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America Reads-Mississippi/Americorps Reading Program's Impact on Mississippi Community College Attendance

Charity Yarbrough

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America reads-Mississippi/AmeriCorps Reading Program's impact on Mississippi
community college attendance

By

Charity Yarbrough

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Community College Leadership
in the Department of Educational Leadership

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2016

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2016

America reads-Mississippi/AmeriCorps Reading Program's impact on Mississippi
community college attendance

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Since the inception of AmeriCorps programs, reading, education and civic engagement has been emphasized in a large portion of the United States. Members enlist to serve schools and communities for 1 year, possibly 2. Upon completion of a member's year(s) of service an education award is given which can be used to attend a community college, university or repay student loans. This study showed how AmeriCorps/America Reads programs partnered with community colleges and universities which recruited members to volunteer at school sites and community centers tutoring students in classrooms to improve reading, grades, engage in community service activities, use education award to attend college or pay off student loans, and increase employment in education. Mississippi was the main focus of this study. Minnesota and New York America Reads programs were also discussed in comparison. Findings indicated whether involvement in AmeriCorps/America Reads programs enhanced members' decision to enroll or re-enroll in higher education, pursue a career in education and continue to volunteer in community service.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for allowing me to reach this point in my life and giving me the strength to complete this task with my sanity intact. I would also like to thank my sons Joseph and Demetrius for keeping me hopeful with encouragement that the end of this journey would be glorious and worth the effort. Also this document is dedicated to my mother who is in heaven cheering for her daughter and who has always told me to never give up, pray and stay positive when there is a goal you are trying to reach.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1960, President John F. Kennedy asked Americans all over the country to become involved in helping the nation by volunteering starting in their own neighborhoods and then going to other neighborhoods and giving assistance where needed (Kennedy, 1960). In 1993, the federal government under the leadership of President Bill Clinton's administration, offered middle-class, as well as low-income Americans, a way to go to college. The federal government would assist them by paying for college with a grant to those who give service back to their country in return by joining AmeriCorps (Corporation for National & Community Service [CNCS], 2016). AmeriCorps is a national community service program created in 1993 by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 under the Clinton administration which entails volunteers termed "members" participating either full-time (1700 hours) or part-time (900) hours. After completing one-year term of service, AmeriCorps members receive education awards each year to attend college or to repay student loans (America Reads-Mississippi [ARM], 2016).

According to Wofford, the chief executive officer of the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS), while AmeriCorps produces numerous benefits its primary purpose is to "help communities solve critical human, educational, environmental, and public safety problems" (Wofford, 1996, p. 28). AmeriCorps has had

four program areas with services of building homes, teaching children to read, cleaning up vacant lots and making the streets safer for Americans. William F. Buckley Jr. (1990) states, “To have “gratitude” for being given so much. It instills core values of hard work, discipline, and teamwork that make young people not only more productive workers but also better citizens” (p. 18). All national service programs in the United States are overseen by the Corporation for National & Community Service: AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and Senior Corps. The Corporation works with governor-appointed state commissions, nonprofits, faith-based groups, schools, and other organizations to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve their communities. The federal Government set aside funds for anyone who would take a year of their time to volunteer in an AmeriCorps program and in return the volunteer would receive a stipend and (or) an education award (CNCS, 2016). AmeriCorps program were launched all over the country at community colleges and universities spreading literacy, community improvement and volunteerism since Americans desired to contribute in promoting education and making our country a better place to live. MTV in cooperation with other news media promoted the “Call to Service” which announced for anyone who desired to provide community service in return AmeriCorps participants would receive a grant to use for higher education (Hebel, 1999).

Volunteer Mississippi (2016) awards AmeriCorps state grants to organizations all over the state addressing Mississippi’s greatest needs. AmeriCorps programs offer individuals a unique opportunity to improve communities through service. Controlled by the state, AmeriCorps programs offer tutoring, skills training, continuing education and other benefits that help members to better serve local needs while gaining valuable work

experience. Volunteer Mississippi, formerly the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS), 2014-2015 program years, 524 AmeriCorps members who serve in 12 programs to “Get Things Done”, (the AmeriCorps motto). Mississippi AmeriCorps members devote a year of their lives to make a difference in communities. Several ways members serve were in schools during the day and after-school programs as tutors and mentors, providing resources and dietary education to address food security issues and healthy living lifestyles while cultivating school gardens to harvest were ways AmeriCorps members serve the community. Providing independent skills training to individuals with disabilities enabling them to live independently or transition into independent living were another way AmeriCorps member make a difference in the lives of the low income families. Other contributions made by AmeriCorps members were completing rehabilitation of energy efficient affordable homes, and connecting veterans and family members of active military personnel to available resources. Members who volunteer were recruited and trained to make changes in neighborhoods to better communities (Volunteer Mississippi, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

There are studies that document the impact of AmeriCorps experience on its members and, to some extent, the impact of AmeriCorps programs on communities. A report in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Selingo, 1998) addressed the impact of the education awards of AmeriCorps programs on student enrollment in higher education (Selingo, 1998). All of the studies cited the effort to capture the impact of AmeriCorps programs from different perspectives. However, this study investigated the impact AmeriCorps/ARM has on the number of members who completed the one or two years in

an AmeriCorps tutoring program in Mississippi, received an education award, used their education award to attend community college or a university in Mississippi to pursue a degree in education as a teacher, administrator or chose another career.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of ARM members who tutored students in partnering school sites in reading, used their education award to attend community college or a university, and if education was the career choice upon completing college. The history of AmeriCorps/America Reads programs in Minnesota, Mississippi and New York was also examined with the study's main motivation on Mississippi. The impact reading has on college readiness, college enrollment, education award usage, program completions rates, employment and civic engagement was also explored.

Research Questions

1. What effect does participation in ARM/AmeriCorps have on college graduation rates and becoming a certified teacher?
2. What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members used their education award to attend community college or a university to pursue a degree or finish a degree?
3. What major was pursued by ARM/AmeriCorps members who attend community college or universities in Mississippi?
4. What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members continue civic engagement after completion of program?

Theoretical Framework

In the next section the motivation theory was discussed as the guide to this study. Mitchell, 1982 stated, “Motivation becomes those psychological processes that cause arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal-related” (p. 81). Brennen, 2006 stated, “Motivation has been defined as the level of effort an individual is willing to expend toward the achievement of a certain goal”. McDevitt, 2006 stated, “Motivation energizes, directs and sustains behavior and can be either intrinsic or extrinsic”.

Effective guidance for student motivation consists of philosophical and practical disciplines along with behavioral, cognitive, humanistic, and biological perspectives. Another motivational theorist B.F. Skinner used operant learning and behavioral theories to define the developments of desired behaviors by using either positive consequences or avoidance of negative stimuli as extrinsic forms of motivation.

In the case of America Reads tutors, the motivational theory’s approach to reading by students has been proficient in schools therefore intrinsic motivation can develop greater incentive in students (Paris & McNaughton, 2010). Intrinsic motivation rewards students directly whereas extrinsic motivation is looking for something other than the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 1989). According to Ross, McKechnie & Rothbauer (2006), many readers are motivated and get pleasure in reading as a result: “Readers who become proficient are those who enjoy reading and who do it by choice as a voluntary activity in their leisure time” (p. 45). In other words, with intrinsic motivation students are happy when they learn to read while guided by a tutor’s instruction, which is a reward in itself.

Maslow's (1943) humanistic view "Motivation and Personality" were the main reasons students search for and achieve five different levels of hierarchical needs. In addition, Maslow's theory suggests that if basic needs such as physical and safety needs are met then needs for belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization will intrinsically motivate students to achieve. Maslow's self-actualization is referring to:

People desire for self-fulfillment, namely, the tendency for them to become actualized in what they are potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming (Maslow, 1943, p. 382).

Countless individuals want to reach their goals; therefore, the achievement motivation theory is an important factor in the realization of them. "Low achievers tend to attribute failure to lack of ability and success to luck. High achievers... tend to attribute failure to a lack of effort and success to effort and ability" (Weiner, 1990, p. 618).

AmeriCorps members who participate in America Reads programs probably consider many motivating factors before choosing to use their education award to attend college including extrinsic factors; grants, college degree, higher pay and intrinsic factors; praise, recognition and societal associations. Human needs position themselves in proponent order. Therefore, lower level needs must be satisfied before higher level needs become operative. Maslow's hierarchy of needs relates to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of needs being met as they all relate to one another (Maslow, 1943).

In this section, extrinsic and intrinsic motivating factors were discussed as the driving force in this study of AmeriCorps members who participated in the America Reads-Mississippi program used their education award to attend college and obtain a

degree in education or another career. It is assumed that everyone would like to make advancements in their lives by obtaining additional education and training through a governmental program like AmeriCorps. Opportunities would lead members to serve the schools, students, and their community while gaining a reward that would assist them in returning to school. Members who take advantage of serving in AmeriCorps would reap the benefits of an education, higher pay and recognition by their peers in addition to AmeriCorps staff. All of the aforementioned rewards and recognition were extrinsic and intrinsic motivators available to meet the needs of AmeriCorps members while reaching their goals.

In chapter two the goal of the literature review was to examine key elements that impact AmeriCorps/America Reads programs members' participation in AmeriCorps reading programs who used their education award to attend community college or a university and what career was pursued or obtained. Further topics reviewed were: the impact reading has on college readiness, college enrollment, education award usage, program completions rates, employment, and civic engagement. Chapter three described methods used in the study in detail, which include a summary of the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, non-returns of survey, and data analysis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

According to CNCS (2014), 50% of AmeriCorps programs main concentration is education; where 1 in 4 schools are in underprivileged regions. 10,010 out of 103, 483 schools require tutors in classrooms in these particular regions. The article in education week discussed The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which passed through congress in 2001 under President George W. Bush's administration, was signed into law on January 8, 2002. NCLB replaced the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 instituted under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program. Both laws were enacted to assist in educating students and raising test scores in low performing areas. By 2015, the deadline for students to be at "proficient level" for state test passed with no state reaching 100% (Education week, 2015).

AmeriCorps America reads programs give students motivation to learn. These motivations are a direct correlation between reading and reading comprehension and not based on circumstances (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In the article "Tutoring and Mentoring: The results of an America Reads program on struggling reader's motivation and achievement," Hughes, Brooker, Gambrell & Foster (2011) related motivation to the "The Little Engine that Could" (Jacob, 1910) expressing students can have the "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can..." motivation mentality to be persistent in learning to

read. As a result, students were motivated for successful learning. The ultimate objective was motivating students to learn how to read therefore, college bound students can be successful.

The intent of this literature review was to analyze the impact AmeriCorps/ARM had on the number of members who completed the one or two years in a AmeriCorps tutoring program in Mississippi, received an education award, used their education award to attend community college or a university in Mississippi to pursue a degree in education as a teacher, administrator or chose another career. Motivation theory guided this research in association with the history of AmeriCorps/America Reads programs. A comparison of America Reads programs in three states Minnesota, Mississippi and New York was also examined, with Mississippi as the main subject area. Additional topics included the impact reading has on college readiness, college enrollment, education award usage, program completions rates, employment and civic engagement.

Motivation Theory

Kreitner (1995) theorizes persistence and direction as a psychological motivator while Higgins (1994) describes motivation as an inner determination to satisfy needs that are not met. According to Bassy (2002) motivation is necessary to reach goals and depends on in what manner an individual is eager to work to reach and achieve those rewards and incentives. McClelland (1967) stated that achievement motivation theory explains how individual, who are risk takers will have a need to complete difficult tasks seeking praise and honor once the task is completed. Ultimately, if their efforts go unnoticed they would go elsewhere to find another task searching for approval for their accomplishments.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Analysis of motivation theory based on researchers varies. According to Maslow (1943) humans have five basic needs which are: self-actualization, esteem, belongingness/love, safety and physiology that arrange themselves in order of prepotency. Each of these needs are different and relates to one need being satisfied before another need becomes active. Maslow (1943) also suggest higher needs cannot be satisfied until basic needs for instance physiological needs are satisfied. Higher needs are not even considered until basic needs are not satisfied due to basic needs are of the utmost importance. Maslow found that basic needs were difficult for individuals to satisfy if prerequisites such as: “freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express one's self, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend one's self, justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness in the group are examples of such preconditions for basic need satisfactions” (p. 382). The risk of these freedoms would cause basic needs to become endangered therefore an emergency response would need to take place (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow's (1943) theory gave the researcher the assumption that if basic needs are not satisfied an AmeriCorps member would not attend college to pursue a degree. America Reads programs assisted members in meeting the higher need of attending college by assisting members with an education award for participation in the program. A stipend to cover basic needs as rent, food and shelter, an organization to belong to, self-satisfaction tutoring students, self-esteem booster helping others and the safety of knowing members are reaching their goal. Members have satisfied basic needs as well as higher needs.

