaged in one of these partnerships described it, "The class that I . . . have taught for the past eight quarters is interpersonal communications. . . . any organization that provides a place for students to interact with people is appropriate (Del-PrU-ComHIV_M, pp. 5 to 7).[2] In other partnerships, outcomes had been co-defined in discussions considering the specific talents of the students involved and the specific needs of the community. For example, in Del-PC-govp, the parties had agreed that "marketing students . . . [made] brochures or things like that. . . . Photography minors . . . may be interested in doing something if you need photography work. And so on" (Del-PC-govp_G, p. 15).

After identifying outcomes as a differentiating factor, we analyzed the partnerships to explore the origin of this factor. The analysis yielded one crucial difference that seemed to explain the difference in outcomes: the presence and type of engagement of coordinators. Two of the 11 partnerships studied did not engage a coordinator; and it is interesting to note that interviewees agreed that the outcomes derived in these two partnerships were co-defined. The coincidence regarding outcomes in these two partnerships encouraged us to explore the role of coordinators as a potential reason for why some of the partnerships including coordinators also had co-defined outcomes while other ones had pre-defined outcomes.

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The analysis revealed an uncanny overlap between the type of outcome derived (pre- or co-defined) and delegation (whether coordinators had assumed coordination responsibilities exclusively; see Table 2). This overlap led us to distinguish and further explore other similarities and differences between delegated partnerships, those in which coordinators engaged exclusively in coordination tasks (e.g., identification of partners), and undelegated ones, those in which the coordinators engaged beyond their coordination tasks (e.g., in definition of the SL project). In total, the sample included four delegated partnerships and seven undelegated ones.

Once identified, the distinction between delegated and undelegated partnerships was not that surprising. In delegated partnerships, coordinators acted like unintrusive matchmakers. They had identified and brokered an encounter between two parties—instructor and community partner—who wanted, and could, exchange a predefined service. Hence, it was natural for the partnerships to include parties that could work with different organizations providing the same predefined outcomes. In undelegated partnerships, coordinators had supported the matchmaking process, but they had also participated in and influenced the process of outcome definition. The relevance of delegation emerged after we had finished data collection. The interviews, however, revealed some patterned differences between coordinators in delegated and undelegated partnerships (summarized in Table 2). These differences provided an adequate springboard for speculation on some of the reasons explaining the differences in the engagement of coordinators.

Results: Delegated and Undelegated Partnerships

Table 3 provides a brief description of the 11 partnerships studied. Because of confidentiality concerns, specific details are disguised. The study included four partnerships in which coordination responsibilities were handled by a coordinator otherwise not engaged in the SL project. The outcomes resulting from these delegated partnerships were different. Del-PrPU-afterschool involved a church-based afterschool program with students volunteering as afterschool trainers. Del-PrU-ComHIV and Del-PbU-ComHIV both served individuals who tested positive for HIV (HIV+)/AIDS, with students volunteering as general assistants serving in multiple routine functions (e.g., serving lunch). Finally, Del-PrPU-writing also involved an agency providing an afterschool program, but in this partnership, the students' assignment was to write a technical report.

Regardless of their diversity, the outcomes derived by the parties in all these partnerships were defined prior to the identification of the community partner and could have been produced working with different partners. On the university side, students derived benefits quite general to the SL experience. They had an opportunity for (a) applied learning and (b) exposure to a different world—and to reflect on this new world. Regarding the outcomes derived by the community partner, all the

(text continues on p. 382)

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Table 2
Delegated Partnerships

