

*Public administration has long considered the administrative agency as the core institution shaping action. But specialists in policy implementation, in particular, have suggested that networks spanning multiple organizations may be important phenomena. National legislation from two Congresses is analyzed to determine the kinds of structures explicitly stipulated or encouraged for new or amended programs. The most important questions have to do with the extent to which single-agency or networked (multiactor) structures are used and the relative degree to which intergovernmental versus intragovernmental programs are prominent. The evidence shows that the great majority of legislation requires multiactor structures spanning governments, sectors, and/or agencies; intergovernmental programs are especially prominent; and the multiactor character of the structures has remained relatively constant. These findings carry implications for the study and practice of public administration.*

**STRUCTURES FOR  
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**  
*An Analysis of National Legislation,  
1965-1966 and 1993-1994*

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**The conventional wisdom** in the field of public administration holds that the administrator operates from an agency home base and that this locus is the institutional setting from which coordination occurs. The agency is universally recognized to be surrounded by an environment, to be sure, but this element of context is typically placed into the background, not the foreground, of analysis. But what kinds of institutional arrangements are really used to implement public programs? The answer to this question should frame appropriate strategies for public management, in this country and abroad.

The fact is that public administration as a field of study and practice has assumed an institutional answer without demonstrating it, and the



assumption is contestable. A great deal of recent research emphasizes the importance of networked, multiorganizational arrays in governance and implementation (a sampling would include Bogason & Toonen, 1998; Bressers, O'Toole, & Richardson, 1995; Hufen & Ringeling, 1990; Jordan & Schubert, 1992; Kickert, Klijn, & Koppenjan, 1997; Klijn, 1996; Marin & Mayntz, 1991; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; O'Toole, 1997; Provan & Milward, 1995; and Scharpf, 1993). Unfortunately, much of the discussion on this point has been anecdotal. Because an accurate answer is critical to a diagnosis of the current state of practice and theory—and because the answer is accessible in principle via empirical methods—it is appropriate, even essential, to seek systematic information.

This article offers a set of preliminary answers to the question of what kinds of institutional arrangements structure the environment in which public programs are executed. The answers are incomplete, but they are systematically framed. More specifically, we analyze a sample of authoritative mandates for new or revised public programs—the legislation of the U.S. Congress in two widely separately 2-year periods—to determine what kinds of arrangements have been stipulated for program implementation. We rely on the research literature of policy implementation to frame the relevant research questions and to provide the concepts and criteria for analyzing institutional arrangements. And we attempt a preliminary examination of longitudinal dynamics—of particular relevance to theorists focused on whether and how such arrangements may have shifted over time.

#### **AGENCY STRUCTURES AND PROGRAM STRUCTURES: A POINT OF EMPIRICAL CONTENTION**

In scholarly research on the subject of policy implementation, it has often been asserted that understanding what makes for success in the execution of public programs is related to—but in important respects different from—the study of public administration. Part of the argument has to do with the relevant units of analysis: What analyzable elements should be the object of systematic inquiry regarding the execution of public programs? Traditionally, analysts of public administration have focused on the administrative agency as the primary object of attention (Rainey, 1997), whereas numerous students of policy implementation have argued that the more appropriate unit would be the public program itself (Hjern, 1982).

In public administration, the focus on the agency has been prominent for decades. Textbooks are framed in this fashion, important cornerstones of organization theory assume it (e.g., Simon, 1976), coverage of budgeting and the management of human resources is based on it, and some of the most prominent normative discussions in the field are explicitly centered on an “agency perspective” (Wamsley et al., 1990). But if public programs are typically constructed in ways that do not neatly match agencies, administrative study is faced with profound questions about how people and resources can best be mobilized to accomplish public tasks.

The stipulation of the appropriate unit of analysis thus drives a number of important conclusions. If most public programs were implemented primarily or exclusively by a single public agency, and if most public agencies were to administer one and only one public program, then it might matter little which unit of analysis is selected, and the issues that arise for managing public programs would have to be closely tied to those of concern to public managers concerned with leading agencies. How to achieve programmatic success would amount in large measure to how to manage the personnel and resources of a given public agency.

If, on the other hand, public programs were assigned authoritatively to (parts of) multiple institutions—public, nongovernmental, and/or private—then the admonitions and ostensible lessons of public management derived from the actions of managers in single, “lonely” organizations (Hjern & Porter, 1981) would likely be inapplicable. Indeed, entirely new—and thus far largely undeveloped—lessons for managing public programs in complex institutional settings would need to be generated and tested, lessons extending far beyond admonitions for “hierarchical integration” offered in some of the standard research literature (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989). In short, practical suggestions regarding public program management need to be derived from an accurate characterization of the kinds of institutional settings in which such programs must develop.