Hertzberg's Motivational Hygiene Theory

Hertzberg's (1966) Motivational Hygiene theory, also recognized as Hertzberg's Two-Factor-Theory, focuses on individuals observations are linked to extrinsic and intrinsic variables as a result satisfaction or dissatisfaction is influenced by only one, not both. In other words, individuals are either satisfied or dissatisfied. Herzberg's theory (1966) is particularly pertaining to the workforce, which is divided into two sections. One group was termed as "motivators", which when extant increased job motivation and satisfaction, but did not lead to dissatisfaction when absent. Motivators and satisfiers are intrinsic factors such as: responsibility, achievement, recognition, job challenge, and advancement. Hygiene dissatisfiers are extrinsic factors, which include job stability, policies and procedures, administrative processes, pay, status and personal life. When hygiene factors are absent dissatisfaction is increased and motivation is decreased. In a nutshell, Herzberg's theory states that satisfaction and dissatisfaction cannot coexist and hygiene factors must be met before motivators can be used to increase job performance (Herzberg, 1966).

Community colleges and universities recruit students by creating motivating factors that entice them to enroll at a certain school, for example: brochures, television commercials, college days at high schools and information sessions. Other motivators used to attract students to pursue higher education would include obtaining a degree, job with great pay and benefits and self-satisfaction.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Theory X (McGregor, 1957) suggests that employees do not like to work and will avoid work, if possible, unless they are controlled by supervisors threats of punishment

which in turn motivates them to accomplish the employer's goal. Consequently, employees prefer to be instructed if not, they will not be motivated to complete organization's tasks.

Theory Y, in contrast suggests employees are important to the employer therefore, if employees are in a positive, nurturing, and trusting work environment they will be responsible, as well as, excel in job performance by using creativity to problem solve while achieving the objectives of the organization. This theory suggests employees can be responsible and work on their own while enjoying the activity.

History of AmeriCorps

CNCS (2016) found that United States presidents and policy makers have supported literacy and community service for a number of years. In 1963, with the assistance of the federal government, John F. Kennedy called for a national service corps "to help provide urgently needed services in urban and rural poverty areas." Less than two years later political leaders on both sides worked alongside President Lyndon B. Johnson to realize President Kennedy's dream through The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which created VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and other lasting antipoverty programs. The "War on Poverty" was also launched. President Johnson's administration welcomed the first group of 20 VISTA volunteers saying, "Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor often will be difficult. But you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man" (CNCS, 2016). VISTA, like Head Start and other lasting antipoverty programs, was created by The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to serve the needs of poor Americans.

In 1989, under the leadership of President George H. Bush and the federal government the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light Foundation was created to foster volunteering. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 was enacted by the federal government and signed into law by President G. H. Bush while he was in office. This legislation authorizes grants to schools to support service-learning through Serve America and demonstration grants that created Learn and Serve America. President Bill Clinton (CNCS, 2016), in agreement with the federal government, signed the National and Community Service Trust Act in September 1993, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their communities. In August of 1996, President Clinton and his administration launched the America Reads Challenge to ensure that all American children can read on their own by the third grade with tutoring (CNCS, 2016).

In 2002, following the September 11th terrorist attacks, USA Freedom Corps was instituted under George W. Bush and his administration calling on every American to commit to at least two years of their lives to the service of others. As part of USA Freedom Corps, the President calls on Congress to expand AmeriCorps by 50% to 75,000 members per year, a goal reached two years later. In May of 2005, President Bush and his administration, welcomed AmeriCorps members to the Oval Office as part of the first-ever AmeriCorps Week to mark the 500,000 member milestone. President Bush remarked, “I am grateful for all those involved with AmeriCorps for your dedication to a cause greater than self. Your compassionate efforts demonstrate the great character of our country and inspire others to build a more hopeful society” (CNCS, 2016).

In August of 2012, President Barack Obama and his administration welcomed more than 175 AmeriCorps Alumni from 25 states and the District of Columbia to the White House for a day-long session celebrating national service as a pathway to opportunity and career advancement (CNCS, 2016). In July of 2013, the Obama administration created the Task Force on Expanding National Service, resulting in new public and private AmeriCorps partnerships focused on addressing critical challenges in education, economic opportunity, and the environment. In April of 2013, President Obama announced STEM AmeriCorps, a multi-year initiative to place hundreds of AmeriCorps members in nonprofits across the country to mobilize STEM professionals to inspire young people to excel in STEM education at the White House Science Fair. In September of 2009, President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama joined AmeriCorps members and volunteers in painting a Habitat for Humanity home in Washington, DC, as part of the first September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance designated by Congress in the Serve America Act. In April of 2009, after passing through Congress, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, this landmark piece of legislation gave CNCS the ability to expand opportunities for Americans to serve, focus on critical national issues, be a catalyst for social innovation, and support the nonprofit sector.

A report by Voices for National Service (2012), published by CNCS, states that in 1937, unemployment plummeted from 24.8% in 1933 to 14.2% after the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was formed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Federal government to provide jobs and community services to United States citizens.

President George H.W. Bush, and his administration, created the first office of national service in the White House, signed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990, which created the CNCS and the Points of Light Foundation promoting volunteerism. Grants were given to schools to assist in student learning. CNCS also stated that The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was created by President Bill Clinton and the AmeriCorps was formed. President Clinton stated that, “Service is a spark to rekindle the spirit of democracy in an age of uncertainty.” After 9/11, President George W. Bush asked Americans to give their country 4,000 hours of service and at that time USA Freedom Corps was formed. President W. Bush’s 2002 budget decreased AmeriCorps funding by \$33 million, but provided \$237 million to maintaining the program created by President Bill Clinton in 1993 to let Americans know he still supported AmeriCorps (Hebel, 2001).

Continuing the tradition of service and because of the economic predicament of the United States, on April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, the largest extension of service since AmeriCorps launched in 1993. At the bill signing, President Obama remarked “national service supports innovation and strengthens the nonprofit sector. And it is just the beginning of a sustained, collaborative and focused effort to involve our greatest resource – our citizens – in the work of remaking this nation” (CNCS, 2016).

On September 12, 2014 Presidents Obama and Clinton celebrated the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps on the White House lawn with a ceremony and swearing in of a new corps of members for the 2014-2015 program year as AmeriCorps alumni and programs nationwide watch a live stream of various speeches on the impact of

AmeriCorps in the last 20 years and a recorded message from President George W. Bush (CNCS, 2014a). The Presidents Obama, Clinton and Bush praised AmeriCorps members on their accomplishments volunteering all over the country addressing concerns in the communities. President Obama then launched “Employers of National Service,” an initiative that connects alumni of national service to potential employers (CNCS, 2014b). This initiative is directed to recognize national service alumni and participating employers by promoting a national commitment to civic engagement in the United States. Employers demonstrate their interest in improving communities while giving AmeriCorps alumni access to job opportunities. “Employers of National Service,” could possibly assist in bringing the unemployment rate down (CNCS, 2014b).

Over the past 20 years 900,000 AmeriCorps volunteers served more than 1 billion hours in thousands of communities where millions of Americans benefited from these acts of kindness (CNCS, 2016). AmeriCorps programs enlist various income brackets to serve their country, which has proved to be a rewarding and beneficial idea for schools along with communities across the United States, which has undertaken both praise and criticism. One element that made AmeriCorps exceptional is financial aid for college is connected to tutoring and community service. AmeriCorps connects helping our neighbors and going to college together so that Americans can earn an education award to attend college while tutoring a student in reading or delivering clean water to someone in Flint, Michigan.

America Reads Tutoring Programs

According to Wasik (1998), a reading program’s success is contingent upon four themes: (a) whether or not the program had a coordinator who was trained in reading

instruction, (b) tutoring sessions that provided reading opportunities in both familiar and new books, activities that emphasized work analysis and letter-sound relationships, writing activities, and ensuring active engagement of the child in the learning process, (c) intensive volunteer training and/or highly structured lesson materials, and (d) coordination between tutoring and classroom instruction. There are a significant number of America Reads program located at various colleges, universities and community centers in cities throughout the United States. All America Reads reading programs are AmeriCorps programs operating under the umbrella of CNCS. In the next section various America Reads programs were analyzed with America Reads-Mississippi being the targeted program of this study.

America Reads-Mississippi

America Reads-Mississippi (ARM), the Mississippi experience, is an AmeriCorps reading program with funds from CNCS administered through the Office of Academic and Student Affairs at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. This program was established in 1998. ARM began with 200 full-time AmeriCorps members, two university partners and 18 school sites in various regions of Mississippi. In 2010-2011, ARM's enrollment consisted of 350 full-time members at the following colleges: 96 at Alcorn State University, 52 at Delta State University, 52 at Jackson State University, 85 at Mississippi State University, 52 at the University of Southern Mississippi and 14 at the University of Mississippi. Other major partners at that time included the Barksdale Reading Institute, Head Start, the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, America Learns, and the Mississippi Red Cross. These organizations work together with

ARM to improve important needs in Mississippi such as: literacy, disaster relief and community service (ARM, 2016).

ARM's primary focus is education and tutoring where teams of ARM members deploy to school sites to tutor students one on one and in groups before school, during school, after school, during school breaks, and during the summer in summer school, community centers and churches. In addition, members recruit community volunteers to assist with reading activities and implement community service projects (ARM, 2016). Members and volunteers implement community service projects on the following national services days: Make a difference day, Martin Luther King Jr. day, Read across America day and Global Youth Service day. Members also initiate Junior Citizen Corps clubs at their schools teaching students about becoming involved citizens in their communities through service learning projects that help the community for example: book drives, uniform drives (for students who can't afford school uniforms), coat drives, soup kitchens, food pantries and a number of community service activities (ARM, 2016).

The ARM program year begins August 1st and ends July 31st of each term. Members are required to serve at least eight hours a day; Monday through Friday with some weekend service for service projects. Requirements for participation in ARM include (a) be a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. (b) at least 17 years old (c) have a high school diploma or GED (d) pass the reading portion of the ACT Work Keys Assessment test (e) at least 48 college credits or an associate degree (f) pass an FBI background check and child abuse registry check (ARM, 2016).

According to ARM program director, participants who enrolled in the program are termed "ARM members", range from age 17 and over, and enroll in yearlong tutoring

programs at various school districts around the state of Mississippi. These members must serve 1700 hours if full-time between the months of August 1st through July 31st. There are stipend members and non-stipend members (assistant teachers) who participate in the program. Stipend members receive a monthly living allowance for living expenses issued by the state office located at the Institutions of Higher Learning in Jackson, Mississippi. Additionally, stipend members also receive childcare and medical insurance. The non-stipend members are assistant teachers already on the school districts payroll therefore, they do not receive a living allowance, childcare, or medical insurance. Both stipend and assistant teachers received an education award, which effective October 1, 2015 was \$5,775.00 per year for a full time member to use to go back to school, pay off an accumulated student loan, or a combination of both. Participants have seven years to use their education award.

On August 20, 2010, the two-year term limit that members can serve in AmeriCorps programs increased to a four-year term limit. If they successfully complete the first year of service in the program they would be eligible for a Segal education award in the amount of \$5,775.00 for each year of service. The cost of this service to the school districts is just \$3,500.00 per stipend member and no charge for assistant teachers since they are already employed by the school district. Enrollment consists of 75% stipend and 25% assistant teachers for a total of 100% member enrollment (ARM, 2016).

