

Nonprofit Decision Making and Resource Allocation: The Importance of Membership Preferences, Community Needs, and Interorganizational Ties

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Abstract:

Data on 12 local chapters of a high status women's community service organization and their communities are used to assess the relative impact of community needs, members' perceptions and preferences, and interorganizational ties on decisions about how to allocate volunteers and funds among 17 community problem areas. Quantitative analysis indicates that the distribution of volunteer time and funds was unrelated to community needs as measured by objective indicators. Instead, members' and leaders' perceptions of the severity of community problems and their willingness to work in some problem areas more than others were the most important determinants of resource allocation. Qualitative evidence also suggests that members' ties to other organizations played a role in the chapters' decisions about project selection.

Keywords: Nonprofit organizations | Volunteers | Women | Philanthropy | Social services | Social class

Article:

An often-cited structural feature of American society is the prominence of its third sector. Almost half of Americans volunteer time to nonprofit organizations or causes (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996, p. 2). One important part of the voluntary sector is community service organizations. These organizations, found in most every U.S. community, raise funds and make financial contributions to schools, charities, and social service organizations. Some also provide volunteers to community agencies, and others design and implement their own projects. Some community service organizations, such as volunteer-staffed soup kitchens, are created to meet specific community needs. Others, such as women's service clubs, address a more diverse set of needs, ranging from women's shelters to environmental education programs. Many community service organizations have long histories and national associations. Examples include the Red

Cross, Rotary Clubs, the American Association of University Women, and college service fraternities.

In contrast to other types of nonprofit organizations, such as social service delivery agencies with paid staffs, foundations, and community hospitals, community service organizations and their effectiveness have been little studied. Nevertheless, recent government downsizing and eroding faith in the effectiveness of government programs have led to calls for an even greater role for voluntarism (“Serious Social,” 1995, p. 4; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Such proposals often assume that locally based associations, including community service organizations, are especially responsive to community needs, but in fact, little is known about whether this is true or how such organizations decide which needs to serve.

This research helps to answer this question by examining how chapters of one community service organization decide where to direct their volunteer labor and monetary resources. We ask whether chapters located in communities that have especially serious needs in specific areas allocate more resources to those needs than chapters in other communities. We also investigate the alternative hypotheses that members’ or leaders’ perceptions of the importance of various community needs, their willingness to work in projects addressing these needs, or their networks of community contacts are more important determinants of resource allocation.

Our data come from a comprehensive study of 12 local chapters of a national community service organization, which we call the International Association of Women (IAW). The IAW is a young women’s association with about 200,000 members, mostly in the United States. Its official purposes are to develop members’ potential for volunteer service and community leadership, contribute to community change, and promote volunteerism, but it also provides many opportunities for its members to socialize. In many communities, the IAW has a long history as an elite organization with a focus on cultural enrichment and children (Daniels, 1988; Ostrander, 1984). Recent changes have opened membership to a more diverse constituency, although the majority of members continue to be drawn from the upper-middle and upper classes (Markham & Bonjean, 1995, 1996), and the IAW has recently increased its emphasis on community service and attempted to downplay its social activities (Johnson, 1994). Our data come from surveys of members and leaders, interviews with chapter leaders, annual reports and other chapter records, and standard statistical sources that provide information about the severity of community problems.

ALLOCATION OF VOLUNTEER LABOR AND DONATIONS BY COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

The last two decades have seen a spate of proposals to increase the proportion of community needs met through the third sector (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Ware, 1989). These proposals have included the “thousand points of light” campaign (Gergen, 1996), AmeriCorps (McCarthy, 1995; Peterson, 1997), the Summit for America’s Future (Apple, 1997; Harden, 1997), and others

(Shogren, 1995; Sleeper, 1995). Advocates have suggested that third sector organizations are more effective in providing for community needs because they are more efficient and less hampered by bureaucratic constraints than government, more innovative, and better suited to identify and tailor their activities to the particular needs of their communities. Some advocates also suggest that reductions or gaps in services precipitated by government cutbacks will be filled by volunteer effort.

Such proposals are subject to criticism on a number of grounds, including financial feasibility (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Ware, 1989). However, this paper focuses on whether third sector organizations—and in particular community service organizations like those envisioned by President Bush’s “thousand points of light” statement—are well suited to identifying areas of greatest community need and acting on them? Despite the important strengths of such organizations (Weisbrod, 1988), neither theoretical analysis nor past research offers much encouragement for an affirmative answer to this question.

HOW COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS ALLOCATE VOLUNTEERS AND DONATIONS: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Most community service organizations depend heavily on volunteer labor and donations from the public to accomplish their objectives. They are created by groups that share the belief that certain community needs, such as education, culture, environmental protection, and child welfare, are not adequately met by government or private sector activity (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Weisbrod, 1974, 1988). They are especially likely to be created by individuals from society’s more privileged strata, whose resources, outlook, and skills predispose them to volunteer activity (Ware, 1989; Wilson, 1973).

To maintain the flow of volunteer labor and donations required for sustenance, community service organizations must offer their members and donors adequate incentives to ensure their participation (Bonjean, Markham, & Macken, 1994; Etzioni, 1975; Wilson, 1973). These incentives include material benefits, social interaction with peers, prestige, and the opportunity to satisfy normative obligations to serve the community (Etzioni, 1975; Weisbrod, 1988; Wilson, 1973). However, because they are purposive, community service organizations can also be expected to attract members and donations by accomplishing their stated goal: community service. If they fail to do so, their members and donors may withdraw support (Weisbrod, 1974, 1988; Wilson, 1973). Moreover, once they become institutionalized, community service organizations acquire roles in the community that they are expected to fill, constituencies that they are expected to serve, and skills for responding to specific types of needs (Ware, 1989; Warren, 1967; Wilson, 1973). They attract members and donors who are comfortable with the organization’s established goals and role in the community (Markham & Bonjean, 1995).

Consequently, most community service organizations would be expected to devote the most attention to community needs that are best known, considered important by their members and

donors, and in line with their historic goals and commitments. Community service organizations also would be expected to provide opportunities for volunteers or members to get involved in projects that are congruent with their backgrounds, skills, and interests (Bonjean et al., 1994; Ware, 1989). Thus, even if community service organizations had the resources required for comprehensive assessment of various community needs—and the great majority do not—there are good reasons to suspect that they might be slow to address problems outside of their members' and donors' fields of interest. To the extent that community service organizations are staffed and funded by elites, this would be reflected in their choices of programs and goals.

WHERE DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEER LABOR GO: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There has been little direct study of how community service organizations allocate resources of volunteer time and funds among communities. The line of existing research most germane to this question focuses on whether charitable giving primarily benefits privileged or less privileged groups in the society. A number of studies suggest that the charitable giving of the philanthropic elite benefits disadvantaged groups less than more advantaged ones, as evidenced by a pattern of contributions that focuses on the arts, culture, higher education, and hospitals (Odendahl, 1989, 1990; Ostrower, 1995). Similarly, Paprocki and Bothwell's (1994) study of corporate gifts by the most profitable corporations in six industries found low levels of giving to minority populations, and the Independent Sector's 1992 National Survey of Charitable Organizations reported that only about 11% of 501(c)(3) organizations stated that their services and programs were geared toward the poor or economically disadvantaged (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Noga, & Gorski, 1993, pp. 16-17). Covington's (1994) study concluded that 10 of the largest community foundations in the United States generally chose projects that they believed benefited the community as a whole and rarely supported new or grassroots organizations, community organizing, issue advocacy, or public policy initiatives. The same general conclusions appeared in Jencks's (1987) study of giving by the general population. Using Gallup Poll data, he found that, in 1981, only 13% of Americans' contributions supported health and social welfare organizations and that "prospective beneficiaries [of philanthropic giving] are seldom indigent and are often quite affluent" (p. 322).