Delegated Partnership	Lasted > < 5 Semesters	Outcomes Derived by Community in Addition to Access to Volunteers: IHE Resources	Org. Capacity	Enhanced Awareness	Administrative Structure to Place or House Student Volunteers: IHE	Community	Role of Coordinator: Participated in Definition of SL Project	Initiated	Profile of Coordinator: Employee or Manager of SL Department	New to SL	Centrality of SL in the IHE
Del-PrPU-afterschool (Volunteers in community agency)	Less	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Employee	No	High
Del-PrPU-writing (Cookie cutter project in a community agency)	Less	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Employee	No	High
Del-PrU-ComHIV (Volunteers in community agency)	Less	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Employee	No	High
Del-PbU-ComHIV (Volunteers in community agency)	Less	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Manager	No	High
Undelegated Partnership											
Undel-CC-school (Exchanges with K-12 school)	More	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	Low
Undel-PbU-afterschool (Afterschool training program)	More	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A	N.A	Low
Undel-PC-govp (Multiple specific projects)	Less	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Manager	Yes	Low
Undel-PC-govh (Multiple projects supporting housing project)	Less	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Manager	No	High
Undel-PrPU-gove (One day event improving energy efficiency)	More	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Employee	Yes	High
Undel-PC-Comviolence (Organization of events)	More	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Manager	No	High
Undel-PC-Integrated (Volunteers in afterschool program)	More	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Employee	No	High

Note: "Del" identifies delegated partnerships, and "undel," undelegated ones. Subsequent letters identify the partnership on the basis of the type of educational institution, service learning project, and/or profile of community partner. The markers have been kept purposefully obscure to guarantee that individual interviewees cannot be identified. IHE = institution of higher education; SL = service learning.

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Table 3
Cases

Delegated Partnerships

Del-PrPU-afterschool engaged a private college and a community agency. The partnership has lasted less than five semesters but was expected to continue. It involved students from different courses volunteering as trainers in an afterschool program. The community partner is one of several that the coordinator relies on to place students; coordinators in this school were under a lot of pressure to do this because participation in SL is a requirement for graduation. The benefit for the students is an opportunity to engage with children and individuals of very different socioeconomic background. The benefit for the community is access to a new pool of volunteers. There were instructors involved but their engagement, apart from working with the students academically, was negligible. The IHE has a well-developed infrastructure to work with community partners, and the community partner has a well-developed infrastructure to work with volunteers. They did not treat SL student volunteers as different from any other volunteer, but the community partner mentioned that she had desired a higher level of engagement with the students and the IHE.

Del-PrPU-writing engaged a private college and a community agency and involved students' writing technical reports. The partnership has lasted less than five semesters and had already expired at the time of interviewing. It resulted from a request from an instructor to the SL office to identify a partner that could benefit from students' preparing professional reports on a technical topic. At the time of interviewing, it included alternative community agencies. The benefits for students are applied skills and community engagement. In turn, the community benefited from having a technical analysis of an important purchase, a service it could not afford otherwise. The community partner has a well-developed infrastructure to work with volunteers. The IHE has a well-developed infrastructure to work with community partners in SL initiatives. There was some direct communication between the community agency and instructor to define the topic for the technical reports, but most communication was done through the coordinator.

Del-PrU-ComHIV involved a private university and a community agency. It had lasted less than five semesters. The community partner was part of a larger pool engaged with the same instructor in the same type of activity. The partnership was formed at the request of the instructor, and the coordinator was responsible for the maintenance of the partnerships, with little communication between the instructor and the community. Students volunteered to do what was needed in the agency (e.g., serving lunches) and used this experience to improve their communication skills. The community agency had access to a new pool of volunteers. The university had a well-developed structure to support SL initiatives. The community partner had a well-developed infrastructure to work with volunteers. This agency was engaged in to work with volunteers. This agency was engaged in supporting HIV+ and AIDS patients and saw, as part of the mission, both prevention of the disease and wider social acceptance of people living with the AIDS virus. The community agency representative had initially seen this partnership as an opportunity to further the awareness mission, but she confessed that the current level of engagement did not further this desired benefit as much as the agency would have liked.

Del-PbU-ComHIV partnered a public university and a community agency. It had lasted less than five semesters and was expected to continue. It began when the community agency replied to an invitation from the coordinator to house student volunteers. The coordinator assumed all coordination responsibilities. Students benefited from applied skills and community engagement. The community partner gained access to an expanded pool of uncompensated labor. It had also hoped to use the partnership as a way of extending its social mission of encouraging better understanding

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Table 3 (continued)

of a stigmatized community. Like the community partner in DelegateDel-PrU-ComHIV, this community partner was also working with HIV+ and AIDs patients and also saw, as part of its mission, both prevention of the disease and wider social acceptance of people living with the AIDS virus. As in the previous partnership, the community agency representative had seen this partnership as an opportunity to further the agency's awareness mission but complained that the current level of engagement permitted the agency to further this goal less than desired.