Minnesota Reading Corps

The Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC), the Minnesota experience started in 2004 and grew to become one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the country. MRC consistently made reading improvements and tutored children in four preschool and head

Start programs (MRC, 2016). In 2005, MRC extended the program to serve students in Kindergarten through third grade. The primary activities of the MRC, and its supporting organization, Serve Minnesota Action Network, was to "recruit, train, place and monitor" AmeriCorps members to implement research-based literacy interventions for at risk students in K-3 and preschool. AmeriCorps members in the MRC program serve in school settings to implement MRC literacy strategies and conduct interventions with students using a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. The vital phases of the MRC RtI framework are: (a) clear literacy targets at each age level from PreK through Grade 3 (b) benchmark assessment three times a year to identify students eligible for one-on-one interventions (c) scientifically based interventions (d) frequent progress monitoring during intervention delivery (e) high-quality training and coaching in program components, and literacy assessment and instruction (MRC 2016).

The MRC (2016) students were succeeding in reading by leaps and bounds. An independent evaluation by leading social science researcher NORC at the University of Chicago shows elementary schools and preschool programs that implement Reading Corps get significantly greater outcomes for their students than programs that do not have access to Reading Corps. The study found that African American students, students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and English Language Learners are achieving outcomes equal to or greater than their peers. Higher risk students continued to fundamentally make better grades. NORC also found that the MRC reading model was bringing reading levels up to standards and beyond various settings for instance; urban, suburban, and rural. MRC reading tutors from all education environments are trained by

professional reading coaches to ensure students are getting the best possible chance at success in reading as well as other subjects (MRC, 2016).

New York Reading Corps

The New York experience began at New York University's (NYU) America Reads/Counts (NYUARC, 2016). NYUARC reading program began in 1997 with the placement of approximately 600 tutors in 43 schools in New York City School Districts 1 and 2. Currently, the program is the largest reading program in the United States. NYU placed approximately 1000 tutors in 100 schools in New York City School Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 13 and 23. NYUARC has added mathematics tutoring, expanding the program to NYUARC. These NYU undergraduate and graduate students provide close to 10,000 hours per week of academic assistance to students in grades Pre-K - 8, at no cost to the participating schools (NYUARC, 2016).

NYUARC teachers assign tutors in their classroom to assignments based on the feedback given that specific students are identified as a low performing student who needs additional assistance in reading and other subjects. Teachers realized that students excel better when they have one-on-one tutoring in a classroom setting. Classrooms are set up with reading material to assist tutors while working privately with a student or a small or large group of students while other classroom activities are in session (NYUARC, 2016). A portion of the grant funding is distributed by CNCS directly to single- state, multi-state and national organizations through a competitive grants process. The New Yorkers Volunteer organization awards grants to the New York area to nonprofit groups to respond to local needs (CNCS, 2016).

The three reading programs described above have the same objective, which is to motivate students to learn how to read. These programs also give college students an opportunity to become involved in AmeriCorps, which will give them the tools needed to be in a professional setting. These college students/AmeriCorps members were interacting daily with students and staff therefore, by the end of the service term may make the decision to use their education award to go to college to pursue a degree in education.

CNCS is the largest grant maker and source of funding for all America Reads programs (grantee) in the country. However, the programs are overseen by other federal, state, and local agencies such as: the U.S. Department of Education, State commissions, Institutions of Higher Learning and volunteer organizations (CNCS, 2016). Each of these programs whether reading, teaching math, or building a habitat house have managed to motivate individuals by incorporating reading and tutoring with going to college, getting a degree, and ultimately finding employment.

Tutoring Studies

A study conducted by Coulter (2004) at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs called Summit Scholarship program studied the impact of the America Reads Program. AmeriCorps collaborated with The U.S. Department of Education and the Institutions of Higher education to donate funds for 100,000 tutors to teach students reading skills (Morrow & Walker, 1997). Students failing one grade level or more were recommended for one on one and group tutoring. Professional supervision from licensed instructors oversaw 144 tutors teaching 750 students, 72% from low-income families, to read. Coulter's research focused on outcomes of the program with student members

participating in getting paid by the hour through work-study and AmeriCorps members received a stipend (living allowance). The program tutored over 600 children, at 13 sites, with an increase in 2.4 words correct per minute each week. Surveys of tutors showed a positive rating of the experience and indicated that participants were more sensitive to the needs of students in low-income schools. Participation in America Reads tutoring program motivated 19 of the 144 tutors who participated applied to the teacher education program (7 students) or the Special education Program (12 students).

Kosman (2007), the creator of the America Learns network, which is a survey website for America Reads programs members to complete weekly surveys on how the program was going and what improvements needed to be made, did a case study of the America Reads Programs. The study found that tutors were using reading strategies found on America Learns website and online because “They were simple to follow and easy to understand”, Because they ran out of tutoring ideas and needed new ideas,” “The strategies help in every possible way with the students”, and “The strategies helped because they gave me a new way to teach something, therefore making tutoring more interesting to me and to the student “(p. 7). The study also found that classroom management needed to be added to America Reads tutor training curriculum.

While conducting the study, Kosman (2007) interviewed a former ARM state director who stated:

The Network is giving our AmeriCorps members the immediate personalized technical assistance they need while providing regional and central office staff with instant feedback on how well the program is operating at each region.

Information about how members are meeting program goals, and what staff need

to do to improve our in-person training efforts. ARM can use the Network to make quarterly reporting to government funder's a breeze. Regional staff used to have to compile data manually and send it separately to the various school districts central office. Now school administrators can access previous reports and copy data into WBRs, the web-based reporting system managed by the Corporation for National & Community Service (p. 8).

The study found that by using the America Learns website tutors were sharing and learning a great amount of information about teaching students how to read. Administrators were able to access forms and process reports in a timely manner because documents were online which made their jobs much easier (Kosman, 2007).

Program Enrollment and Completion Rates

According to (Galley, 2003) 70,000 AmeriCorps applications were approved by CNCS in 2002. Although, Congress only allowed 50,000 applications to be processed, leaving 20,000 new recruits unable to participate.

According to an ABT Associates Inc. (1999) study of more than 2,000 members of the 2000 AmeriCorps class, at the time of enrollment AmeriCorps members were more likely to have a high school diploma and slightly more likely to have a bachelor's degree than the average 18- to 24- year-old. However, despite their above-average level of educational attainment, less than one in three of the corps members had graduated from college at the time of enrollment. Clearly, AmeriCorps offers more than two-thirds of its recruits the possibility of serving as a pathway to college or as a means to help ensure they have the resources to complete their education.

CNCS (2016) reported AmeriCorps members are a relatively diverse group of individuals in terms of age, ethnicity, education, and income level. In its first year of service, 47% of corps members were Caucasian, 31% African American, 14% Hispanic, and the remaining 8% "other." Over one-half of corps members came from middle-class families (median household income of \$28,156); over one-half fell within the ages of 21 and 29; over 60% had either a high-school diploma 27% or an associate's degree or some college 34%; and 28% of corps members had either a bachelor's or a graduate degree (Perry, Thomson, et al., 1999). Below is a chart on 2013- 2014 program comparison statistics.

Table 1

AmeriCorps Program Comparison Chart 2013-2014

AmeriCorps Programs	Projects	Service Locations	Participants	Education Scholarships	Program Funding
Mississippi	5	73	354	\$1,890,935	\$398,027
Minnesota	24	113	1,258	\$4,195,049	\$1,734,131
New York	87	775	4,036	\$17,722,263	\$7,006,760

(Source: CNCS 2016)

Mississippi was granted \$3,688,095 for program expenses in 2013 and \$7,462,063 for education awards, which is a drastic decrease in Mississippi's AmeriCorps budget compared to 2014.

Education Award Usage

The AmeriCorps Segal education award encouraged people to go to college who otherwise would not. ABT Associates Inc. finding of the long-term impact of service in AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, education and employment. In this study, ABT Associates Inc. compared 2,228 full-time members of AmeriCorps' 2000 class with 1,925 young people who had requested information about joining because the education award was a way to pay for college. This group did not enroll or could not enroll because slots in AmeriCorps were filled (ABT Associates Inc., 2001a).

Exploring members' plans for the education award was one of the best ways to understand the award's role in advancing upward mobility. In its survey of 2,000 members from the 2000 class, ABT Associates (2001a) found that 51% of members planned to use the award to pay for future college expenses, 18% to pay for graduate school, 8% to pay off existing loans, and 5% to pay for job training. Only 18% said they had no plans for the award. When asked how important the award was for achieving their educational goals, 73% said it was "necessary." 18% described the award as not necessary, but something that would make it easier to achieve their goals and just four percent said they did not need the award.

Statistics on members' actual use of the awards show comparable patterns since AmeriCorps members have seven years after completing the program to use their education awards. Data for the first four AmeriCorps classes show that full award use has grown from 68% to 75%. Roughly three of four AmeriCorps members out of AmeriCorps programs for seven years or longer say the award is necessary. AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC members have slightly higher usage rates (80% and

84%). Overall, the average AmeriCorps usage rate is similar to that of armed forces veterans under the original GI Bill (80%) and considerably higher than that of Army reservists using the Montgomery GI Bill during the 1980s (47%) (ABT Associates Inc., 2001a).

Table 2

Segal Education Award Amounts

Service Term	# of Hours	Ed Award	Ed Award 2010-2011	Ed Award 2011-2012	Ed Award 2012-2013	Ed Award 2013-2014	Ed Award 2015-2016
Full-time	1700	\$4,725	\$5,350	\$5,550	\$5,550	\$5,645	\$5,775
Half-time	900	\$2,362.50	\$2,675	\$2,775	\$2,775	\$2,822	\$2,887.50
Reduced Half-time	675	\$1,800	\$2,038	\$2,114	\$2,114	\$2,150	\$2,200
Quarter-time	450	\$1,250	\$1,415	\$1,468	\$1,468	\$1,493	\$1,527.78
Minimal-Time & Summer associate	300	\$1,000	\$1,132	\$1,175	\$1,175	\$1,195	\$1,222.22

Effective October 1, 2015 –Education award same amount as Pell grant each year. Members should check with their program or project sponsor to confirm the amount of the award for which they are eligible. (Source: CNCS 2016)

Each year participants enroll in AmeriCorps reading programs and after completion of the program and receiving their education award some go back to college to pursue a degree, payoff student loans, become teachers or never return to college. Many members have participated in the ARM program have not taken advantage of using the education award because of personal or professional reasons. If the award is not used by the end of seven years at that time it goes back to the government unless members

transfer their award to a child, step-child, foster-child, grandchild, or step-grandchild (ARM, 2016).

Impact on College Attendance

In the past 20 years, community colleges have been challenged by a growing number of part-time students while budgets and course selections get smaller (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990; Levine, 2001). Trends pertaining to enrollment, curriculum and other issues are reasons higher education particularly the community college are using part-time or adjunct faculty immensely.

As a result, faculty pay has gone down, specialized courses are being taught in addition to temporary positions are filled (Levine, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2001b). The primary goal of the community college is to keep tuition cost down and by hiring part-time faculty student's access to college becomes affordable. (American Association of Community Colleges [AACCC], 1995). The NCES (2001a) indicated that in 1997, 64% of the faculty at public community colleges were part-time employees; compared to 1992 figures of 42%, shows an rise of 22% in five years.

In today's society students are more than likely to attend either a two-year institution or they will attend a four-year institution (Townsend, 2001). Townsend's classifications details students action at each level to characterize the six existing differences of transfer to include moving to the four-year school without an Associate's degree; moving with an Associate's degree; moving to and from the two-year school in a lateral motion; moving dual-enrollment (high school) credits from the two-year institution to the four-year institution; moving coursework taken at a two-year institution

during the summer; and, transferring two-year institutional coursework taken alongside four-year coursework (2001).

When Governor Bill Clinton accepted the Democratic nomination for President in 1992, he declared that “national service would create an America in which the doors of college are thrown open once again to the sons and daughters of stenographers and steelworkers”. AmeriCorps alumni were increasingly entering into public service employment in education, politics, law enforcement, health and human safety or enter the military. The experience of being an AmeriCorps member broadened member view of employment and life skills and equipped them with tools for success (Selingo, 1998).