FACTORS AFFECTING ALLOCATION OF DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEER TIME: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

A second body of literature focuses on factors that affect how third sector organizations allocate their resources among competing problems and needs. Although relatively little of it focuses directly on community service organizations, the existing evidence does generally support the theoretical argument above.

One important line of research examines how general community context influences the activities of a community's nonprofit sector, focusing on how factors such as median income, level of poverty, community size, economic cycles, the civic values and traditions of a community, and public sector support affect the overall generosity of community giving

(Camasso & Moore, 1985; Wolpert, 1988; Wolpert & Reiner, 1985). However, these studies do not examine factors that influence which specific problems nonprofit organizations choose to address.

Another prominent set of studies examines the impact of culture, class, and gender on the giving patterns and volunteer activities of wealthy, female volunteers (Covelli, 1985; Daniels, 1988; Odendahl, 1990; Ostrander, 1984; Ostrower, 1995). In general, these researchers conclude that social class is a major determinant of the volunteer activities of the women they studied (Covelli, 1985; Daniels, 1988; Odendahl, 1990; Ostrander, 1984). They suggest that the volunteer efforts of upper-class women channel the goals of the agencies, foundations, and corporations on whose boards they sit toward typical patterns of elite philanthropy. These and other studies (e.g., McCarthy, 1990) also point out the historical focus of women's voluntarism on specific issues, such as child welfare and education. Such studies are especially relevant for our research because the IAW is composed primarily of upper-middle- to upper-class White women. Along the same lines, Ostrower's (1995) study of the philanthropic elite in New York City emphasizes the central role of the donors' worldview in shaping this group's patterns of giving. She concludes that the philanthropic elite view helping the poor as a task for government. For them, the purpose of philanthropy is not to help the poor; rather, philanthropy's purpose is to support public institutions that are under private control, such as museums, symphonies, and hospitals. Taken together, these studies suggest that social class and gender are important influences on which volunteer effort and donations are directed.

A third important line of research examines how the internal organization and leadership of third sector organizations influence how resources are allocated. A number of studies look at whether voluntary and nonprofit organizations with boards that are diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are more likely to take on riskier projects and serve nontraditional constituencies. Certainly, such diversity is far from the rule (Widmer, 1987). Ostrander (1987), for example, reports that elites were overrepresented on the boards of three nonprofit social service agencies she studied and that they had more power to set policy and priorities because of the agencies' heavy reliance on private donations. On the other hand, Gittel, Gross, and Newman (1994) report that greater representation of women and minorities on neighborhood development organization boards is associated with broader programmatic emphases and a wider range of social services. Similarly, Plambeck (1987), in his case studies of four United Ways in the midwestern United States, notes that boards with younger and more diverse members take greater risks and have more success in fund-raising. These studies support Weisbrod's (1974, 1988) contention that nonprofits that make charitable gifts are generally formed by likeminded affluent citizens who share a desire to see specific types of services provided.

Research also suggests that influences of an organization's institutional environment (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Zucker, 1983) can affect decisions about resource allocation. Nonprofit organizations' access to resources and legitimacy depends on maintaining good relationships with other community organizations and agencies (Galaskiewicz, 1979; Warren, Rose, &

Bergunder, 1974), and the goals and priorities of organizations that collaborate with other associations, government agencies, and corporations are often shaped by their place in the network and their role in the community as defined by that network. Consequently, efforts to innovate often stir up resistance (Levine & White, 1961; Warren, 1967). In a related vein, many studies conclude that organizational inertia and history can make it difficult for an established nonprofit organization to change its focus or try new projects. For example, in their study of the United Way of Chicago, Gronbjerg, Harmon, Olkkonen, and Raza (1995; see also Smith & Lipsky, 1993) report that funding allocations have changed little over the past 30 years, despite efforts to make them more responsive to local communities and to changes in the city's population and institutional environment.

Social networks and interorganizational relationships also can play a key role in determining which programs community service organizations support. Board interlocks are common in the third sector (Odendahl, 1990; Ostrower, 1995), and class-based social networks of community board members help to shape decisions about nonprofit policy and funding (Ostrander, 1987). Nonprofit organizations operate in a "field" of other organizations that influence one another's activities (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Warren, 1967). Leaders and members may thus be aware of other volunteer organizations' activities; have acquaintances among the members, leaders, or staff of other organizations; and formally or informally collaborate with other organizations to achieve mutual goals (Hall, 1996). Such relationships can make leaders and members more aware of or more sympathetic to some community problems than others and create opportunities for collaboration in specific areas. In these ways, they can influence funding decisions.

A final factor that may influence how community service organizations allocate volunteer labor and donations is formal needs assessment. Such efforts are ubiquitous, and although much has been written about needs assessment, little research examines exactly how needs assessment is used in decision making by community service organizations or how much influence it has. Instead, the literature catalogs types of needs assessment (e.g., Witkin, 1994), describes common methods for conducting them (e.g., Loos, 1995), and identifies various goals of needs assessment, often pointing out that maintaining legitimacy can be as important as meeting community needs (e.g., Carpinello, Newman, & Jatulis, 1992). Such studies suggest that, depending on the purposes for which they are used, needs assessments may or may not have a major impact on the choices of goals of community service organizations.

SUMMARY

Taken together, these disparate studies reveal a pattern of resource allocation in the third sector that is typically more responsive to the needs and interests of the donors and organization members than to other groups in the community. The research studies suggest that institutional and exogenous factors, such as organizational inertia and culture, social networks, and lack of information, make it difficult for nonprofit organizations to sponsor innovative projects or respond equally readily to all types of community needs.

This study examines a voluntary community service organization. The data permit us to compare the relative impact of members' and leaders' ratings of the importance of various issues (and their willingness to work on each) and statistical indicators of objective community need on chapters' decisions about where to supply volunteers and provide funds.

THE IAW AND ITS LOCAL CHAPTERS

The IAW is a young women's voluntary association with about 200,000 members in approximately 300 chapters, mostly in the United States. Its membership is drawn mainly from the upper-middle class and secondarily from the upper class; although not altogether absent, minorities and women from other social classes are underrepresented (Markham & Bonjean, 1995). The IAW's official purposes are to develop members' potential for volunteer service and community leadership, contribute to community change, and promote volunteerism. Chapters pursue these goals by (a) training members to better understand their communities and to serve as participants and leaders in volunteer activity, (b) raising funds for disbursement to community programs or agencies, (c) operating their own community service projects, and (d) providing volunteers to work in other community projects. Recently, the central organization and some local chapters have initiated efforts to influence public policy in areas of concern to members.

The IAW offers various side benefits that may motivate some members to participate. Because of its long history as an elite women's organization (Daniels, 1988; Domhoff, 1998), membership in the IAW continues to confer a degree of status, even though membership is now in principle open to almost any woman and, hence, has become somewhat more diverse (Johnson, 1994). The IAW also offers its members many opportunities to socialize with other members (Daniels, 1988; Ostrander, 1984).

In practice, most chapters' major activities are fund-raising and the provision of funds and volunteers to address various problems in the community. The IAW is well known for its fund-raising prowess, and most of the funds at local chapters' disposal are raised by the chapters themselves. IAW chapters do not receive contributions from the United Way, and they rarely receive government funds or foundation grants. Although many chapters make direct monetary contributions to community agencies or programs with which they have no direct relationship, most of each chapter's work in the community is organized around several formal community "projects." These are organized efforts to ameliorate a community problem, most often conducted in cooperation with other community organizations such as schools or private social service agencies. Projects ordinarily involve providing both volunteers and funds, although some involve only volunteers. Both the number of volunteers and size of donations can vary from nominal (2 or 3 volunteers and less than \$100) to substantial (20 to 30 volunteers and funding in the \$100,000 range). Some chapters provide volunteers to community agencies outside the context of projects, but the numbers involved are very small. Each IAW member has at least one formal work assignment in a community project, fund-raising effort, training, or chapter administration.