Undelegated Partnerships

Undel-CC -School brought together a community college in a suburban setting and a K-12 school in a distressed urban setting. At the time of interviewing, the partnership had been in place for 10 years and had survived several threats (e.g., when the schedule of the class was changed, making it impossible to make the trip to the urban center where the school was located). The partnership was built on a personal relationship between a community college instructor and the school teacher. They both have developed a strong sense of shared vision which drove them to remain engaged in the partnership, modifying it as required. The SL project was carefully crafted to fit with their goals. The instructor's goal was to provide students with an opportunity to see first-hand life in a distressed urban center so as to help them overcome unjustified prejudices. The teacher's goal was dual. She wanted to (a) improve the image of schools and school children in a distressed urban setting and (b) encourage students to stay in school by showing them how feasible it was for them to get a college education. The partnerships had little or no support from the community college.

Undel-PbU-afterschool involved a public university and an afterschool program. The partnership had already lasted more than five semesters, and the parties wanted to continue it. Initially, the project involved the students' volunteering as trainers in the afterschool program. Eventually, the partnership evolved into a specifically designed project that fit with the profile of the instructor's course, the students, and the needs of the agency. The students participating derived applied skills and an improved self-image as junior professionals in the particular field they were studying. The community gained access to a pool of individuals with a specific profile that made them excellent role models for afterschool students. The IHE was supportive but did not have the administrative infrastructure to support the program.

Undel-PC-govp involved a private college and a government agency. This partnership had lasted less than five semesters. It was not expected to continue, following government cuts that closed down the government agency engaged. It provided an extreme example of shared design and shared responsibility for coordination of activities. Participants mentioned careful definition of the project as part of its success for both students and community. Students got applied skills and a better understanding of the goals being pursued by the government agency. The community was able to pursue projects it would not have otherwise because of lack of resources. It also furthered its mission of increasing awareness regarding urban environmental issues. The students did projects as varied as developing a photo book and supporting a Don't Feed the Ducks campaign. The partnership involved an instructor, a coordinator, and the government agency. Initially the instructor was very involved, but the coordinator assumed coordination responsibilities over time. Note that the partnership engaged two different individuals as SL coordinators. The first one was a VISTA volunteer, the second one an individual hired by the IHE to further its engagement in SL. The community partner did not have an infrastructure to house volunteers, and they had to make special arrangements.

(*continued*)

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Table 3 (continued)

Undel-PC-govh engaged a private college and a government agency. It had lasted less than five semesters but had emerged from an older and wider collaborative initiative between the IHE, the community, and government agencies in a neighborhood. This forum brought together the SL representative with members of the community and allowed the definition and implementation of multiple initiatives, including the one included in this study.
The crucial partners in this initiative were the IHE representative and the government agency, although it also involved instructors and other community partners. The project was defined to derive the best possible fit between the profile of the students and the needs and goals of the agency. The partnership had the institutional support of the IHE and the hierarchy in the government agency, but the agency did not have any specific infrastructure to house volunteers. Therefore, they had to make special arrangements to integrate the work of the students.

Undel-PrPU-gove is another partnership involving a private college and a government agency. This partnership had lasted less than five semesters, but it was expected to continue. The partnership actually originated from a previous effort which also involved a community agency. It is interesting to note that the initial partnership did not include the government agency, which became involved only when the coordinator contacted the agency for support. This contact led to the identification of a shared agenda and a general rapport between the parties involved. They ultimately changed the nature of the partnership and decided to replicate the same project in a new context involving an alternative community agency in another neighborhood. Students derived applied skills and community engagement and furthered their understanding of energy efficiency. The government agency got an opportunity to work in a specific target neighborhood and expand its dissemination mission by making students aware of the need for energy conservation. The private college had a very well-developed infrastructure to place students, but the government agency was unaccustomed to working with volunteers and had to make special arrangements.