AmeriCorps class of 2000 said their involvement in the program was one of the deciding factors for pursuing higher education. However, when ABT Associates Inc. compared the change in AmeriCorps members’ confidence in their ability to obtain a college degree against the control group, ABT Associates Inc. found that members enjoyed serving in AmeriCorps their experience was a positive one. In regard to members’ feeling as though they can achieve a degree, ABT Associates Inc. (2001b) discovered that 95% of AmeriCorps alumni had earned their high school diploma. Of that percentage, 3% more members were enrolled. Member who pursued and obtained a bachelor degree went up from 30% to 40%, a 10% increase (ABT Associates Inc., 2001b).

To understand what role participation in AmeriCorps might have played in this increase, ABT Associates Inc. compared the educational progress of AmeriCorps members and the control group three years after the first study. Looking only at individuals who had not obtained a bachelor’s degree by the start of the study, ABT

Associates Inc. (2001a) found that three years later, 66% of those who had served in AmeriCorps and 69% of those in the control group were either pursuing or had completed a bachelor's or associate's degree. The positive impact of AmeriCorps may become more evident as time has passed (ABT Associates Inc., 2001a)

According to Vaughan (2006), individuals' needs are a requirement when they are looking for a college to attend. One critical need is a developmental or remedial program that would allow students to transfer to a four year university from a community college. Universities now offer remedial courses to prepare students for college level assignments. In the next section "Remediation" in higher education will be the topic of discussion.

A Review of the Remediation Issue

Merriam Webster dictionary online version (2016) defines remediation as the act or process of remedying, remediation of reading problems. The American Heritage dictionary (2001) defines remediation as intended to correct or improve something, a deficient skill. The American Heritage online version (2016) defines remediation as the act or process of providing remedial education: remediation of poor reading skills in college students. AmeriCorps reading programs across the country have organized and administered reading or math remediation programs in the elementary and high schools to prepare students for college (CNCS, 2016). The Pawtucket School District in Pawtucket, Rhode Island is one of many organizations in the nation to receive AmeriCorps funding where members were based at high schools to work with juniors and seniors on remediation and academic support, higher education counseling, career awareness, financial literacy, and ongoing mentoring support (CNCS, 2016). Remediation in American higher education is a topic of great

interest to many. While the issue may seem to be relatively new to the higher education arena, its origins date back to pre-colonial times. As early as the 1630s, Harvard College was providing tutors in Greek and Latin for under-prepared incoming students. By 1849, the first remedial programs in reading, writing, and arithmetic were being offered by the University of Wisconsin. At the conclusion of the 19th century only 238,000 students were enrolled in all of higher education. However, preparatory departments were present and, of the first-year students, more than 40% were participating in pre-collegiate programs (Breneman, Costrell, Haarlow, Ponitz, & Steinberg, 1998; Ignash, 1997; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

The end of World War II brought soldiers home who were taking advantage of the GI Bill, creating a rise in the need for additional remedial programs throughout the nation. An additional surge came after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965. Increased government funding and open-admissions policies opened the door to new students entering into colleges and universities under-prepared (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Payne & Lyman, 1998).

Although a broad idea of what remedial education is allows for a brief study of its history, there is little agreement about what modern remediation is, who should receive instruction, who is responsible for providing it, and how much it does or should cost. The results of this lack of consensus are policy decisions which lack necessary information, an “imprecision of language” that contributes to confusion, and a system that has no uniform guidelines distinguishing remediation in one institution as opposed to another (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Nevertheless, community college systems' involvement in remedial or developmental education paints them as a target in the discussion. "Opponents of college remediation argue that the availability of remediation in college removes incentives to do well in high school, detracts from the education of prepared college students by 'dumbing down' courses, and leads to low graduation rates" (Oudenhoven, 2002). The argument is compounded by college faculty who feel their work environment would be improved if their students were better prepared to handle course requirements.

The high cost of remediation in community colleges is also getting attention. Colleges must pay for faculty to teach the remedial courses, provide class room space, and supply a variety of support services, including counseling, administrative support, parking facilities, maintenance, etc. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2006), the estimated cost nationally of remediating students who recently completed high school but who are not prepared to succeed in college work is \$1.4 billion.

The cost, and large numbers, of students enrolled in remedial courses have generated a debate about where remediation should take place. Community college leaders defend their role in remediation by claiming they can provide remedial education more efficiently than four-year colleges and universities (Colby & Opp, 1987). Bettinger & Long (2005) backs this claim by stating that remediation at two-year institutions is less expensive than four year colleges because many remedial courses are taught by low-paid, adjunct (part-time) faculty who have larger class sizes.

In contrast, Brawer and Friedlander (1979) note that some believe two-year colleges, as institutions of higher learning, should not offer any developmental courses. The authors go on to explain that remedial education belongs in adult schools, the private

sector, or on-the-job training programs. If remedial courses are found in community colleges, they are typically offered in two ways; embedded in regular college curriculum or offered entirely separate from other courses. “The traditional approach assigns underprepared students to separate courses from remedial work in English or math (or both)...however, some community colleges are experimenting with either embedding critical thinking and basic skills work in regular college classes or allowing students to simultaneously complete remedial and college-level work” (Oudenhoven, 2002, p. 41).

Community colleges are a place where students, not eligible to enter four year institutions, can remediate basic skill deficiencies and obtain the college education that would otherwise be out of reach (Colby & Opp, 1987). The open entry, easy access, and convenience characterized by community colleges make them a logical choice for the location of such remedial programs (Colby & Opp, 1987). Even so, objections are commonly raised because of the high cost of remedial education, the confusion surrounding what it is, and whom it should serve.

Mississippi is approaching the issue of remediation in community colleges with an effort called the “High School Dropout Recovery Initiative.” Created and developed by the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC), the initiative is an effort to confront the states low educational achievements. Mississippi has approximately 17,000 students drop out of high school each year (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006a). As a result, only 60% of students entering the ninth grade will graduate from high school. Currently 27% of Mississippi adults over the age of 25 don’t have a high school diploma, a number that is high compared to the national average of

20% (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006a; Community and Junior Colleges, 2006c; Harrison, 2006).

The states labor force suffers as a result of these low educational outputs. Mississippi has one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the nation, with an estimated 21% of the working age population (20-64) not participating (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006c). The coupling of low educational achievement with low workforce participation rates illustrates the importance of remediation and training of the state's population.

The High School Dropout Recovery Initiative enables the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to come to life. The program, which encourages and enables low-income adults to persist beyond the “come and get your GED” mindset, is located at the state's community colleges and is molded to fit the needs of local communities and employers (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006c). The goal of the community colleges is to increase the number of GED achievers by 4500 each year while providing the individuals with marketable job skills (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006b & c).

The program offers two options. The first is the “Academic Adult High School Diploma,” in which the student must complete the GED as well as additional measures established by the State Board of Community and Junior Colleges. The second option is the “Technical Adult High School Diploma.” In addition to participating in the Adult Basic Education Program, the student is also required to successfully complete a postsecondary career or technical program at the community college level (Mississippi Legislature, 2006).

The program is performance based and merit driven. Under the new program, community colleges will receive an initial appropriation for ABE students enrolled in courses to improve their educational attainment level and/or GED preparation programs the previous year. In subsequent years, the colleges will receive an additional state reimbursement for each student that achieves the GED and obtains job readiness skills in a community college occupational skills program or college credit program. These funds will be awarded to colleges that are producing the best results – more students enrolled in GED programs, earning GED's and transitioning to career or technical training programs (Community and Junior Colleges, 2006c).

Remedial education does not have to be provided exclusively by community colleges. The ARM reading program can provide tutors at the college level to tutor students who are failing or at risk of dropping out of college. The program, funded by the federal government, focuses on reading by providing tutors to students as early as kindergarten and continuing throughout adult education.

One of ARM's goals was to provide a service to students that will reduce or eliminate the total of students who can't read proficiently by the time they have reached high school. In order for students to succeed in school they must learn how to read. This is an effort to counteract the need of remedial programs in the community college setting by addressing the problem prior to post-secondary enrollment (ARM, 2016).

Mississippi has a rich history of remediation programs that run through State Literacy Resource Centers, many of which are facilitated in community colleges and their libraries. In 1995, 50% of the state's public libraries had major adult literacy programs,

most being subsidized by Library Service and Constitution Act Title VI related programs (Spangenberg, 1996).

In many instances, state policy makers intentionally concentrate the remedial function within two-year colleges in order to free colleges and universities of this function (Colby & Opp, 1987). All public two-year colleges offer remedial courses and percentages suggest that community college students are in need of the function: more than 40% of students entering Rockland Community College in New York were directed to the developmental studies department; 88% of Shelby State Community College (Tennessee) first-time students were placed in remedial or developmental studies courses; 70% of entrants into Prince George's Community College in Maryland were identified as in need of remedial coursework (Brawer & Cohen, 2003; Brown & others, 1989; Hobbs, 1988; Prince George's Community College, 1999).

In the past, several states have attempted to limit remedial education, including Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. Levin & Calcagno (2007) point out that many states restrict remediation to two-year institutions and that at least 10 states prevent entirely or discourage public four year institutions from offering remedial education. "By 2000, more than half the states had regulations governing remedial instruction," and some had mandated that it not be offered at all in the public universities; Missouri, South Carolina, and Arizona are notable examples (Brawer & Cohen, 2003, p. 264). Florida also mandated that remediation not be offered in the public universities and moved nearly all its remediation coursework to the community college level (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Different states approach remediation in different ways. A 1996 study by the Maryland Higher Education Commission “found that policies, instruments, and standards used by Maryland colleges and universities to identify and place remedial students differed, even within the community college sector” (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000, p. 72). In 1998, as a result of public and political pressure, the City University of New York (CUNY) phased out remediation programs at the four-year institution level and limited community college remediation to one year (Oudenhoven, 2002). In another study, “the Ohio Board of Regents found that almost 40% of remedial math students never take a subsequent math course, and those who do are less likely to succeed than non-remedial students” (Bettinger & Long, 2005, p. 18).

A subsequent study in Ohio by Bettinger and Long (2005) examined “the effect of remedial education on community college student outcomes by tracking the outcomes of nearly 13,000 students over a five-year period. The study found that “students in remediation do not perform worse than similar individuals who do not enroll in remedial courses” (Bettinger & Long, 2005, p. 24). The authors concluded by adding that “remediation can have a positive overall effect on community college students but there appears to be much room for improvement” (Bettinger & Long, 2005, p. 25).

Remediation in higher education is an issue, which has been present in American education for centuries. Nonetheless, there is little consensus on what remedial education constitutes or whom it should serve. Increasingly community colleges are being looked to as primary providers for remedial education instruction, with many states mandating the stoppage of remedial courses in public four-year colleges. Specifically, Mississippi’s community colleges offer remedial coursework through the ABE program. Remedial

programs aren't limited only to community college settings in Mississippi however; ARM and State Literacy Resource Centers provide the same function for a variety of ages and skill levels.

According to Dougherty (1992) only a small portion of economics play a part in a comparison of community college transfer students and four-year university students who both pursued bachelor degrees. Dougherty compared students of similar backgrounds at both levels of education and discovered that university students earned 20% more Bachelor's degrees than community college students.

Training Skills and Employment

Wendy Spencer (2014), Chief Executive Officer of CNCS stated:

CNCS programs also expanded economic opportunity for service participants, by helping them graduate from high school, gain career skills, pursue higher education, and find work. For both beneficiaries and participants national service helps expand individual opportunity, build family stability, and create more sustainable, resilient communities. (p. 2)

According to CNCS, there was supported evidence that AmeriCorps has provided over \$2.7 billion dollars in education awards for college expenses and college debt to AmeriCorps alumni in excess of 20 years. Job opportunities and lifelong skills that would lead members to career choices materialized thanks to AmeriCorps training, leadership and professional development workshops. AmeriCorps is regarded as a stepping-stone to financial stability that affords members with treasured skills, direction and knowledge guiding members to their perspective professions (CNCS, 2016).

In its survey of 108 AmeriCorps programs in 2000, ABT Associates Inc. (2001b) found that the average program devoted about eight days during the year to member training, with 14% offering six weeks or more. Programs devoted the most time to team building (offered by 96% of programs for an average of 24 hours per year), service related skills training (offered by 80% of programs for an average of 40 hours per year), and leadership training (offered by 76% of programs for an average of 17 hours per year). College classes or other formal educational training was offered to 22% of the 108 AmeriCorps members (ABT Associates Inc., 2001b).