Chapters devote considerable effort to project selection. Most assign a committee to investigate and recommend projects. The committee typically conducts research about community needs and solicits community input in a variety of ways. Some chapters hold community forums to familiarize agencies and community groups with the chapter's activities and to learn about community needs. Others interview key community leaders or review research about community needs conducted by the United Way or other groups. Some distribute letters to community agencies asking for proposals for projects or donations, and others advertise in local papers. Most chapters also poll their members informally about their volunteer interests, and many conduct membership surveys. After the project research committee reaches consensus about which projects to endorse, the recommendations typically go to the chapter's board for a vote and then to the general membership for final approval.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Obviously, a study of a single organization—with its own unique history and role in the community—cannot determine conclusively whether community service organizations in general select projects primarily on the basis of community need, member interests, or other grounds. Nor can such a study pretend to settle the more general debate about the efficacy of third sector activity as a substitute for government programs. Nevertheless, our data provide the basis for one of the most comprehensive and systematic investigations of this question to date.

Specifically, our research investigates factors influencing how much attention IAW chapters devote to 17 community problems (see Table 1) that IAW chapters nationwide typically address through their projects or their contributions. The list of problems was based on a previous list of 11 areas developed for our 1975 study of the IAW and on interviews with chapter officers, open-ended questionnaire responses from members at pretest sites, reviews of chapters' annual reports, and consultation with the IAW's headquarters staff.

We selected 12 IAW chapters in the United States (along with a single Canadian chapter not included in this analysis) using a random sample stratified by chapter size. The number of active members in these chapters ranges from about 100 to over 500. Chapters are located in metropolitan areas ranging in population from just under 100,000 to more than 3,000,000. A sample size of 12 places our study within the realm of small-sample research, and the quantitative results must be interpreted accordingly. Nevertheless, our data provide a better basis for generalization than the case studies used in most past research on this topic.

In 1992, we administered questionnaires to all those present at a regular general membership meeting of each chapter. Depending on the percentage of members attending, we mailed one or two rounds of follow-up questionnaires to absentees. Response rates varied from 53% to 97%, with an overall rate of 74% ($N = 2,362$). Only one chapter had a response rate below 60%. The number of respondents from each chapter ranged from 88 to 306. Demographic characteristics of the sample have been reported elsewhere (Markham & Bonjean, 1995). The typical IAW

member is White, well educated, married, in her 30s, employed, a mother, and has a family income over \$75,000. She has been a member of the IAW for 4.3 years and devotes 4.2 hours per week to IAW activities.

We also collected annual reports for each chapter. Although far more comprehensive than comparable documents published by most voluntary associations, chapter annual reports vary in completeness and the manner in which they report budget data and member work assignments. Other documents, such as new member orientation handbooks, lists of available work assignments, and press releases or newspaper articles, were obtained when possible.

At the time questionnaires were administered, we interviewed the presidents and the presidents-elect of 11 chapters and asked them about their community projects. In a second round of data collection in 1994, we interviewed 11 of the 12 people who were presidents in 1991 to 1992 and the person in charge of community projects in 1991 to 1992 in each chapter. In addition, we completed at least five interviews with community knowledgeable in each city for a total of 61 interviews. Knowledgeables included the director of the United Way, the CEO of a local foundation, the public affairs officer of a local major corporation, the president of the League of Women Voters, the head of a minority organization, and an academic. Finally, 38 interviews were completed with representatives of organizations that had collaborated on projects with IAW chapters, with at least 3 interviews for each chapter.

MEASURES OF MEMBER AND LEADER ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

The attitudinal data in this report come from responses to two questionnaire items about each of the 17 community problem areas. Rank and file members and leaders first rated the importance of each problem by choosing one of five responses ranging from *relatively unimportant* (coded 0) to *critically important* (coded 4). They also indicated whether they “would personally devote time in the next 2-3 years” to a program or project in each of the 17 areas. Negative responses were coded as 0, and positive responses were coded as 1. The complete wording of the questionnaire’s description of the 17 areas is reported elsewhere (Markham & Bonjean, 1995). Mean chapter responses for both importance and members’ willingness to work were calculated separately for rank and file members and leaders (defined as current board members) for each of the 17 problem areas.

STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

We used data from published statistical sources to assess the severity of problems in the 17 areas in each of the sample chapter communities. The specific variables are listed in Appendix A.¹ We chose indicators that tapped as many different dimensions of a problem area as possible and were consistent with the descriptions of the problem areas in the questionnaire. Several indicators that met these criteria were available for most problem areas, but lack of reliable and valid data sometimes hindered our efforts. We were unable to find any reliable data for one problem area,

substance abuse. Nor could we find data that were comparable across communities for some variables we had hoped to include: rates of child and spouse abuse, public school student achievement levels, quality of public health services, availability and quality of day care, accessibility of reproductive health services, and frequency of incidents of interracial conflict. Although it would be desirable to have this information, our interpretation depends less on the presence or absence of specific variables than on the overall pattern of correlations.

Member address lists show that chapters vary in the percentage of members residing in central cities. In smaller cities without incorporated suburbs, most members live in the central city, and in one city with a declining center, almost all members live in the suburbs. In 11 chapters, almost all members who lived outside the central city resided in the single county surrounding it (in the 12th, almost all lived in one of two counties). We thus included both city- and county-level variables in our analysis, constructing a “synthetic county” for the one chapter with substantial numbers of members residing in two counties.² Some of the indicators we chose are tabulated only at the city or county level, but most were available for both.

CHAPTER EFFORTS IN COMMUNITY PROBLEM AREAS

The dependent variables for our analysis are measures of the amount of effort chapters devoted to each of the 17 problem areas. Data on chapter effort come primarily from the annual reports, supplemented by data from interviews with officers and other documents. Eight chapters returned brief questionnaires to help us fill gaps in the data.

We examine chapter effort in terms of the number of projects in and amount of monetary contributions to each area. We were able to compile a complete list of each chapter’s projects, including descriptions of almost all projects. Besides serving as a good overall indicator of where chapters direct their efforts, the number of projects focused on each of the 17 community problem areas is a reasonable proxy for number of volunteers in each area, since all projects involve at least some volunteers.³ We also obtained the dollar amount spent (or budgeted for cases in which actual expenditures were unavailable in annual reports) for each project and the dollar amount of each nonproject donation to community agencies.

After constructing complete lists of projects and expenditures, we classified each project or donation by the community problem area(s) it addressed. Projects or donations that addressed more than one area were coded for all applicable areas. We did not prorate them, since there was no a priori reason to believe that their effect in one problem area was diluted due to a simultaneous concentration on other areas. Six percent of projects and 19% of donations proved unclassifiable. The higher percentage of unclassified donations is of relatively little concern, since almost all were quite small relative to the chapters’ total project budgets. Most often, especially for smaller donations, this occurred because we lacked complete information about the purpose of the donation or project. Several chapters also had projects in which the sole purpose was to provide volunteers for a large number of short-term, one-time community efforts, details

of which were usually unavailable. A small number of projects or donations addressed issues unrelated to any of the 17 community problem areas.