Undel-PC-Comviolence involved a private college and a community agency. It emerged from conversations in a neighborhood-based forum that brought the coordinator and the director of this agency together and encouraged them to identify a joint project. Multiple instructors were involved in the project. The partnership had already extended more than five semesters at the time of the interviewing, and the parties showed willingness to continue. Students gained applied skills, community engagement, and awareness of problems related to violence against women. The community gained access to an expanded pool of volunteers and increased awareness of violence against women and furthered a broader agenda of increasing the engagement of the college in the neighborhood. The IHE had a good infrastructure to support SL projects. The community partner had a good infrastructure to work with volunteers.

Undel-PC-Integrated involved a private college and a school and was one of the oldest in the sample. It had been designed so that the students of the IHE would provide services volunteering and teaching in an afterschool program in an urban neighborhood. The project was defined, coordinated, and implemented by a sort of joint-venture structure housed in the IHE, which carried all the coordination costs. The project involved a school and a private college, but it was part of a formalized initiative that engaged the IHE with neighborhood groups for a number of years. The coordinator was representing simultaneously the interests of both the IHE and the K-12 school. Students derived applied skills and community engagement. The community, in turn, derived access to an expanded pool of uncompensated labor and support in its commitment to neighborhood stabilization.

Note: "Del" identifies delegated partnerships, and "undel," undelegated ones. Subsequent letters identify the partnership on the basis of the type of educational institution, service learning project, and/or profile of community partner. The markers have been kept purposefully obscure to guarantee that individual interviewees cannot be identified. HIV+ = HIV positive; IHE = institute of higher education; SL = service learning; VISTA = Volunteers in Service to America.

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partnerships in our sample, whether delegated or not, provided community partners with access to a new pool of volunteers. Delegated partnerships provided hardly anything more.[3] In Del-PrPU-afterschool, the students were not different from any other volunteer trainers. This was also the case in Del-PbU-ComHIV_B, as illustrated in the following comment by the community partner engaged: "Students are doing the same thing here that any other volunteer does" (Del-PbU-ComHIV_B, p. 5). Similarly, the students working in the agencies providing services to HIV+/AIDS individuals (Del-PrU-ComHIV and Del-PbU-ComHIV) were not substantially different from any other volunteers. It is interesting to note that the interviewees from the agencies involved in these two partnerships expressed a desire for a higher level of engagement; they wished they had been more involved in the process of reflection accompanying most SL experiences. They saw reaching out to students as part of their mission and felt that the predefined arm's-length engagement they had with the IHE was not optimal for reaching this goal.

Finally, Del-PrPU-writing involved students' writing technical reports, and hence it permitted the community participant to derive a benefit it may not have had otherwise (e.g., a careful study for the purchase of technical equipment). As in all other delegated partnerships, this outcome (the technical report) was predefined in consideration of the content of the SL course (a course on technical writing) and would have been the same regardless of the community agency involved. In fact, at the time of interviewing, the partnership being studied had ended, and the instructor involved was searching for other agencies interested on this sort of report.

The delegated partnerships we studied were rather new; none had existed more than five semesters. This is consistent with research connecting outcomes derived with level of development of partnerships (see Austin, 2000a; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Enos & Morton, 2003). Therefore, the fact that they were achieving predefined outcomes could be explained by their age; they were still rather underdeveloped. The next section, however, undermines this argument by showing how the connection between age of the partnership and outcomes was unclear in undelegated partnerships.

The fact that outcomes were predefined could be explained by considering that in all these partnerships, participants relied on the SL office to identify the community partners and to maintain communications during, and particularly between, semesters. Moreover, the engagement of coordinators in these partnerships shared several characteristics. In all but one of them, the coordinator initiated the partnership only in response to a request from faculty to identify a partner that would fit the profile required for their course. In the one partnership initiated without faculty request, the coordinator (Del-PbU-ComHIV) contacted and engaged the community partner involved through a mass mailing meant to jump-start SL in the IHE engaged. This formal approach to engagement was then not followed by discussions on the nature of the SL project. The community agency engaged the students as it did other volunteers.

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In addition, the individual coordinators involved in these partnerships had a surprisingly similar profile. They were comparatively senior (they had been engaged in SL for a few years) to those engaged in undelegated partnerships. Moreover, only one of them, the coordinator engaged in the formation of Del-PbU-ComHIV (the only delegated partnership initiated through a mass mailing), had a leadership position. All the other coordinators were subordinate employees within the administrative structures supporting SL.