In a survey of AmeriCorps members who completed the program, ABT Associates (2001b) found that 61% were “very satisfied” with the new skill they had learned and nearly all 97% believed their chances of finding a job had improved “quite a bit” or “a great deal” as a result of their year of service. In addition, 95% of programs offered member workshops on making the transition into professional careers or higher education, with about two-thirds offering a full-day workshop or more on these issues. Perhaps most importantly, when ABT Associates Inc. (2001b) compared the changes in the AmeriCorps members’ basic work skills (collecting and evaluating information, motivating team members, and time management) and their obligation of personal responsibility for their own employment success in contrast to the control group, it found that serving in AmeriCorps created positive, outcomes.

Aguirre International’s study of the 1996 AmeriCorps class. In that study, Aguirre (1996) researchers compared 382 AmeriCorps members with 732 individuals who did not participate in the program. Aguirre administered a Life Skills Inventory (LSI) test before and after the term of service to groups, assessing their aptitudes in communication,

leadership, analytical problem solving, organization and management, and computer and mathematical skills. This longitudinal study found that, on average, participation in AmeriCorps had a positive and statistically significant effect across all five measures of members' life skills. These positive results were found across ethnic groups and were the most substantial for those with the least developed skills at the time of their entry into the program (Aguirre, 1996).

Civic Engagement

According to CNCS (2007b), one out of three people volunteer one year and the following year fail to do so. Sustaining volunteers is of critical importance to the community service initiative of AmeriCorps. "Creating positive volunteer experiences is key to growing a widespread culture of service" (CNCS 2007b, p. 5). Social organizations are in desperate need of community volunteers because nine out of 10 organizations will accept as many volunteers who will make the commitment (Urban Institute 2004). The Urban Institute (2004) estimates that 2.5 million volunteers are needed right away if the public would be motivated to make the commitment.

There is no evidence of racial bias in terms of AmeriCorps impact on volunteers' civic involvement. White individuals and persons of color were significantly more likely to become active in local communities and to form community groups as a consequence of program participation. Neither group became significantly more likely to attend public meetings. African Americans were considerably less likely to join community groups than white participants in the pre-service survey, but the difference was statistically slight in the post-service survey. This finding provides important empirical evidence that

AmeriCorps is having a positive impact on racial minority involvement in civic organizations (Simon, 2002).

Summary

There is persuasive evidence that national service is meeting real public needs in a cost effective way by the studies that are evidence of the performance of AmeriCorps programs that have spread all across the nation. AmeriCorps members are performing a variety of task to meet our education in addition to community needs. Although there may not be an overwhelming amount of evidence there is still proof that AmeriCorps is helping to raise the number of teachers in the classrooms today. Past research suggests that AmeriCorps has supported key factors linked to expanded opportunity, but perhaps not to the degree that many advocates of national service had hoped. On the plus side, AmeriCorps has succeeded in recruiting a diverse group of Americans interested in using the education award to pay for college and ensured that the majority of members completed the program and made use of their awards. However, the evidence to date suggests that AmeriCorps members are more likely to go to college than their peers. At the same time, the evidence also suggests that serving in AmeriCorps enhances members' basic work skills and sense of personal responsibility.

Definitions

1. *AmeriCorps* is a national program, originally started in the 1960s by John F. Kennedy (formerly the national Peace Corps), that promotes literacy and community service in the USA and other countries (CNCS, 2016).

2. *AmeriCorps Program*: An organization that has received an AmeriCorps grant and operates a service program (CNCS, 2016).
3. *AmeriCorps State & National* provide grants to local and national organizations and agencies to address education, public safety, health and environmental issues (CNCS, 2016).
4. *AmeriCorps NCCC* is a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24 who engage in short-term service projects across the country (CNCS, 2016).
5. *AmeriCorps VISTA* provides full-time AmeriCorps members to community organizations and public agencies to serve in high poverty, low-income communities (CNCS, 2016).
6. *America Reads-Minnesota* is a collaborative effort between the College of Education and Human Development, the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence, and the University YMCA in partnership with Minneapolis and St. Paul schools and community organizations to increase literacy, support education and career growth in the community of students K-8th grade and University of Minnesota tutors (<http://serveminnesota.org/programs/minnesota-reading-corps>, 2016).
7. *America Reads-Mississippi (ARM)* is an AmeriCorps program, which began in 1998 and directed by Academic Affairs Office of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (www.americareadsms.org, 2016).

8. *Civic engagement* is a concept, which involves activities that build on the collective resources, skills, expertise, and knowledge of citizens to improve the quality of life in communities (CNCS, 2016).
9. *Community college and junior college* is any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as the highest degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).
10. *Completion rates* are the number of members who complete their term of service during the program year (CNCS, 2016).
11. *Corporation for National and Community Service* (CNCS) was created from two agencies (ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service). Together the two agencies became one to bring Americans together of all ages to volunteer and serve the nation (CNCS, 2016).
12. *Extrinsic motivations* include fringe benefits, wider opportunities and job security as some good examples Hall and Langton (2006). These factors consist of employment flexibility, more family time, teacher shortage, teacher made a great impression, job change, numerous days off throughout the year and summer, schedule compatible to own children, and finances (Feistritzter, 2008).

13. *Graduation* is getting a diploma or academic degree or the ceremony that is sometimes associated, in which students become graduates. At the college and university level the faculty will usually wear academic dress at the formal ceremonies, as will the trustees and degree candidates (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduation>, 2016).
14. *Grantee* is the direct recipient of the grant funds (CNCS, 2016).
15. *Intrinsic Motivational Factors* are the values individuals hold for themselves (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997). In the workforce factors include the desire to help people, love for your profession, and benefits of longevity and retirement income (Feistritzter, 2008).
16. *Living Allowance* is the stipend a full-time AmeriCorps member receives during a term of service to pay for personal expenses (CNCS, 2016).
17. *Members* are AmeriCorps participants who receive a living allowance, education award or other benefits as part of their enrollment upon completion of a term of service (CNCS, 2016).
18. *Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services* is the state agency in Mississippi overseeing national service programs (CNCS, 2016).

19. *Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning* consists of the eight public universities: Alcorn State University, Delta State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, Mississippi University Women, Mississippi Valley State University, the University of Mississippi, The University of Southern Mississippi, including the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, Mississippi Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, ten off-campus centers, and various other locations throughout the state (Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning, 2016).
20. *Multi-State*: An AmeriCorps Program operating in two or more states. This program receives an AmeriCorps grant directly from CNCS (CNCS, 2016).
21. *National Service* refers to nationally supported community service initiatives (CNCS, 2016).
22. *Segal Education award*. Full-time AmeriCorps members receive an education award after one year completion of service in the amount of \$5,775. Education awards can be used to pay education costs at any community college or university that receives federal financial aid, or to repay qualified student loans. Members have up to seven years after his or her term of service has ended to use the award or transfer to a family member (son/grandson, daughter/granddaughter) (CNCS, 2016).

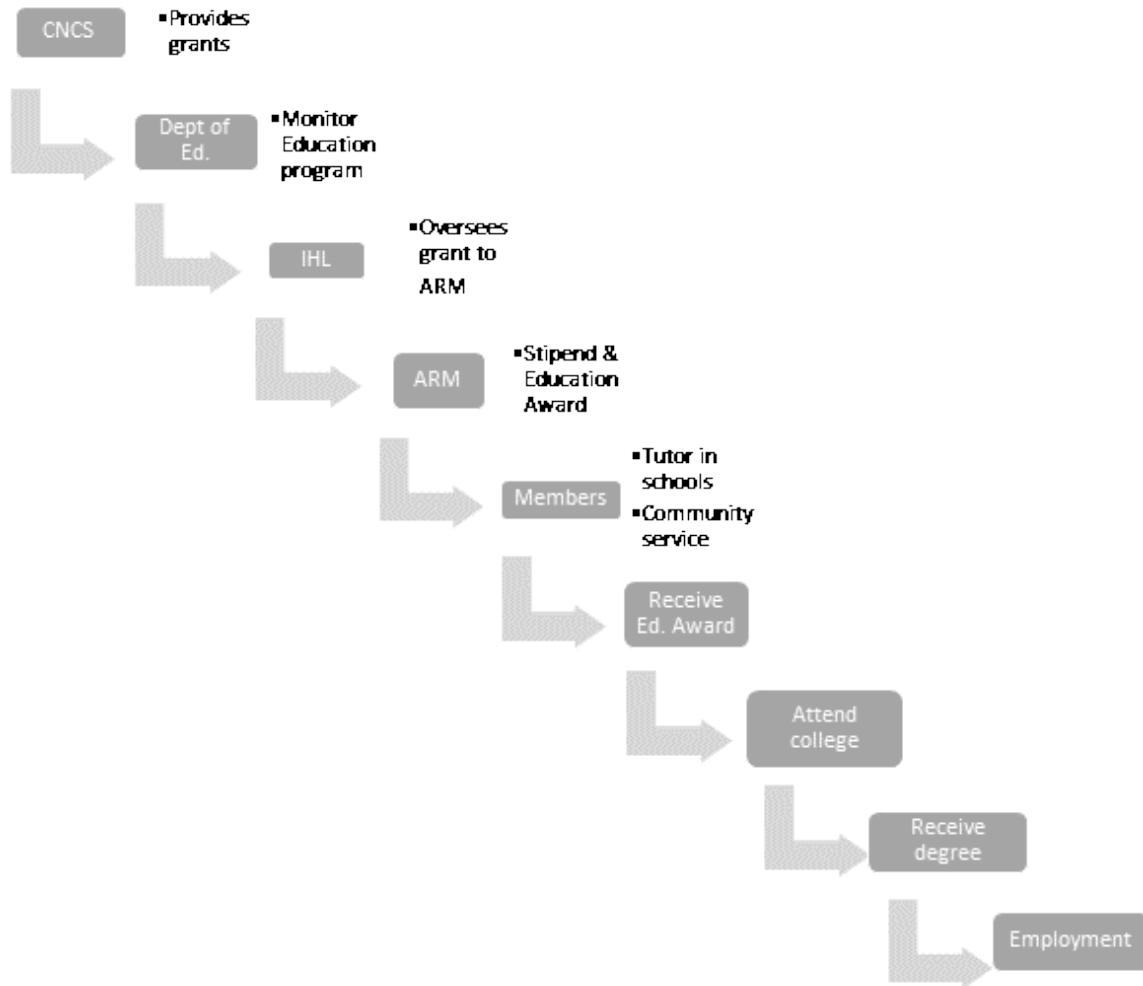


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Figure 1 displays the motivating factors that contribute to ARM members attending community college and/or a university.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to specifically explore the motivating factors that impact AmeriCorps/ARM members who tutored students in partnering schools sites in reading, used their education award to attend community college or a university and was education the career choice upon completing college. The study also determines the relationship between demographics as a motivating factor for members using their education award to return to college after serving in an AmeriCorps/America Reads program. In order to address the problems indicated in this study the following research questions were answered.

Research Questions

1. What effect does participation in ARM/AmeriCorps have on college graduation rates and becoming a certified teacher?
2. What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members used their education award to attend community college or a university to pursue a degree or finish a degree?
3. What major was pursued by ARM/AmeriCorps members who attend community college or universities in Mississippi?

4. What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members continue civic engagement after completion of program?

Research Design

This study attempts to measure the overall effectiveness of the AmeriCorps/ARM program in terms of the success rate of ARM/AmeriCorps members returning to college after receiving an education award to pursue degrees in education or other professions. In addition this study can also be used on an individual basis for means of reporting results per individual. Several methods will be used to compile data. Quick surveys is the online website used to administer the survey. A one page ARM/AmeriCorps Alumni Survey consisting of 19 questions asked members what have they been doing since ARM. These questions determined motivating factors about why ARM members used their education award to attend a community college, university or both to obtain a degree in education or another field. Fraenkel & Wallen (2006) suggest that survey researchers select a topic of interest so respondents are more likely to respond. The data analysis will be computed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) a computer program used to analyze quantitative data.