After classifying the projects and financial contributions into the 17 areas, we determined for each chapter the total number of projects and the total monetary contribution—including both project expenditures and nonproject donations—in each community problem area. Based on this information, we constructed measures designed to capture the relative and absolute community effort each chapter devoted to each of the 17 problem areas. In constructing the measures, we considered several factors that might affect the number of projects and amount of funds a chapter devoted to an area:

1. Chapter size (in general, larger chapters are able to mount more projects and donate more funds);
2. The chapter's fund-raising success (in general, chapters that raise more money per member can spend more in the community, and amount of funds available can also affect number of projects a chapter can support);
3. Decisions about the number of projects to undertake and the proportion of available funds to devote to the community, as opposed to other organizational goals or activities such as member training, fund-raising, headquarters offices, and internal administration (Johnson, 1994);
4. Decisions about which community problems to address and the amount of resources to devote to each.

How many projects and dollars a chapter devotes to a given community problem thus depends on the size of the "pie" (points 1 and 2) and how the pie is "sliced" (points 3 and 4). If members or leaders in Chapter A attach more priority to a particular community problem than those in Chapter B, or if the problem is objectively more severe in Community A, we would expect the pie to be sliced to give that problem more attention. In addition, chapters in communities where problems are objectively more severe, or where members believe they are, might respond by raising more funds, developing more projects, and assigning a higher proportion of volunteer time to community work, thus enlarging the pie.

Based on these considerations, we developed five measures of chapter effort in each issue area:

1. Proportion of the chapter's projects in the area;
2. Proportion of all funds devoted to the community spent in the area;
3. Proportion of total chapter expenditures for all purposes (excluding fund-raising) spent in the area;
4. Number of projects per 100 members in the area;

5. Expenditures per member in the area.

Measures 1 and 2 tap most directly how a chapter divides the resources it allocates to the community among the 17 problem areas. Measure 3 also considers how a chapter divides its resources, but the pie to be divided is total chapter expenditures, taking into account the fact that some chapters devote a higher proportion of their total expenditures to the community. Measures 4 and 5 standardize for chapter size. They reflect both how the pie is sliced and how the size of the pie is affected by a chapter's fund-raising success and decisions about the proportion of volunteer time and funds to spend in the community.

DATA ON ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKS

Interviews with chapter officers, community knowledgeable, and representatives of collaborating organizations provided data on formal and informal networks and their effects on the IAW project selection process. We asked the representatives of collaborating organizations how their project was initiated and what role each organization played in the collaboration. This information and any other mention of project initiation was used to assess the role of informal contacts and networks in determining IAW resource allocation.

RESULTS

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND MEMBERS' WILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS THEM

The left panel of Table 1, based on the total survey sample, shows the mean importance ratings that members and leaders assigned to each of the 17 community problems. It also reports the percentages of members and leaders who indicated that they would work in each area. A previous analysis of the importance ratings (Markham & Bonjean, 1995) showed that (a) the ratings reflect the fact that the IAW is a women's organization composed mainly of members of the business-oriented upper-middle class and the politically moderate upper class, (b) members' importance ratings did not vary much by demographic characteristics, and (c) accession of new members with attitudes similar to current members was the primary mechanism for maintaining homogeneity of views.

For this report, we examined the views of members and leaders separately because we suspected that leaders' opinions might be especially influential in project selection and allocation of funds. But, in fact, there is high agreement between the attitudes of ordinary members and their leaders. The correlations between the leaders' and members' mean ratings of the importance of the 17 issues in the 12 chapters range from .84 to .97, with a mean of .91. The results from the total sample in Table 1 show that members and leaders attribute greatest importance to child welfare, education, child health and mental health, and economic well-being; they regard citizen involvement, cultural enrichment, urban revitalization, and race and ethnic relations as least important.

Table 1. Mean Importance Ratings, Percentage Willing to Work, and Means for Measures of Chapter Effort for Each Community Problem Area

<i>Community Problem Area</i>	<i>Mean Importance Rating by Members</i>	<i>Percentage of Members Willing to Work</i>	<i>Mean Importance Rating by Leaders</i>	<i>Percentage of Leaders Willing to Work</i>	<i>Mean Percentage of Projects in Area</i>	<i>Mean Number Projects per 100 Members</i>	<i>Mean Percentage of Community Expenditures in Area</i>	<i>Mean Percentage of All Expenditures in Area</i>	<i>Mean Expenditures per Member</i>
Adolescent issues	2.12	68	2.14	64	9	.26	11	4	\$41.57
Adult education	1.91	61	1.90	58	3	.12	3	1	\$5.79
Adult health and mental health	1.78	31	1.76	29	12	.37	12	4	\$36.98
Aging	1.75	46	1.67	40	9	.30	7	2	\$18.46
Child health and mental health	2.34	72	2.34	69	18	.69	15	4	\$47.03
Child welfare	2.58	78	2.56	74	15	.63	19	6	\$50.70
Citizen involvement	1.42	45	1.40	46.7	.19	7	2	\$17.37	
Criminal justice	2.08	36	1.96	36	3	.08	2	1	\$6.51
Cultural enrichment	1.42	59	1.51	63	18	.61	16	5	\$46.89
Economic well-being	2.28	56	2.26	50	9	.31	11	4	\$35.53
Education	2.57	79	2.55	80	25	.80	26	8	\$65.27
Environment	2.11	62	2.17	71	6	.16	3	1	\$5.80
Race and ethnic relations	1.58	34	1.56	37	1	.04	2	1	\$11.66
Substance abuse	2.16	52	2.08	48	3	.06	4	1	\$8.60
Urban revitalization	1.45	29	1.49	32	3	.07	3	1	\$15.07
Women's issues	1.87	64	1.84	64	9	.29	8	2	\$15.70
Work and family issues	1.89	58	1.90	53	4	.11	5	2	\$9.65

We anticipated that members' and leaders' willingness to work in various issue areas might have a more direct impact on project selection and donations than ratings of issue importance. That is, to increase member satisfaction and reduce the risk of project failure due to low participation, chapters might eschew projects in areas where members are unwilling to invest their own efforts, even if the members or leaders rate the issue high in importance. In fact, the data suggest that most chapters seldom face this dilemma, as willingness to work personally on an issue proved to be strongly related to ratings of the issue's importance. Among the 12 chapters, correlations between member importance ratings and the percentage of members willing to work on the issue range from .60 to .79, with a mean of .71. For board members, the corresponding correlations range from .45 to .79, with a mean of .66. Combining the results from all respondents (see Table 1), members are most willing to work on education, child welfare, child health and mental health, and adolescent issues. Leaders prefer to give their time to education, child welfare, environmental issues, and child health and mental health. Both leaders and members are least willing to work on projects in the areas of urban revitalization, adult health and mental health, race and ethnic relations, and criminal justice. Not surprisingly, members and leaders show considerable agreement on areas in which they would prefer to be personally involved. Correlations by chapter range from .69 to .92, with a mean of .81.

Although the correlations between importance ratings and willingness to work are high, they are not perfect, and there are some noteworthy discrepancies. For example, in the total sample, nonleaders rank criminal justice 7th in importance, but it is 14th in their willingness to address it. This pattern is reversed for cultural enrichment, which is tied for lowest in importance but ranks 8th in members' willingness to be personally involved.

Members and leaders in any one chapter generally rate the importance of the community problem areas and their willingness to work on them about the same as their counterparts in other chapters. A correlation matrix for mean member ratings of the importance of the 17 issues for all 66 possible pairs of chapters shows correlations ranging from .79 to .97, with a mean of .90. Correlations between percentages of members willing to work on the issues are also high, ranging from .73 to .96, with a mean of .87. There is somewhat less agreement across chapters in leaders' responses. The correlation matrix for mean board member ratings of issue importance shows correlations ranging from .46 to .89, with a mean of .74. The range for leaders' willingness to work on the issues is from .47 to .91, with a mean of .71. In short, there is a strong relationship between members' perceptions of the importance of problem areas and their willingness to work on projects in those same areas.