The sample included seven undelegated partnerships, which did not include a coordinator or included one engaged beyond coordination. None of these partnerships involved a project defined prior to the formation of the partnership. Instead, these projects were co-defined by participants and tailored to the resources and goals of most or all participants. Partnerships Undel-CC-school, Undel-PC-govh, Undel-PrPU-gove, and Undel-PbU-afterschool built on a project that was jointly designed by members of the IHE and the community participant. Partnerships Undel-PC-govp and Undel-PC-Comviolence involved a menu of projects the community partner had developed considering its needs and even the profile of the students to be engaged. Finally, Undel-PC-integrated involved placing students as volunteers in an afterschool program. Their work was specific in that it revolved around a community garden that had been planted and developed through recurrent SL projects. This partnership was one of the oldest in the sample (more than 10 years old) and actually involved an organizational arrangement developed between an IHE and the surrounding schools to implement SL projects on a recurrent, long-term basis.

As in delegated partnerships, community participants in undelegated partnerships got, as an important outcome, access to a new pool of volunteers. But in all cases, the students were engaged in projects that built on skills they had because of their backgrounds (Undel-PC-govp) and/or their work in the classroom (Undel-CC-school, Undel-PbU-after-school, and Undel-PC-govh). In several instances, the projects emerged because the community partners saw working with students as an opportunity to extend the mission of their organizations. Not surprisingly, the mission involved increasing awareness of the social problems these agencies were addressing. In Undel-PC-govp, it was a need to protect wildlife in urban settings; in Undel-PrPU-gove, how to use energy more efficiently; and in Undel-PC-Comviolence, an understanding that anyone, regardless of socioeconomic background, can become a victim of domestic violence.

In contrast to delegated partnerships (which were all young), some of the undelegated partnerships were more than 10 years old (Undel-CC-school and Undel-PC-integrated), although others had produced only two cycles of SL projects (e.g., Undel-PC-govp and UnDel-PC-gove). Our study was not longitudinal, so we cannot discard the notion of a connection between type of outcomes and level of development of partnerships. But our evidence does suggest that there might be other intervening factors. Specifically, coordinators were completely absent in two of these undelegated partnerships (Undel-CC-school and Undel-PbU-afterschool), and in

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one of the five where they were present (Undel-PC-integrated), the individual acting as coordinator was in fact connected to both the IHE and the community. The organizational structure supporting this partnership was a sort of joint venture, and the coordinator involved was in charge of both identifying students to work in projects for the IHE and of supervising their work as afterschool instructors in local schools. Similar to the coordinators engaged in delegated partnerships, the coordinator was very familiar with SL and was a subordinate employee (instead of a manager). But in contrast to peers in delegated partnerships, the coordinator was engaged beyond coordination. More interesting, the coordinators engaged in the remaining four partnerships were all engaged beyond coordination and had participated in the definition of the SL project.

In addition, in contrast to their peers in delegated partnerships, coordinators in undelegated ones were either new to the job (Undel-PrPU-gove and Undel-PC-integrated), held the SL leadership position in the university (Undel-PC-govh and Undel-PC-Comviolence), or both (Undel-PC-govp). The individual who was both was also the first full-time employee hired to support SL in the IHE (previously the IHE had worked with a VISTA volunteer).[4]

Discussion: Delegation of Coordination Defines the Nature of Outcomes

Our analysis identified an uncanny overlap between the outcomes produced by cross-sector partnerships and whether these partnerships were delegated. In delegated partnerships there was a clear-cut division between coordination and participation, and coordinators assumed only coordination responsibilities. These partnerships produced outcomes defined prior to the formation of the partnership. Not surprisingly, most could have been derived regardless of community placement, and even regardless of the tasks students performed. In turn, in all but one of these partnerships (Del-PC-writing), the community partner perceived students' work as the "same thing that any other volunteer does" (Del-PrU-ComHIV_B, p. 5), and the tasks they performed were routinely done by nonstudent volunteers, e.g., afterschool training or serving lunches.