Participants

The participants for this study were former ARM members' ages 18 - 64 who were enrolled in the ARM/AmeriCorps programs between August 2000 and July 2012 (approximately 3500). ARM/AmeriCorps members who tutored students in public school settings, completed their term of service, received an education award, used the education award to attend college and obtained a degree will be asked to complete 10 to 15 minute

online survey. The targeted number of surveys collected for data analysis is 100 to determine factors that motivate ARM members to use their education award to pursue a degree in education or a degree in another field.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was obtained from the ARM state director, located at the Institutions for Higher Learning in Jackson, Mississippi. ARM created the validated survey as an evaluation tool for life after AmeriCorps to follow-up on progress made by members after leaving the program. The instrument for this study was modified with permission from ARM's state staff. The survey, based on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, has a 19 question survey that measures the extent to which various motivational factors impact ARM members' reasons for pursuing a degree in education or another field.

After reviewing the original survey there was a process of elimination of some questions also modifying and adding questions to coincide with the research objectives. Validity is when correct inferences are made based on results of an instrument, the instrumentation process and the characteristics of the group studied (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

When measuring content validity, researchers test the format of the survey instrument to ensure accurate data are collected (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). To test validity of the modified survey instrument a sample group of America Reads alumni not participating in the study reviewed the survey instrument to determine if there are any complications in understanding the questions or any problems completing the survey instrument. The sample group gave positive feedback about the survey instrument and

determined there were no errors, duplicate information, easy to read, easy to understand and complete the questions.

The one page ARM/AmeriCorps Alumni Survey consisted of 19 short questions asking respondents what they have been doing since ARM, to determine motivation factors about why ARM members used their education award to attend a community college, university or both to obtain a degree in education or another field and what employment was obtained. Survey respondents' demographic information (age, gender, and race) and a survey end date were included at the bottom of the survey page.

Data Collection

Surveys were administered to ARM/AmeriCorps members using Quick surveys online via email, Facebook and text messages. After receiving IRB approval, members were contacted by email, Facebook and text messages informing them of what type of research was being conducted and the intended purpose was for this study only. An agreement to participate in the survey by respondents' was reached once members clicked on the survey and began responding to the questionnaire. Completion of the survey took 10 to 15 minutes from start to finish. Members had the option not to take the survey if they desired to do so. Surveys were held and data collection ended once the goal of collecting 100 surveys was met.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data from the survey by using descriptive statistical analyses to measure the mean, median and mode for each survey element. Each survey item rating was a dependent variable and was used to determine the factors that motivate

ARM/AmeriCorps members who used their education award to attend college to become a teacher, administrator or chose another profession. The one-way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze whether demographics impact the factors that motivate members' decision to attend college using their education award. SPSS was used for data analysis while ANOVA was analyzed at the .05 level of significance.

Summary

Mississippi was the main focus of this study to explore how AmeriCorps/America Reads programs partnered with community colleges and universities which recruited members to volunteer at school sites and community centers tutoring students in classrooms to improve reading, grades, engage in community service activities, used their education award to attend college or pay off student loans, and increased employment in education. In this chapter the methodology described the research questions, research design, participants, instrumentation, data was collected through online interactions and data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses ANOVA, Spearman's Rho, Pearson R test, Kendall's Tau b correlation, and T-Tests which were rendered through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Additional factors investigated in this study were motivational factors that made an impact on AmeriCorps/America Reads-Mississippi members obtaining degrees and employment in education or another field.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this study, 250 ARM/AmeriCorps alumni out of a database of 3500 were contacted by email, Facebook and text messages however, 100 ARM/AmeriCorps alumni actually completed the online survey which was the targeted number of respondents needed to collect data to understand the program's impact on college attendance among its members. Additional questions addressed the types of majors chosen, how often the education award was used for college attendance and degree completion, and if members continued in civic engagement after the completion of their program commitment. The choice of one specific major/profession was also investigated. The research examined how frequently members became certified teachers. Survey findings and their implications are discussed in this chapter.

Demographics

The last four questions of the survey instrument reflect the demographic information of the respondents. The demographic characteristics include: age range, education level, race, and gender. Race and gender are used for general demographics only.

All information in regards to demographic data is displayed in Table 3. Alumni members responding to the survey were between the ages of 18 and 64. The majority of

the respondents were primarily between the ages of 35-44 ($n=48$). Of the respondents, the next largest age range was 25-34 ($n=23$), followed by the 45-54 ($n=16$) age range, then the 55-64 ($n=10$) age range and the small group made up the 18-24 ($n=3$) age range. No respondents indicated that they were in the 65 or above age group.

The next demographic question addressed level of education. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had completed an Associate degree ($n=32$). The next largest group of respondents said that they had obtained a bachelor degree ($n=29$), followed by the respondents who had obtained a Master's degree ($n=26$). 12% of the respondents said they had complete some college ($n=12$), while only 4% of the respondents had obtained just a high school diploma or GED ($n=4$). All respondents indicated that had completed some level of education.

Demographic question 17 asked the participants to indicate their race. The majority of the respondents indicated that their race was African American ($n=92$). The second largest racial group was Caucasian/White ($n=7$). Only one respondent selected the "other" option for race ($n=1$). No other racial selections were indicated through the survey instrument.

The final question in the demographic portion of the survey addressed gender. Of the respondents, 91% of the respondents of were female ($n=91$), and 9% were male ($n=9$).

Table 3

Demographics

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age Range</i>			
	18-24	3	3%
	25-34	23	23%
	35-44	48	48%
	45-54	16	16%
	55-64	10	10%
	65+	0	0%
<i>Level of Education</i>			
	High School/GED	4	4%
	Associate Degree	32	32%
	Bachelor Degree	29	29%
	Master's Degree	26	26%
	Some College	12	12%
<i>Race</i>			
	African American	92	92%
	Asian American	0	0%
	Caucasian/White	7	7%
	Hispanic	0	0%
	Other	1	1%
<i>Gender</i>			
	Male	9	9%
	Female	91	91%

Research Question 1: What effect does participation in ARM/AmeriCorps have on volunteers' graduation rates and becoming a certified teacher?

The intrinsic value of research question one was to determine what effect participation in the ARM/AmeriCorps program has on ARM alumni graduation rates. The researcher also considered a difference between one-year program participants and two-year program participants. The statistical tests were applied to discover if one year members or two year members were more likely to achieve a degree versus the other

group. This question also seeks to understand if participation in the program influences the type of professions chosen; specifically certified teachers.

Question 1 Data Summary

The ARM/AmeriCorps program was specifically designed as a gateway to attend community colleges and universities for Mississippi volunteers from all walks of life. The data collected through the survey instrument shows that more than 74% of the volunteers who participated in this survey not only attended a community college or university with their award, but also graduated. Graduation is getting a diploma or academic degree or the ceremony that is sometimes associated, in which students become graduates. At the college and university level the faculty will usually wear academic dress at the formal ceremonies, as will the trustees and degree candidates (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduation>, 2016).

Statistical analyses were performed using different methods to review the data from several viewpoints. Frequency and percent confidence intervals were used for descriptive statistics followed by one-way ANOVAs (two tailed), T-Tests, Means, and Correlations to test the difference between the college completion rates of one-year participants and two-year participants as well as the impact on becoming a Certified Teacher as a profession.

Table 4 displays data obtained through a one-way ANOVA statistical test. The standard deviation ($SD = .029$) between groups indicates that there is a significant difference between the length of time served in the program and the participants' ability/and or motivation to complete a college or university degree. This value is significant at the .05 alpha level. A value of ($SD = .029$) shows that length of time

influences educational attainment. Particularly that, longer enrollment in the ARM/AmeriCorps program is related to greater degree completion.

Table 4

Difference between one-year participants and two-year participants graduation rates

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SD
<i>Between Groups</i>	.018	1	.018	.146	.029
<i>Within Groups</i>	1.256	98	.012		
<i>Total</i>	1.374	99			

*p<.05

The T-test was rendered to identify any significant difference between one-year participants and two year-participants ability/and or motivation to graduate from a college or university. The standard deviation between the year groups is ($SD = .03588$) indicating a significant difference, echoing the results from the one-way ANOVA.

Table 5

Year-one versus Year-two T-Test

	N	Mean	SD	SEM	
<i>Years</i>	015	1.8500	.03588	.00035	
<i>Graduate</i>	013	1.2600	.04408	.04408	
Test Value = 0					
	T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Lower Upper
<i>Years</i>	55.551	85	.000	1.85000	1.7788 1.9212
<i>Graduate</i>	28.582	83	.000	1.26000	1.1725 1.3475

Table 6 displays data collected in regards to means (averages) between the independent variables, which are one-year participants and two year-participants, and the

dependent variables which are the graduation frequency of one-year participants and the graduation frequency of two-year participants. The means report shows ($SD = .03831$) which is a significant difference. The means report was tested at an alpha level was of .05 and therefore shows that the average one- year participant will graduate at a significantly lower rate than the average two-year participant. While both groups have successful graduation rates, two-year participants are more likely to complete their degree programs.

Table 6

Means Report

Graduate	Mean	N	SD
<i>1.00</i>	1.8243	15	.03831
<i>2.00</i>	1.9231	85	.185002717
<i>Total</i>	1.8500	100	.03588

* $p < .05$

Table 7 focuses on the frequency of participants who made the occupational choice of becoming a Certified Teacher. The data results indicate that ($SD = .006$) which determines that there is a significant difference between the one-year and two-year group in terms of selecting a Certified Teacher as the occupation of choice. With an alpha level of .05 a value of ($SD = .006$) is a very significant difference. This result indicates members who participate in the ARM/AmeriCorps program for two-years more often selected a Certified Teacher as the occupation of choice.

Table 7

Certified Teacher One-way ANOVA

	Sum of Squared	DF	Mean Square	F	SD
<i>Between Groups</i>	.012	1	.003	.015	.006
<i>Within Groups</i>	1.273	98	.130		
<i>Total</i>	1.285	99			

*p<.05

In table 8, the researcher is able to see the mean difference between one-year graduates, two-year graduates, and those who selected Certified Teacher as their occupation of choice. All variables show a significant difference. ($SD = .03588$), ($SD = .04408$), and ($SD = .04282$) respectively. Tested at the .05 alpha level, the standard deviation of each variable slightly increases showing a correlation between length of time served as an ARM/AmeriCorps member, the likelihood of graduating, and selection of Certified Teacher as the occupation of choice. ARM alumni who graduated from higher levels of education, also spent more time as a volunteer in the ARM/AmeriCorps program. The respondents who selected both variables more often cited that they had become Certified Teachers.

Table 8

Certified Teacher Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
<i>Years Graduate</i>	85	1.00	2.00	.7000	.03588
<i>Certified Teacher</i>	83	1.00	2.00	.7300	.04408
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	19	1.00	2.00	.9560	.04292

*p<.05

The information displayed in Table 9 indicates that there is a correlation between how many years a participant was part of the ARM/AmeriCorps program ($SD = .03588$), how often they graduated ($SD = .04408$) and how often a Certified Teacher was the career choice of preference ($SD = .04292$).

Table 9

Certified Teacher Descriptive Correlations

	Mean	SD	N
<i>Years</i>	.7000	.03588	85
<i>Graduate</i>	.7300	.04408	83
<i>Certified Teacher</i>	.9560	.04292	19

* $p < .05$

Table 10's data displays a significant difference in the correlation between one-year participants and the selection of Certified Teacher as a career choice ($SD = .003$). The data also shows a significant difference in the correlation of community college and university graduates and the selection of Certified Teacher as a career choice ($SD = .003$).

Table 10

Certified Teacher ANOVA/Pearson R Test Correlations

		Years	Graduate	Certified Teacher
<i>Years</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.012	-.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022	.069
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1.275	.190	-.060
	Covariance	.012	.001	-.004
	N	15	13	5
<i>Graduate</i>	Pearson Correlation	.012	.01	.003**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022		.010
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	.190	1.924	.624
	Covariance	.001	.019	.061
	N	15	13	5
<i>Certified Teacher</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.309	.003**	.01
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.010	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-.060	.624	1.824
	Covariance	-.006	.008	.018
	N	15	13	5

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2: What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members used their education award to attend community college or a university to pursue a degree or finish a degree?