EFFORT DEVOTED TO COMMUNITY PROBLEM AREAS

The right-hand panel of Table 1 shows the mean values of the five measures of chapter effort in each area across all chapters. Clearly, there are large differences in the number of projects and amount of money that the average chapter devoted to the 17 areas. For example, chapters averaged .04 projects per 100 members in the area of race and ethnic relations compared to .80

projects per 100 members in the area of education. Chapters spend an average of \$5.79 per member on adult education compared to \$65.27 per member on elementary and secondary education. The two measures involving number of projects show that, on average, most projects address education, child health and mental health, child welfare, and cultural enrichment; far fewer projects address race and ethnic relations, substance abuse, urban revitalization, criminal justice, adult education, and work and family issues. All three measures of funds expended show that chapters devote the most money to education and child welfare, but there are minor variations in the ranking of the next five areas: adult health and mental health, adolescent issues, child health and mental health, cultural enrichment, and economic well-being. All three measures show that chapters spend the least money on adult education, criminal justice, race and ethnic relations, substance abuse, and urban revitalization.

RELATIONSHIPS OF IMPORTANCE RATINGS AND WILLINGNESS TO WORK ON ISSUE TO CHAPTER EFFORT

Inspection of Table 1 suggests that, overall, IAW chapters devote the most attention to issues that members and officers believe are important and to which they are most willing to devote time. For example, education, child welfare, and child health and mental health all rank high in perceived importance, member willingness to be personally involved, and number of projects and funding levels, whereas race and ethnic relations and urban revitalization rank low. Table 2, which reports the correlations of members' and leaders' ratings of issue importance and the percentages of members and leaders willing to work on each issue with the five measures of chapter effort in each area for all chapters combined, confirms this conclusion. All correlations are positive and of moderate strength, and 14 of 17 issues are statistically significant. But, as the correlations imply, the correspondence between member attitudes about a problem and chapter effort is not perfect. Thus, criminal justice, substance abuse, and the environment receive less attention than their importance ratings might suggest. (Criminal justice, however, ranks low in member willingness to be personally involved.) On the other hand, cultural enrichment ranks near the bottom in perceived importance but high in members' willingness to work and chapter effort.

Contrary to our initial expectation, leaders' opinions do not carry more weight than members' in project selection or funding decisions. The average correlation for members, which appears in the first two rows of Table 2, is .54 compared with .56 for leaders. However, it does appear that member and leader willingness to work in an area have more influence on resource allocation than ratings of issue importance. The average correlation between the measures of willingness to work in an area and the chapter effort measures is .60, whereas the average correlation for the importance ratings is .50. Although the number of issues is small, regression analysis supports this conclusion. When members' ratings of issue importance are added to regression equations predicting the five measures of chapter effort after members' willingness to work in these areas, increases in R^2 range from 0 to .02. But when members' willingness to work is added after their importance ratings, increases in R^2 range from .10 to .20. When we added leaders' importance

ratings after willingness to work, R^2 changes ranged from 0 to .04, but when we reversed the order, R^2 changes ranged from .06 to .15.

Table 2. Correlations Between Mean Importance of Area, Percentage Willing to Work, and Means for Chapter Effort Measures

Member and Leader Attitudes	Mean Percentage of Projects in Area	Mean Number of Projects per 100 Members	Mean Percentage of Community Expenditures in Area	Mean Percentage of All Expenditures in Area	Mean Expenditures per Member
Mean member importance rating	.43	.47	.51*	.51*	.45
Percentage of members willing to work	.62*	.65*	.64*	.61*	.55*
Mean leader importance rating	.48	.52*	.55*	.56*	.50*
Percentage of leaders willing to work	.62*	.64*	.61*	.57*	.52*

* $p < .05$.

The overall pattern in Table 2 of moderate correlations between member attitudes and measures of chapter effort for all chapters combined is replicated in separate analyses for 9 of the 12 chapters (tables not shown). Most of the correlations in these chapters are of about the same magnitude as those in Table 2, although a few are stronger and some are weaker. The three exceptions display a mixture of weak, nonsignificant positive and negative relationships. In two of these chapters, this pattern occurs because of especially high effort in a single area (citizen participation in one chapter and adult health and mental health in another) that both members and leaders ranked low in importance and willingness to become personally involved. Removing these areas from the analysis reveals the pattern of consistent moderate correlations found in Table 2. The low correlations in the other chapter occur because of projects and donations in several areas that have low appeal to members.

In short, most chapters devote their resources mainly to issues to which leaders and members are most willing to devote their time and see as most important, but chapters do sometimes initiate projects in areas that their members regard as less appealing. Because our data cover only a single year, it is impossible to know whether some chapters deviate from their members' concerns over the long term or whether the exceptions would disappear if we tabulated projects and expenditures over a longer period. We cannot determine whether instances of devoting resources to an unpopular area are chance occurrences or the result of more careful research

about community needs by some chapters, but the results reported below suggest the former interpretation.

SEVERITY OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND CHAPTER EFFORT

There is no common metric, other than those based on perceptions, by which the severity or importance of different problems in the same community can be compared. That is, there is no objective way to determine whether a particular community's crime problem is more severe than its child welfare problem. Even if it is shown that crime is a bigger problem in Community A than it is in the average community, one could argue that a less than average child welfare problem is still more serious than an above average crime problem in Community A.

It is possible, however, to assess the impact of the severity of each community problem on chapter effort in the area by examining whether chapters in communities where a given problem is more serious devote more resources to that problem than chapters in communities where the problem is less severe. We conducted such analyses for 16 of the 17 problem areas listed in Table 1. A sample of one such analysis, for child welfare, appears in the upper left quadrant of Appendix B.⁴ Results of all 16 tables are summarized in Table 3.

Caution is warranted in interpreting these results. Sample size is 12, and measures of chapter effort in a few problem areas (those to which only one or two chapters devote any attention) are skewed, placing an upper limit on the size of the correlations. Furthermore, some desirable measures are not included (see above). Hence, interpretations should be based on the overall pattern of results, not specific correlations.

Inspection of the results reveals an almost random pattern of relationships. Of the 575 correlations, only 297 (52%) are in the predicted direction, and only 26 are statistically significant, which is less than the 29 that would be expected by chance alone. The relatively few significant correlations are generally in the predicted direction (25 of 26), but it would be unwise to attribute much importance to this finding because there is no overall tendency for correlations to be in the predicted direction, there are very few significant relationships, and most of the significant relationships that do exist appear in analyses that lack any strong pattern of correlations in the predicted direction (see Table 3).⁵ Indeed, none of the analyses provides clear evidence that the severity of a community problem influences chapters' allocation of resources. There is also no indication in Table 3 that any of the five measures of chapter effort are more highly correlated than others with the measures of problem severity, and inspection of the underlying tables shows no tendency for either county-level measures or city-level measures of community problems to be more highly correlated with the chapter effort measures.

SEVERITY OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND MEMBER AND LEADER ATTITUDES

If the severity of community problems did affect a chapter's selection of projects and funding decisions, this would presumably occur because leaders or members of chapters in communities

where a particular problem is most severe are more likely to see that problem as important and be willing to work on it personally. We examined this possibility by correlating across chapters the measures of the severity of each community problem with mean member and leader estimates of that problem’s importance and willingness to work on it. Sample results for one problem area, child welfare, are shown in the upper right quadrant of Appendix B. Table 4 summarizes the results for all 16 tables.