In undelegated partnerships there was no clear-cut division between coordination and participation. In two, there was no coordinator, and the coordinators in the other five were all engaged beyond coordination. In these partnerships outcomes were co-defined and tailored to the community partner, the students' course work, and even students' profile and preferences. Interviewees discussed defining projects through negotiation and described excellent projects as those in which "everybody's needs [were] being met" (Undel-PbC-afterschool_D, p. 144) and those that permitted "matching people with the right project" (Undel-PC-govp-M, p. 96).

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The connection between coordination and outcomes identified suggests that delegation can frame the development of partnerships. As expected, when present, coordinators facilitated the formation of partnerships by relieving the instructors of taxing coordination tasks. But at the same time, their engagement discouraged (a) participants from engaging in coordinating exchanges and (b) coordinators from using their exchanges for anything other than coordination. In delegated partnerships, the participation of coordinators freed up instructors' time and accordingly encouraged them to engage in SL projects, but it also (a) reduced the number of times instructors talked with the community parties and (b) discouraged or prevented coordinators from participating in the definition of SL projects. The result was a dramatic decrease in the number of occasions parties had to co-define tailored outcomes.

In short, the evidence indicates that delegation increases the likelihood of partnerships' producing predefined outcomes. This proposal adds to research on structural factors as enablers of cross-sector partnerships. Current interest in structural factors ponders their potential to encourage actors to identify or develop shared goals or shared identity (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Bringle et al., 2000; Edwards et al., 2001; Hinck & Brandell, 2000; Marullo, 1996; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mooney & Edwards, 2001). Our study highlights that the same structural factor—delegation—can simultaneously have two opposite effects. It can facilitate the formation of a partnership by creating a more efficient path to identifying partners, and it can discourage the staff involved from identifying outcomes other than those predefined before the engagement.

Incorporating a Coordinator Does Not Always Result in Delegation

The sample included nine partnerships that engaged a coordinator—an administrator whose fundamental role was coordination—but in only four of them did these individuals engage exclusively in coordination functions (see Table 2). An analysis of patterned differences in the profile and behavior of the coordinators in delegated and undelegated partnerships suggests a few factors that may explain why those in delegated partnerships engaged only in coordination functions whereas those in undelegated partnerships did more.

In delegated partnerships, all of the coordinators were experienced in the job and only one was a manager. In contrast, in the five undelegated partnerships, three out of the five coordinators were managers, one was new to SL, and only one was an experienced subordinate. We can speculate, then, that coordinators in delegated partnerships are likely to be subordinate employees whereas those in undelegated partnerships would be either managers and/or new to the job. Of course, the differences in knowledge and hierarchical positioning identified are not clear-cut, and the

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evidence is solely indicative of copresence. This speculation, however, is plausible. Our understanding of bureaucracy within organizations (see, e.g., Burns & Stalker, 1961) suggests that the individuals most likely to adopt "not my job" behaviors are those who are both experienced and located in subordinate organizational positions. New-to-the-job employees might be less aware of and less willing to follow role boundaries. For example, the coordinator engaged in Undel-PrPU-gove was new to the job and did something very unusual: midway into the project, she included a new partner. This inclusion completely changed the outcomes derived from the partnership. In turn, subordinate employees are more likely than managers to place higher value on performing the task at hand efficiently (e.g., identifying opportunities for students to engage in SL) than on how the task performed serves a wider organizational goal (e.g., engagement of IHE and their students in their surrounding community). Accordingly, they are more likely than managers to prioritize the efficiency of the placement over its quality. The following comment from a coordinator illustrates the likely trade-offs between efficiency and quality: "I could literally push 100 students through a school system without any difficulty at all [as volunteers in after-school programs]. However, . . . students would not receive what they deserve . . . in a service learning experience" (Del-PrPU-afterschool_O, p. 178).