Research question 2 seeks to determine what percentage of the survey participants used their award to pursue and/or complete a degree. Information obtained in specific regards to the ARM Education Award is displayed on Table 11. The research objectives include the following: ARM education award recipient, years participated in ARM, and specific years participated in ARM. Of the 100 participants, 95% indicated that they had received an education award ($n=95$). Consequently, 5% of the participants indicated that they had not received an education award ($n=5$). Of the 95 participants who received an education award, 81% indicated that they had used it to attend college.

Table 11

ARM Award Statistics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Education Award Used to Attend College</i>		
Yes	81	81%
No	19	19%
<i>Currently Enrolled in College</i>		
Yes	16	16%
No	84	84%
<i>College Graduate</i>		
Yes	74	74%
No	26	26%

The statistics in Table 12 show that the 81% of ARM/AmeriCorps used their education award to attend community college or a university to pursue a degree or finish a degree. Of the 95 award receiving participants, the 81% that used their award falls in the range of 73.3% & 88.7% with a margin of error of $\pm 7.69\%$. Therefore, the average fits on the equation.

Table 12

Question 2 Equation

$$\hat{p} \pm Z_{.025} \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}\hat{q}}{n}} = .81 \pm 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{(.81)(.19)}{100}} = .733 \leq \hat{p} \leq .887 = 73.3\% \leq \hat{p} \leq 88.7\%$$

Table 13 displays the frequency of participants who chose to use their education award to attend college ($n=81$), as well as those who did not use their education award ($n=19$). Subsequently, Table 14 explores several reasons why participants did not use

their award. The majority of the participants indicated that the reasons listed on the survey were not applicable to them ($n=87$). Finance was the second largest category with 9% of the participants citing this as their reason for nonuse of the award ($n=9$). Time was also considered to be one of the reasons why participants did not use their education award ($n=7$). One respondent indicated that childcare ($n=1$) was the reason that they were not able to use their education award. However, transportation ($n=0$) or medical issues ($n=0$) were not reasons for nonuse of award.

Table 13

Participants' use of award

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Education Award Used to Attend College</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	81	81%
<i>No</i>	19	19%

Table 14

Reason for nonuse of Award

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Time</i>	7	7%
<i>Finance</i>	9	9%
<i>Childcare</i>	1	1%
<i>Transportation</i>	0	0%
<i>Medical Reasons</i>	0	0%
<i>N/A</i>	87	87%
Total	100	100%

Research Question 3: What major was pursued by ARM/AmeriCorps members who attend community college or universities in Mississippi?

Research question 3 sought to determine what specific majors were pursued by ARM/AmeriCorps members. This information gives insight as to which career fields are benefiting the most from the ARM/AmeriCorps program and its education award. Chart 2 display ARM alumni chosen careers in the form of a bar graph. The option of “others”, used to indicate that the respondent’s major was not listed, represent the largest group ($n=48$). The second most frequent major chosen was elementary education ($n=18$), followed by education ($n=10$). The majors of early childhood education ($n=4$), business administration ($n=4$), and liberal arts ($n=4$) all had equal selections among the respondents. The majors of sociology ($n=3$), early child education ($n=3$) and social work ($n=3$) also had equal selections among the respondents, but at a lower frequency. The two least frequent majors on the survey instrument were interdisciplinary studies ($n=2$) and psychology ($n=2$). Note education majors total 35%.

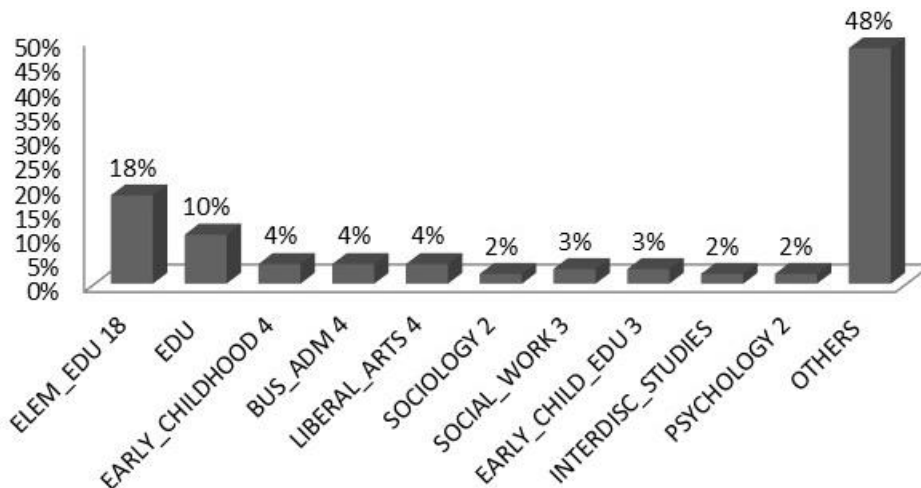


Figure 2. Participants’ chosen careers.

Question 4: What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members continue civic engagement after completion of program?

Civic engagement is an important function of the ARM/AmeriCorps program. Therefore, alumni members continued pursuit of such interest after completing the program is an integral part of ARM/AmeriCorps. Of the 100 survey respondents, the majority said yes ($n=66$) they had continued in civic engagement, while the minority of the respondents said no ($n=34$) they had not continued in civic engagement after completing their program obligations. Displayed on Table 15, the statistics show that the 66% of ARM Alumni continued civic engagement after completion of program. Therefore, the 66% of ARM Alumni who continued civic engagement falls in the range of 56.7% & 75.1% with a margin of error of $\pm 9.28\%$. The percentage fits in the equation.

Table 15

Civic engagement questions

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Have you volunteered for community service projects since completing ARM/AmeriCorps?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	66	66%
<i>No</i>	34	34%

Table 16

Question 4 Equation

$$\hat{p} \pm Z_{.025} \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}\hat{q}}{n}} = .66 \pm 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{(.66)(.34)}{100}} = .567 \leq \hat{p} \leq .751 = 56.7\% \leq \hat{p} \leq 75.1\%$$

Additional Data Output Tables

Table 17

Nonparametric correlations

			Years	Graduate	Certified Teacher
<i>Kendall's Tau_b</i>	Years	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	.012	-.003
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.022	.069
		N	15	13	5
	Graduate	Correlation Coefficient	.121	1.000	.003**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	.	.001
		N	15	13	5
	Certified Teacher	Correlation Coefficient	-.003	.003**	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.001	.
		N	15	13	5
<i>Spearman's rho</i>	Years	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	.012	-.039
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.022	.069
		N	15	13	5
	Graduate	Correlation Coefficient	.012	1.00	.003**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	.	.001
		N	15	13	5
	Certified Teacher	Correlation Coefficient	-.003	.003**	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.001	.
		N	15	13	5

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Summary

In Chapter IV, data from the survey instrument have been analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. The researcher was able to comprehensively answer all four research questions through the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, and intervals, as well as through the use of parametric tests such as one-way ANOVAs, Spearman's Rho, Pearson R test, Kendall's Tau b correlation, and T-Tests. As

study results are presented within this chapter, succeeding is a discussion of study conclusions, recommendations for conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study explored the effect of the ARM/AmeriCorps program on alumni members' pursuit of community college or university degrees in the state of Mississippi and provided insight into which majors were frequently chosen, how education awards were used (or not used), with a specific interest in how often members chose to become certified teachers. The development of the ARM/AmeriCorps program was to increase educational progress and opportunities in to two fold way. First, to increase reading competency skills in high need areas through the aid of tutoring and mentorship. Additionally, this program allows tutors the opportunity to continue their own education through education awards.

Since its inception in 1998, the ARM/AmeriCorps program has enlisted hundreds of tutors, and aided numerous students in developing their reading skills. The research data shows how this program is also impacting the lives of the tutors after they have completed their program obligations. It is determined that alumni members continue their civic engagement efforts through other volunteer opportunities. Furthermore, the ARM/AmeriCorps program has helped alumni members to pursue continued education through providing financial access to a community college or university in our state.

The ARM/AmeriCorps member's all share the Mississippi experience that, although it has similar goals, is different from other state reading programs supported by AmeriCorps. Mississippi's high rural population and lack of qualified teachers to reach those areas, make the ARM/AmeriCorps members tutoring a valuable commodity to the parents, students, teachers and school districts that they serve. The results of this study will help to increase that impact by contributing valuable information that fills a gap in the current literature in regards to the ARM/AmeriCorps program.

Summary of Findings

Demographics: The results of the demographic findings show that large portions of the ARM/AmeriCorps volunteers are African American, many of which are also female. While there are a significant number of Caucasian volunteers, and male volunteers, the greater population is largely reflected in the survey data.

Demographic results also indicate that a large majority of the respondents are using their education awards to continue their own education. Very few respondents had not earned a minimum of an associate degree. Nearly 95% of survey participants had earned some type of formal degree. The age range was also another unique indicator of the sample population.

Question 1: What effect does participation in ARM/AmeriCorps have on college graduation rates and becoming a certified teacher?

The researcher concludes that participation in the ARM/AmeriCorps program had a significant effect on volunteers' graduation rates. Only 4% of the respondents indicated that they had not yet attended college. However, 81% of the respondents indicated that their education award was used to attend college. Of the 19 respondents who indicated

that they did not use their education award to attend college only 9% stated that it was due to finances.

The researcher concludes that of the 9% of respondents who still had not attended a community college or university due to finances would express decreased motivation and increased dissatisfaction because the education award, stipend, and other benefits of the program still was not enough to persuade this small group of participants to attend college to pursue a degree or finish a degree.

In relation to Hertzberg's (1966) motivational theory, the results showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents expressed increased motivation and increased satisfaction based on Hertzberg's motivational theory as they were able to use their education award to pursue a degree, or pay off student loans. However, Question 1 also seeks to determine if the respondents made the decision to become a certified teacher. The researcher concludes that the ARM/AmeriCorps program had a significant impact on respondents' making the career choice and became certified teachers or employed in other areas in education. Although, 84% of the majors pursued were related to the field of education, and 24% of the respondents stated they became certified teachers.

According Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs Theory members have a need to feel as if they can and will reach their goals. The ARM/AmeriCorps program caters specifically to aspiring administrators, educators and certified teachers as it allows them the opportunity to make an impact in the world of education which was the respondents' chosen occupation. As all lower and more physiological needs are met, volunteers seek to aspire to greater more philosophical needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization.

Question 2: What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members used their education award to attend Community college or a University to pursue a degree or finish a degree?

The researcher concludes that 81% of respondents who received an education award, used their education award to attend community college or a university based on data obtained from the survey results. The data also shows that 84% of the education award recipients had already obtained the equivalent of an associate degree. Furthermore, 16% of the respondents receiving an education award were currently enrolled in college. Although, respondents may already have at least one degree and used their education award to continue their education to obtain an additional degree of their choosing.

The use of the education award to attend college is a valuable aspect of the ARM/AmeriCorps program. Since the cost of higher education is increasing faster than the current inflation rate, providing an attainable outlet for Mississippians to offset a portion of college expenses often gives more than just hope. It provides a tangible resource that is enabling a great majority of its participants (particularly two-year participants) to pursue and complete college degrees. This result of the data in response to research question 2 indicates that this program is accomplishing its mission and has great potential if expanded through funding, marketing, and dual purposed partnerships.

From a theoretical standpoint, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can also be applied to research question 2. College attendance can satisfy the philosophical needs such as social acceptance, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The ability to attend college and obtain a degree has been a longstanding principle of the American dream. Along with acceptance into the college or university itself, members who pursue a college degree also receive social acceptance from peers, family members, employers, coworkers, and

the general public. College attendance is thought of by many as a socially accepted rite of passage into American adulthood. Furthermore, groups, clubs, college activities, and school spirit also contribute to a member's social acceptance. Self-esteem and self-actualization are often achieved after the completion of a program and obtaining a degree.

Question 3: What major was pursued by ARM/AmeriCorps members who attend community college or universities in Mississippi?

The researcher concludes that there are five main major disciplines discovered through survey data. They are as follows: Education, Business Administration, Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Other. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) did not select a major that fit into one of the five major categories. However, the most frequent majors selected were in the area of Education with 18% of participants choosing this field of study.