The results help to explain why the severity of community problems has no discernible impact on the chapters’ choices of community projects and monetary contributions, for there is no evidence that problem severity affects member or leader attitudes. Only 53% of the 460 correlations are in the expected direction. The 32 significant correlations are slightly more than the 23 that would be expected by chance alone, but 20 of them are not in the hypothesized direction. Examination of Table 4 shows that there is no issue area for which problem severity is clearly linked to member or leader estimates of the importance of the issue or their willingness to work on it. The underlying tables show that this is equally true regardless of whether problem severity is measured at the city or county level.

Table 3. Summary of Relationships Between Measures of Problem Severity and Measures of Chapter Effort in 16 Community Problem Areas

	Measures of Chapter Effort														
	Percentage of All Projects in Area			Projects in Area per 100 Members			Percentage of All Project Expenditures in Area			Percentage of All Expenditures in Area			Expenditures per Member		
Community Problem Area	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP
Adolescent issues	100	33	0	50	17	0	83	33	0	67	17	0	50	0	17
Adult education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0
Adult health and mental health	44	0	0	33	0	0	44	0	0	22	0	0	22	0	0
Child health and mental health	75	0	0	50	0	0	50	0	0	50	0	0	50	0	0
Child welfare	40	0	0	60	0	0	50	0	0	60	0	0	60	0	0
Citizen involvement	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
Criminal justice	17	0	0	17	0	0	17	0	0	17	0	0	17	0	0
Cultural enrichment	67	0	0	83	0	0	0	0	0	83	0	0	100	0	0
Economic	50	0	10	40	0	0	80	10	0	70	10	0	70	10	0

well-being															
Education	33	0	0	33	0	0	17	0	0	33	0	0	50	0	0
Environment	33	17	0	33	0	0	33	17	0	33	17	0	33	17	0
Race and ethnic relations	57	7	0	57	7	0	57	7	0	57	7	0	57	7	0
Urban revitalization	78	0	0	67	0	0	33	11	0	33	11	0	44	11	0
Women's issues	56	0	0	56	0	0	56	11	0	67	11	0	78	11	0
Work and family issues	67	17	0	67	33	0	100	0	0	100	17	0	100	17	0

Note: P = Percentage of correlations in the predicted direction, SP = percentage of correlations significant in the predicted direction, RSP = percentage of correlations significant in reverse of the predicted direction.

Table 4. Summary of Relationships Between Measures of Problem Severity and Member and Leader Ratings of Importance of Problem and Willingness to Work in 16 Problem Areas

Community Problem Area	Measures of Member and Leader Perceptions of Problem											
	Mean Member Importance Rating			Percentage of Members Willing to Work			Mean Leader Importance Rating			Percentage of Leaders Willing to Work		
	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP	P	SP	RSP
Adolescent issues	33	0	17	33	0	17	67	0	33	17	0	0
Adult education	100	0	0	50	0	0	75	0	0	0	0	0
Adult health and mental health	11	0	0	11	0	33	67	0	0	67	0	0
Aging	50	12	12	25	0	0	50	0	0	25	0	12
Child health and mental health	75	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	0	50	0	0
Child welfare	60	0	0	20	0	10	50	0	0	50	0	10
Citizen involvement	100	100	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal justice	50	17	0	50	17	0	33	0	0	100	0	0
Cultural enrichment	67	0	0	33	0	17	67	0	0	50	0	0
Economic well-being	70	0	0	30	0	0	40	0	20	60	0	0
Education	20	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	0

Environment	67	33	0	83	0	0	33	0	0	50	0	0
Race and ethnic relations	79	7	0	64	7	0	87	14	0	64	0	0
Urban revitalization	78	0	0	78	0	0	78	0	11	56	11	0
Women's issues	22	0	22	22	0	33	22	0	11	33	0	0
Work and family issues	67	0	0	33	0	0	50	0	0	100	0	0

Note: P = Percentage of correlations in the predicted direction, SP = percentage of correlations significant in the predicted direction, RSP = percentage of correlations significant in reverse of the predicted direction.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEMBER AND LEADER ATTITUDES AND CHAPTER EFFORT

We also computed correlations of member and leader estimates of the importance of each problem area and their willingness to work on it with the measures of chapter effort in each area. Sample results for child welfare appear in the lower left quadrant of Appendix B. As might be expected in view of the findings reported for Table 2, chapters with members or officers who rate a community problem as above average in importance or who are especially willing to work on it do tend to devote more resources to it than do other chapters; however, the relationships across chapters are much weaker than those across issues in Table 2. Of the 340 relationships, 69% (234) are in the predicted direction. The total of 19 significant relationships is only slightly higher than the 17 that would be predicted by chance, but 16 are in the predicted direction. Several panels of the table, including adolescent issues, child and mental health, cultural enrichment, environment, urban revitalization, and work and family issues, show a consistent pattern of weak to moderate relationships in the predicted direction, but others contain a mixture of positive and negative correlations.

THE EFFECT OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ON RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Members' perceptions and preferences and the severity of problems in a given community are not the only factors with the potential to affect community service organizations' decisions about resource allocation. Such organizations operate in a field of other organizations that directly or indirectly influence one another's activities, and organizational leaders and members are part of overlapping social networks within the community. As pointed out above, these relationships may influence chapter decisions about resource allocation. Thus, they have the potential to account for some of the unexplained variation of the dependent variables in the analyses above.

In interviews, IAW officers in each chapter were asked to identify their three largest projects (in terms of both funding and volunteer commitment); the community organizations, government

agencies, or businesses with which the chapter collaborated on these projects; and organizations with which the chapter had an active working relationship over an extended period of time. For each organization the respondent listed, we asked about the nature and success of the collaboration. Although we included these questions for other reasons, while conducting the interviews, the impact of informal networks on chapter project selection became obvious.

For 11 of the 73 projects discussed, IAW officers indicated, without prompting from the interviewers, that their sponsorship of a project resulted, at least in part, from networks and social contacts. The most frequent scenario involved an IAW member or officer serving on the board of the collaborating organization (6 of 11 mentions). Projects were also initiated because an IAW member belonged to the collaborating organization (2 of 11), an IAW member met someone from the collaborating organization by chance at a community function or meeting (2 of 11), or through a former IAW member's contacts (1 of 11).

There is also some evidence that formal and informal contacts with members of other organizations may be especially important in resource allocation decisions that represent departures from traditional IAW concerns. Seven of the 11 projects concerned community problems other than children's issues and/or education, traditional areas for the IAW. For example, one chapter board member's formal position in another organization led to the chapter's involvement with a task force for the homeless. In another instance, a chapter president and the president of the public justice center met by accident at a meeting and discovered that they had a mutual interest in the women's shelter. This in turn led to a collaboration with the shelter in support of a bill focusing on domestic violence and the extension of a mandated temporary restraining order time period. Still another example involved a former IAW member who, through her acquaintances in minority organizations, facilitated development of a project cosponsored with those organizations.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Where then do IAW chapters place their resources, and what factors affect their decisions? Chapters direct the most projects and funds to education, child welfare, cultural enrichment, and child health and mental health—all areas of traditional interest to the IAW and women's service organizations. They devote the fewest resources to race and ethnic relations, criminal justice, urban revitalization, and adult education. Ordinary members and officers generally agree with one another about which community problems are most serious and which issues they are willing to work on, and chapters generally direct their efforts to these issues, especially to those that members and officers are most willing to work on. Members in different chapters tend to agree on which community problems are most severe and which they will address personally, but there is some indication that when members think a community problem is especially pressing, a chapter will devote more effort to it. On the other hand, there is no evidence that chapters in communities where problems are most severe devote more resources to those problems than do chapters in communities where the problems are less severe. Nor are members of chapters in

communities where a specific problem is most severe more likely to rate that problem as serious or be more willing to address it personally. Finally, networks of formal and informal contacts between IAW members and leaders and other organizations determine where chapters place their projects and funds.