In addition, evidence from the two clear exceptions to the patterned differences identified (a manager in a delegated partnership and a subordinate experienced employee in an undelegated one) do not contradict the effect of experience and hierarchical position. Instead, these exceptions suggest that the likelihood for coordinators to engage beyond coordination may also depend on other structural factors. The only manager coordinator engaged in a delegated partnership purposefully established an arms-length relationship with the community agency because his goal was to expand rapidly the number of community partnerships engaging the IHE. To serve this goal, he chose to identify and engage interested community agents through a mass mailing. This form of communication hindered the possibility of exchanges with the community agency and hence the definition of co-defined projects. In short, as expected from managers, his approach to partnership building was dependent on the wider organizational goal. But in this case, the goal was expediency; hence, he was willing to engage with potential community partners through a form of communication that hindered the identification of co-defined outcomes. Finally, the only experienced subordinate employee in an undelegated partnership was working in a partnership with a joint venture–like structure (Undel-PC-afterschool). As explained earlier, this individual had little choice but to engage beyond coordination. In fact, she was responsible for defining a project that best used the resources and served the specific goals of all the participants (Austin, 2000a). In short, these partnerships showed that the professional experience and hierarchical positioning of coordinators might have had an impact on whether they engaged beyond coordination. They also showed that structural factors other than the profile of coordinators can influence whether partnerships are delegated.

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Conclusion

This article suggests that cross-sector partnerships that involve staff members whose main responsibility is coordination are more likely to produce predefined outcomes. In many contexts, predefined outcomes may be highly desirable. Partners may want to derive only this sort of outcome, or they may be unwilling to bear the taxing coordination costs (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002) likely when projects involve the definition and redefinition of outcomes to better fit the needs of all involved. It is important, however, for practitioners to become aware that factors that support the formation of partnerships—such as the engagement of a coordinator—can also hinder their ability to produce outcomes other than those defined prior to their formation. They are then well advised to examine and ponder trade-offs between the expediency gained and the rigidity created by a clear-cut separation between participation and coordination.

A growing number of IHEs are interested in (or being challenged to) further their engagement with the communities in which they are situated as tax-exempt institutions. In light of the results from this study, they may decide to avoid engaging coordinators and instead increase faculty's incentives to launch SL initiatives. Alternatively, they could consider assuring that coordinators engage in SL partnerships beyond coordination (i.e., engage in the definition of SL projects). Our results also provide "telltale" signs that community participants can use to recognize whether their partnering with an IHE will provide them with pre- or co-defined outcomes. One such sign is, of course, whether they are invited to participate by an SL coordinator with a project already predefined. Even more telling is whether this coordinator is acting on behalf of an instructor. This is likely to mean that what this coordinator's proposes would be what the community participant receives, with little space for negotiation or future development.

This research adds to a growing body of work emphasizing the influence of structural factors on the formation and development of cross-sector partnerships (Ashman, 2001; Astley & Van de Ven, 1983; Austin, 2000a). The connection it offers between delegation and outcomes is relevant in all types of interorganizational partnerships but particularly so in the case of cross-sector ones. In these partnerships, because of their differences, participants are particularly dependent on the structural factors defining the partnerships to develop relationships conducive to the identification of shared common goals and/or shared destiny.

Through grounded theory, this study identified the connection between delegation and outcomes. The resulting findings require further empirical exploration and testing. The results, however, are consistent with our understanding of bureaucratization within organizations. This consistency suggests both the relevance of these findings as guidance for future research and, more widely, the need for research that explores the impact of bureaucratization processes in the development of interorganizational partnerships broadly and cross-sector partnerships specifically.

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Notes

1. Campus Compact "is a national coalition of nearly 1,100 college and university presidents . . . dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education" (Campus Compact, 2007).

2. All quotations are identified by a tag for partnership identification, one for individual identification, and one for the paragraph of the transcribed interview. Identifications have been disguised to maintain confidentiality. The partnerships are labeled following identification markers. "Del" identifies delegated partnerships, and "undel," undelegated ones. Subsequent letters identify the partnership based on the type of educational institution, service learning project, and/or profile of community partner. The markers have been kept purposefully obscure to guarantee that individual interviewees cannot be identified.

3. See Edwards, Mooney, & Heald's (2001) study for a comprehensive list of potential benefits community agencies can derive from participating in SL initiatives. This list includes outcomes such as access to an expanded pool of uncompensated labor (i.e., volunteers), access to college or university resources, enhanced public awareness of organizational or constituent needs, improved organization–community relations, and enhanced organizational capacity. (See also Bowman, 1998; Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Gray et al., 2000; Prentice & Garcia, 2000.)

4. VISTA stands for Volunteers in Service to America. VISTA volunteers are regularly assigned to IHEs to further SL work.

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