The theoretical framework provides insight to the respondents' choices through the review of the motivation theory. Four of the five major disciplines are noted programs that require intensive reading comprehension and written communication skills. The researcher assumes that through their participation in the ARM/AmeriCorps program member's motivation to learn and excel in literature has caused them to choose such programs.

Education as a major of choice is of great importance in the state of Mississippi. A 2014 report by the Mississippi Department of Education states that there are more than 48 districts with critical needs across the state (Mississippi Department of Education, 2014). The results produced in this survey shows that 35% of the respondents cited majors under the discipline of education. As the ARM/AmeriCorps program continues to

put tutors in critical needs districts and school campuses could likely lead to the higher pursuit of degrees in the education field. Expound on the overall impact of education as a major of choice.

Question 4: What percentage of ARM/AmeriCorps members continue civic engagement after completion of program?

The researcher concludes that the ARM/AmeriCorps program has had a significant impact on members continued civic engagement after completion of the program. The data results indicate that 66% of the participants have been active volunteers beyond the ARM/AmeriCorps arena. Civic engagement is strongly related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs through self-actualization. Beyond reaching goals, ARM/AmeriCorps members seek to continually make a positive impact by giving their time, talent, and service to causes that benefit others besides themselves. Ironically, through the selfless act of civic engagement, members experience psychological benefits that transcend basic and material needs.

The result of Norris' (2001) study of civic engagement and social capital suggests that civic engagement is a necessary factor in economic development and democracy. "The study finds that when combined into a single index it is true, as Putnam suggests, that social capital is strongly and significantly related to multiple interrelated indicators of socioeconomic development and to institutional indicators of democratization" (Norris, 2001, p. 1). This study has concluded that the ARM/AmeriCorps program has a significant impact on influence alumni members to continue their efforts of civic engagement. Continued expanse and organized use of volunteer efforts could greatly

impact Mississippi's economic standings through social change fostered by civic engagement.

Another theoretical perspective that supports ARM/AmeriCorps members continued civic engagement is McGregor's (1957) Theory X and Theory Y; because members had a positive experience through the ARM/AmeriCorps program members are continually motivated to participate in volunteer activities. As the theory suggest, members will enjoy their work or activity when treated with respect, while working in a positive, nurturing, and trusting environment.

Working with children, especially those with reading deficiencies, members must be creative, solve problems, and be able to develop a positive relationship with the student(s) they are tutoring. As a result, members will experience all of the characteristics defined in theory Y.

Comparison to Previous Findings

The findings of this study are complimentary to the data obtained in a study by Moore (2011), "America Reads – Mississippi Future Teacher Corps: A Study of Program Completers' Perception of Factors influencing the decision to become and remain classroom teachers." In her study Moore concludes that the ARM/AmeriCorps program provides positive motivation and that the America Reads-Mississippi experience provides a positive impact in the lives of the members and alumni who had volunteered (Moore, 2011). Another similarity to Moore's (2011) study was that the majority of respondents indicated that they intended to make teaching a long-term career (Moore, 2011). In this study, the education field was the most widely cited major, although less than 25% of the respondents indicated that a Certified Teacher was their career of choice.

A 2009 study of AmeriCorps tutoring programs by Hawk also indicates a positive experience by AmeriCorps volunteers (Hawk, 2009) although this study was based in the Midwest. Hawk's study focused on AmeriCorps administrator experiences instead of AmeriCorps members. However, Hawk concluded that the program, through its administrators, had a significant impact on the people it served as well as those who volunteered (Hawk, 2009).

A similar study by Wilson in 2003, focused on administrators in Mississippi found contrasting results from Hawk's (2009) study. Wilson (2003) found that administrators took a more facilitative role instead of an active one, and often found themselves "spread too thin" in order to achieve major objectives (Wilson, 2003). While this study does not focus on administrators, it does conclude that the program has positively impacted the volunteers in spite of any detrimental aspects of the program.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is the means by which the sample population was obtained. The researcher's original intent was to obtain a random population sample through alumni database access. However, the population sample ended up being obtained through connections such as on Facebook and networking through former coworkers, employers, and alumni members e-mail addresses and text messaging. As a result, the population sample is one of convenience.

This action was necessary in order to obtain an adequate sample population allotted within the designated time frame. Therefore, time was also a significant limitation. Ideally, the survey would remain open to participants until 100 random ARM/AmeriCorps members and alumni completed the survey without any prompting or

subsequent notifications as reminders. Practitioners could aid future researchers in avoiding such limitations by requiring active members and alumni to complete several research and academic surveys throughout the year as a part of the ARM/AmeriCorps policy.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that future researchers seek to discover the myriad ways the program can impact alumni members and their families through the education benefit award. Future researchers can focus specifically on how much money members saved on education costs through the use of their education award. Aside from the initial cost paid by the award, it is important to consider the amount of interest and compound interest avoided through the use of the education award being applied to education costs. It is appropriate to assume that the ARM/AmeriCorps program saves tax dollars and increases state revenue through the education award's ability to pay for student loans thus reducing debt.

This study indicates that 19% of the respondents did not use their education award to attend college. It would be beneficial to determine if the award remained unused, was transferred to a family member, or used to pay off student loans specifically. Furthermore, future researchers can also seek to determine how many AmeriCorps members used their education award to help a family member to obtain a degree.

Future researchers can also investigate how many ARM/AmeriCorps members used their education award to enroll in community colleges specifically or enrolled in colleges or universities specifically. This study included both community college attendance and college or university attendance as one variable. Future researchers could

measure the impact of higher education enrollment as two separate independent variables. Future researchers can use the same model to also investigate how many ARM/AmeriCorps members use their awards at public institutions verses private institutions.

The researcher would also like to recommend that a future study explore the benefits of tutoring on the ARM/AmeriCorps members themselves. From receiving training on how to properly tutor young readers do the ARM/AmeriCorps members receive an unintended benefit by increasing their own literacy skills, and do these skills help members become more successfully in their own higher education pursuits?

The impact of the ARM/AmeriCorps program has been studied from many different aspects. However, the true impact of the program may reach much further than originally intended leaving many avenues for future researchers to explore as the literature on this specific program continues to increase. The more scholarly and scientific data compiled about this program; policy makers and practitioners will be able to guide the program to reach its full potential.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Research questions 2 through 4 provide significant indicators that the ARM/AmeriCorps program or those similar two it are positioned to have positive long-term development of all the stakeholders in the community. Stakeholders can be defined as not only the students who are being assisted by tutors, nor the tutors who are benefiting from the education award, but the stakeholders are all people who are benefited by the far-reaching positive effects of the program. These include, but are not limited to: ARM/AmeriCorps administrators, school district administrators, critical needs

school principals, classroom teachers, parents and family members of critical needs students, average students, exception students, local businesses, community colleges, colleges, universities, and the general population of the state. All are considered to be stakeholders due to the fact that increasing and strengthening literacy skills contributes greatly to the economic progress of a community. This program is geared for students, but in actuality it is designed to support an entire community of people who can positively develop as educational opportunities increase.

Additionally, the ARM/AmeriCorps program has shown to have a significant impact on college attainment among participants of this study. The researcher recommends that practitioners and policy makers consider how the impact can be concentrated to encourage degree attainment in critical needs employment areas in the state of Mississippi, such as in the fields of health care and education.

By using data obtained in this study, and other related studies, policy makers can develop a program that would attract volunteers to designated workforce areas to strengthen the occupational weaknesses that are found within the state of Mississippi. As indicated by this research, the high frequency majors were generally related to the education arena, but did not specifically indicate becoming a certified teacher.

According to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, there are several “occupations in demand” across the state besides those previously mentioned (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2012). Some high demand occupations in Mississippi are in the fields related to Management, Sales & Retail and Business & Administration (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2012).

The researcher recommends that policy makers focus on converting “Tutors to Teachers” to help reduce the drastic need for qualified, certified teachers all over the state. Such a program would capitalize on the data obtained in this study, which indicated that a significant amount of ARM/AmeriCorps members selected teaching as their chosen career. Over time, the researcher believes that such programs would greatly contribute to the progress and development of the state’s economy. Additionally, a well-designed program would also be capable of reversing the effects of rural brain drain that has had a negative impact in the Mississippi’s growth and labor market.

It is also recommended that the ARM/AmeriCorps program actively seek to increase its membership and program outreach by 15% each year, until it can adequately fund and manage more than 500 volunteers per year. As of 2016, the program only enrolled 77 members, a sharp decline from its initial group of 200 (Americareadsms.org, 2016). This recommendation is based on the results of the study, which confirms that the ARM/AmeriCorps program has a significantly positive impact in the lives of the people it serves. If this program was able to amplify its outreach and impact to high needs areas across the state on a large scale, all Mississippians would receive residual benefits in one of its many forms.

Conclusion

The ARM/AmeriCorps program is a beacon of light among the many programs with similar missions and goals. The organizations full impact his largely undocumented and unrealized, but through the aide of volunteers and scholarly researchers the programs impact will continue to grow. This study provided a better understanding of the majors

chosen by ARM/AmeriCorps members, how education awards were used, and how frequent one-year program members and two-year program members obtained degrees.

The interpretation of results were guided by theories such as Kreitner's (1995) Motivation Theory, Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's (1966) Motivational Hygiene Theory, and McGregor's (1957) Theory X and Theory Y. The survey data provided by a sample population of 100 members and alumni of the ARM/AmeriCorps program delivered an abundance of data, which extended the researcher's understanding of the study. The data also extended the researcher's opinion of the impact of the ARM/AmeriCorps program and its many potential benefits.

The results of this study have systematically identified various ways in which the ARM/AmeriCorps program has: had a positive impact on community college and university enrollment, highly contributed to degree attainment among its members, furthered the perusal of education majors, influenced the career choice of becoming a certified teacher, promoted civic engagement among its members, and provided many other social and economic benefits recognized in this study.

The research draws special attention to the results of data obtained in response to research questions 2 through 4 in regards to their direct implications and possible applications. Data obtained can be used to further the ARM/AmeriCorps mission, develop more Certified Teachers, increase degree holding Mississippians, and use civic engagement as a catalyst for social and economic development.

The survey question response data provided detailed information in answer to the posed research questions. Additional data tables provide insights into the program's potential which created a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes

experienced in ARM/AmeriCorps programs. These research data will offer an example to assist stakeholders in cultivating the ARM/AmeriCorps program into a far-reaching system across the state.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) Alumni Survey

Name _____ Date _____

Please answer the following survey questions. Circle answers and fill in the blanks.

1. Did you receive an ARM education award? YES NO
2. How many years did you participate in ARM? One OR Two (Circle one)
3. What year(s) did you participate in America Reads-Mississippi?

4. Did you use your education award to attend college? YES NO
5. If yes, which community college or university did you attend?

6. If no, why not? (Circle one) Time Finances Childcare Transportation
Medical reasons
7. Did you graduate? YES NO If yes, major/month/year of
graduation. _____
8. Are you currently enrolled in college? YES NO
9. If yes,
Where? _____ Major _____
10. Did you become a certified teacher? YES NO
11. If yes, Where? _____ What grade? _____
12. What occupation were you in before ARM/AmeriCorps? Circle one below.
Business Customer service Health Care Education Sales
13. What is your current occupation? _____
14. What school district/site did you serve while in ARM? _____
15. Have you volunteered for community service projects since ARM/AmeriCorps?
YES NO

Demographics

16. Age: ___ 18-24 ___ 25-34 ___ 35-44 ___ 45-54 ___ 55-64 65+

17. What is your level of education? Circle one below.

High school or GED Associate Degree Bachelor Degree Masters Some College

18. Race: ___ African American/Black ___ Asian American ___ Caucasian/White

___ Hispanic ___ Other _____

19. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I value your comments and hope that your participation in the ARM/AmeriCorps program assisted in reaching your career goal.

Go to Quicksurveys.com to take survey.

Online survey ends August 31, 2016

APPENDIX B
IRB APPROVAL

IRB has approved the protocol with the following details.

Protocol ID: 16233

Principal Investigator: Yarbrough, Charity

Department: Educational Leadership Protocol

Title: America Reads - Mississippi/AmeriCorps Reading Programs Impact on Mississippi
Community College Attendance

Review Type: EXEMPT Approval

Date: August 17, 2016