Our results should be interpreted with caution. We provide evidence on only 12 chapters of one general community service organization. Like any other community service organization, it has its own distinctive history and role in the community. We were able to assemble a great deal of information about the severity of community problems, but some desirable measures were unavailable. There is no objective metric for comparing the seriousness of different problems in the same community, so to assess the impact of problem severity, we compared measures of the seriousness of the same problem in different communities. Nor do we have information about how individual chapters' decisions fit into the broader context of efforts by government and other third sector organizations in each community. Finally, our data on the importance of community networks are more suggestive than systematic. Nevertheless, our study does provide a comprehensive investigation of one community service organization—a type of organization little studied to date—and it is evidently the first study to undertake a quantitative comparison of the impact of some of the major factors that may influence allocations of volunteers and funds.

Our findings are broadly similar to those of previous studies of the philanthropic elite (Odendahl, 1990; Ostrower, 1995), wealthy women volunteers (Covelli, 1985; Daniels, 1988; Odendahl, 1990; Ostrander, 1984), and corporate giving (Paprocki & Bothwell, 1994). Paralleling these studies, our data suggest that the worldview and interests of members have a major influence on what IAW chapters do and that these perceptions are shaped by the members' experiences and socialization as higher status women (Markham & Bonjean, 1995). Consequently, although IAW chapters obviously provide much valuable assistance to their communities, the typical chapter's choice of recipients for volunteers and donations exemplifies the problems Salamon (1987; see also Ostrander, 1989) terms *particularism* and *paternalism*. That is, the IAW tends to give the greatest attention to the particular groups and needs that seem especially important or worthy to its members, who are drawn disproportionately from the ranks of the community's more privileged citizens.

Unlike many community service organizations, most IAW chapters do have formal procedures for studying community needs and selecting projects and recipients of donations. Yet, it does not appear that these procedures channel chapter efforts into areas where the communities' problems are especially severe. Most IAW chapters lack the skills and budget to gather the kind of information about community needs that we assembled for this research.

Some chapters turn to studies conducted by other agencies such as the United Way, the quality of which, in some cases, is not certain. Others interview community leaders, who themselves may be poorly informed about the objective severity of their community's problems. Some rely on whatever documentation of need is contained in proposals submitted by organizations or

agencies seeking volunteers or funds. Although there is no evidence that chapters' efforts at needs assessments are insincere, the final result is nonetheless that members' preferences and informal networks influence project selection.

Viewed against the backdrop of theory about goal-setting involuntary associations rather than the hopeful assumption that third sector organizations are uniquely equipped to identify and respond to community needs, these findings are not surprising. Community service organizations like the IAW arise, at least in part, because groups of people share the desire to see services made available that are not provided or funded by government. Hence, it is to be expected that an association's goals will reflect the unique background, perspectives, and interests of its members and that members will tend to agree with one another about the organization's agenda (Weisbrod, 1974, 1988). As organizations staffed primarily by volunteers, community service associations must provide members with rewards for participation that meet their needs (Bonjean et al., 1994; Wilson, 1973). Clearly, they cannot do this by having members take part in projects that are regarded as unimportant or by having them perform unappealing tasks, no matter how great the objectively measured community need.

Organizations like the IAW have an institutional history and role in the community that leads to recruitment of members whose backgrounds and perspectives are similar to those of existing members (Markham & Bonjean, 1995). As members develop expertise in dealing with specific problems, their commitment to addressing these issues grows because they learn more about the problems and develop skills to solve them. Focusing attention on new problems, no matter how important, thus becomes less appealing. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the IAW would focus its attention on goals that its members see as important, or that those priorities would reflect the class and gender of the members and history of the organization.

From a broader policy standpoint, our findings question the ability of community service organizations to identify and respond to community needs. IAW chapters' resource allocations proved unrelated to statistical indicators of the severity of community needs, which members were poorly equipped to assess. Instead, constraints such as member preferences and the influence of established networks apparently limit the extent to which IAW chapters respond to community needs. Although it would be unwise to overgeneralize from a single study, our results do suggest that the voluntary sector may not function to meet basic community needs if government services are curtailed.

None of this is meant to imply that the IAW and other community service organizations do not make important contributions. They do, in fact, provide valuable services that other agencies might not make available, initiate innovative projects, provide a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction for their members, and educate their members about volunteerism and social problems. Moreover, the IAW's major concerns, child welfare and education, are clearly among the most important problems facing communities. Hence, it could be argued that IAW chapters have found a niche in the nonprofit field that offers both membership satisfaction and community

value. What is problematic is not whether the IAW and other community service organizations make important contributions, but whether they can take the lead in addressing problems in areas that do not appeal to their membership.

Our data leave several important questions unanswered. First, we need to know the extent to which our findings will hold for general community service organizations and for other types of nonprofits. Second, more information is needed about the process by which associations decide which projects to undertake and which donations to make. Third, researchers need to know more about the role of formal and informal community networks in project selection. Fourth, we need to know more about who benefits from the efforts of community service organizations. Our results, which classify projects and donations by substantive area, provide only limited information. For example, they show that IAW chapters rarely directly address problems of declining central cities or race relations but frequently work in the areas of public education and cultural enrichment. However, the available data do not clearly indicate the extent to which projects in education or the arts are directed toward poor versus wealthy or majority versus minority groups.

In the same way, our results provide only partial information about the extent to which community organizations are likely to undertake projects that are controversial or threaten powerful interests. Our research classifies a clinic for AIDS babies and a puppet show teaching about disabilities as child health projects, and an effort to fight water polluters and a program to educate children about recycling as environmental projects, but there are important differences between the strategies each project represents. Although there are exceptions, our impression is that more IAW projects are of the “safe” puppet show and environmental education variety (as opposed to the “risky” attack on a corporation or discussion of AIDS), but our data are not adequate to fully substantiate this conclusion, and more research is needed.

Nonetheless, our findings provide a first systematic investigation of many of these issues and raise important issues about the role of general community service organizations. We hope that our study and its implications can serve as a point of departure for further research in this important but neglected area.

Appendix A Measures of Severity of Problems

Adolescent issues

County problem measures

Percentage of persons 16-19 without high school diploma and not in school, 1990

Percentage of persons 16-19 without high school diploma and not in school or employed, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of persons 16-19 without high school diploma and not in school, 1990

Percentage of persons 16-19 without high school diploma and not in school or employed, 1990

Percentage of all births born to women under 20, 1989

Percentage of births born to unmarried women under 20, 1989

Adult education

County problem measures

Percentage of persons aged 25 and over with less than 9 years of education, 1990

Percentage of persons aged 25 and over without high school diploma, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of persons aged 25 and over with less than 9 years of education, 1990

Percentage of persons aged 25 and over without high school diploma, 1990

Adult health and mental health

County problem measures

Crude death rate, 1989

Ratio of crude death rate to rate predicted from age-specific rates, 1989

Suicide rate, 1988-1989

Infant mortality rate, 1989

Number of nonfederal physicians providing patient care per capita, 1992

City problem measures

Crude death rate, 1989

Ratio of crude death rate to rate predicted from age-specific rates, 1989

Suicide rate, 1988-1989

Infant mortality rate, 1989

Aging

County problem measures

Percentage of persons aged 65 and over, 1990

Percentage of persons aged 65 and over in poverty, 1990

Percentage of noninstitutionalized persons aged 65 and over with self-care limitation, 1990

Percentage of noninstitutionalized persons aged 65 and over with mobility limitation, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of persons aged 65 and over, 1990

Percentage of persons aged 65 and over in poverty, 1990

Percentage of noninstitutionalized persons aged 65 and over with self-care limitation, 1990

Percentage of noninstitutionalized persons aged 65 and over with mobility limitation, 1990

Child health and mental health

County problem measures

Infant mortality rate, 1989

Number of nonfederal physicians in practice per 100,000 population, 1992

City problem measures

Infant mortality rate, 1989

Percentage of all births born to women under age 20, 1989

Child welfare

County problem measures

Percentage of children in poverty, 1990

Percentage of families in poverty, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households with children under age 18, 1990

Percentage of children living with both parents, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of children in poverty, 1990

Percentage of families in poverty, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households with children under age 18, 1990

Percentage of children living with both parents, 1990

Citizen participation

County problem measures

Percentage of eligible persons registered to vote, 1992

Percentage of eligible persons voting in 1992

Presidential election

City problem measures

None available

Criminal justice

County problem measures

Total reported crime rate, 1991

Violent crime rate, 1991

City problem measures

Total violent and property crime rate (less arson), 1992

Violent crime rate, 1992

Property crime rate (less arson), 1992

Police per 100,000 population, 1992

Cultural enrichment

County problem measures

Public library budget per capita, 1994

Public library books per capita, 1994

Public library periodical subscriptions per capita, 1994

Public library circulation per capita, 1994

City problem measures

Museums and historic sites per 100,000 population, 1994

Symphonies, orchestras, and operas per 100,000 population

Economic well-being

County problem measures

Average unemployment rate, January-April 1992

Per capita income, 1989

Percentage of employed persons in professional or managerial jobs, 1990

Percentage of persons in poverty, 1989

Percentage of population in homeless shelters or visibly homeless on street, 1990

City problem measures

Average unemployment rate, January-April 1992

Per capita income, 1989

Percentage of employed persons in professional or managerial jobs, 1990

Percentage of persons in poverty, 1989

Percentage of population in homeless shelters or visibly homeless on street, 1990

Education

County problem measures

Percentage of total population in public school, 1991-1992

Student teacher ratio in public schools, 1991-1992

Per pupil expenditures in public schools, 1991-1992

Percentage of per capita income spent on public schools, 1991-1992

Percentage of families with child under age 18, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of families with child under age 18, 1990

Environment

County problem measures

Number of Superfund sites in county, 1993

Ozone level in air, 1992

Particulate matter in air, 1992

Carbon monoxide level in air, 1992

Average emission level of five air pollutants, 1993

City problem measures

Number of city water system standards violations, 1990-1994

Race and ethnic relations

County problem measures

Percentage of population non-White, non-Hispanic, 1990

Ratio of Black to White per capita income, 1989

Ratio of Hispanic to White per capita income, 1989

Ratio of percentage Black to percentage White without high school education, 1990

Ratio of percentage Hispanic to percentage White without high school education, 1990

Ratio of percentage Black to percentage White in professional/management jobs, 1990

Ratio of percentage Hispanic to percentage White in professional/management jobs, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of population non-White, non-Hispanic, 1990

Ratio of Black to White per capita income, 1989

Ratio of Hispanic to White per capita income, 1989

Ratio of percentage Black to percentage White without high school education, 1990

Ratio of percentage Hispanic to percentage White without high school education, 1990

Ratio of percentage Black to percentage White in professional/management jobs, 1990

Ratio of percentage Hispanic to percentage White in professional/management jobs, 1990

Substance abuse

None available

Urban revitalization

County problem measures

Percentage of year-round housing units vacant, 1990

Percentage of occupied housing units that are rentals, 1990

Percentage of housing units without complete plumbing, 1990

Median age of housing unit, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of year-round housing units vacant, 1990

Percentage of occupied housing units that are rentals, 1990

Percentage of housing units without complete plumbing, 1990

Median age of housing unit, 1990

Ratio of residential building permits to existing units, 1992

Women's issues

County problem measures

Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990

Ratio of female to male income for fulltime year-round workers, 1989

Ratio of percentage of women to percentage of men in professional/managerial jobs, 1990

Ratio of percentage of women to percentage of men in precision production jobs, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990

Ratio of female to male income for fulltime year-round workers, 1989

Ratio of percentage of women to percentage of men in professional/managerial jobs, 1990

Ratio of percentage of women to percentage of men in precision production jobs, 1990

Rape rate, 1989

Work and family issues

County problem measures

Percentage of female-headed households with child under age 18, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households with child under age 6, 1990

Percentage of married couples who are both employed, 1990

City problem measures

Percentage of female-headed households with child under age 18, 1990

Percentage of female-headed households with child under age 6, 1990

Percentage of married couples who are both employed, 1990

Appendix B

Intercorrelations of County and City Problem Measures, Member and Leader Attitudes, and Measures of Chapter Effort—Child Welfare

	Measures of Chapter Effort in Area					Member and Leader Attitudes			
	Percentage of All Projects in Area	Projects in Area per 100 Members	Percentage of All Project Expenditures in Area	Percentage of All Expenditures in Area	Expenditures per Member	Mean Member Importance Rating	Percentage of Members Willing to Work	Mean Leader Importance Rating	Percentage of Leaders Willing to Work
County problem measures									
Percentage of children in	.04	.04	-.30	-.08	.08	.30	-.43	-.13	-.42

poverty, 1990									
Percentage of families in poverty, 1990	.04	.08	-.30	-.08	.09	.31	-.40	-.14	-.41
Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990	.33	.33	-.05	.06	.13	.34	-.42	-.44	-.52
Percentage of female-headed households with children under age 18, 1990	-.04	-.28	-.32	-.28	-.28	-.05	-.70	-.26	-.63
Percentage of children living with both parents, 1990	.06	-.27	-.14	-.05	-.08	-.21	-.41	-.19	-.43
City problem measures									
Percentage of children in poverty, 1990	-.39	-.37	.11	.06	-.09	-.07	-.50	.52	.32
Percentage of families in poverty, 1990	-.38	-.34	.07	.05	-.06	-.01	-.54	.48	.24
Percentage of female-headed households in poverty, 1990	-.01	.04	.27	.17	.01	.09	-.57	.12	.06
Percentage of female-headed households with	-.26	-.43	.26	.03	-.24	-.33	-.53	.30	.15

children under age 18, 1990									
Percentage of children living with both parents, 1990	-.24	-.41	.28	.12	-.14	-.39	-.37	.38	.28
Member attitudes									
Mean issue importance rating	.09	.34	-.10	.20	.35				
Percentage willing to work on issue	.19	.40	.20	.33	.38				
Leader attitudes									
Mean issue importance rating	-.40	-.20	-.12	-.01	.10				
Percentage willing to work on issue	-.10	.08	.33	.23	.21				

Note: N = 12. Correlations < .57, p > .05.

Notes

1. A full list of sources is available from the first author upon request.
2. Because SMAs sometimes included many counties (up to eight), most of which contained few IAW chapter members, we did not use SMA data.
3. We attempted to include measures of the number of volunteers devoted to each of the 17 community areas, but the limitations of the annual reports made it impossible to obtain adequate information about the number of volunteers in each area for several chapters.
4. Nodata on the relative severity of substance abuse problems were located. The remaining 15 detailed tables are available from the first author upon request.
5. A more technical reason to discount the preponderance of relationships in the predicted direction among the significant correlations is that clusters of significant correlations tend to occur together in the same row of the table. Because each row contains the correlations between a single indicator of a community problem and five measures of chapter effort—which are themselves usually correlated—the significant relationships are not fully independent events.

That is, an accidental relationship between a community problem indicator and overall chapter effort in that area can produce several significant correlations, not just one. This means that far fewer than 26 accidents are required to produce 26 significant relationships in the predicted direction.

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