Some analysts suggest that the whole set of institutional issues regarding policy implementation is overblown. Kettl (1990, 1993a), for instance, has been explicit in claiming that most programs are actually handled through existing, simple, and basically hierarchical institutional arrangements and that the widespread attention to more complex structures in the scholarship on policy implementation is exaggerated.

[I]mplementation research is largely a study of why things go wrong. The predominantly negative focus comes because implementation scholars have been drawn irresistibly to delicious tales of government programs gone sour. Moreover, implementation research has largely (but not

exclusively) been based in intergovernmental programs, where organizational interrelations are even stickier than usual, where goals are always harder to define than usual, and where success therefore seems especially elusive. . . .

. . . Given such a base, it is little wonder that so much of the implementation movement has been preoccupied with the problem of defining goals, the complexity of joint action, and the difficulty of achieving success. . . . Had the implementation researchers examined other programs, from the air traffic control system to the National Park Service, they might well have come to much different conclusions. (Kettl, 1993a, pp. 60-61)

Kettl refers to this alleged penchant of implementation researchers as a "case-selection bias." It is clear that in speaking for skeptics on the issues of program structure and program complexity, he openly doubts at least two often-asserted propositions regarding today's public programs: that they are often intergovernmental and that such programs typically span multiple structures (in other words, that the typical program is not encompassed within a single hierarchical agency and that successful implementation requires cooperative action across two or more organizations).<sup>1</sup>

Kettl rightly notes that scholars of policy implementation have focused in the main on the intergovernmental and the complicated cases. In doing so, he argues, and in particular by attending to the most challenging programs while ignoring the mundane, straightforward, and simply structured instances, researchers on implementation may have understated the degree of public program success in the United States. Kettl's broad theme is that the field of public administration as traditionally conceived covers most of the implementation arrays of practical significance and that most of what is important to know about public policy implementation has already been answered, or at least addressed, in the field of public administration organized around administrative agencies as the core units of analysis.

It is certainly true that much scholarship on policy implementation has focused on the "complexity of joint action" in public programs, to use the phrase coined by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) in the case study that framed much of the early research on the subject. Both in this country and abroad, a number of recent claims have been advanced that many if not most public programs are executed in complex networked settings (Kickert et al., 1997; LaPorte, 1996; O'Toole, 1997), that intergovernmental programs are more the norm than the exception, and that program arrays are increasingly being developed in the context of a "hollow state"—a government that sets basic criteria and funding parameters and then develops implementation through chains of contracting arrangements (e.g., Milward, 1996).

Which is the correct answer? Or are both characterizations somewhat accurate, even if overgeneralized? The answer here is obviously significant—for descriptive, theoretical, and action-oriented reasons. And yet clear answers are difficult to determine. Some relatively early empirical work based on data gathered by the U.S. General Accounting Office showed that there is clearly a range of cases—some of the simple and single-agency type, some involving multiple actors and ranging widely in coordination requirements (Montjoy & O'Toole, 1979; O'Toole & Montjoy, 1984). But the sampling procedure used precluded generalizations to a broad set of national programs.

A great deal of anecdotal evidence has been marshaled on both sides. The mushrooming discussions of networking and government that can be found in a number of other countries suggest at a minimum that the claims voiced in the United States regarding the importance of structurally complex arrays are not an isolated and parochial theme (for research in several European countries, see Kickert et al., 1997; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Scharpf, 1993). Within this country, some systematic empirical work is beginning to emerge showing the apparent structural complexity with which program managers must cope; but this work is still in the early stages and has focused almost exclusively on intergovernmental settings (the best recent example is Agranoff & McGuire, 1998).

One analyst explains the issue this way:

For all the evidence that networks are important for public administration, most of the discussion of this subject has been vague. . . .

. . . The first task, describing what is out there in the world of contemporary public administration, is more challenging than may be apparent. The systematic information needed to ascertain the prominence of networks is not now available. Careful accounts of the full array of national programs for their network features and the worlds of most middle managers for network-based behavior, for example, need to be a part of the research agenda. (O'Toole, 1997, p. 48)

This article reports research results aimed at beginning to answer some of the basic questions that have lacked systematic responses until now.

### THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Here we explore carefully the kinds of structures for implementation that are called for by national legislation (see below for a more careful

explanation of the data and methods). Accordingly, this study reports on an analysis of new program initiatives rather than of a sample of existing programs. Although substantive changes to existing programs are included under this review, no effort has been made to sample the full array of operating programs—only those established or amended under law during two different periods in time are selected for analysis.

Several questions are investigated. The first two are derived directly from the assertions of those scholars who have been skeptical of the assumptions of complexity and of the heavily intergovernmental character of many public programs.

*Proposition 1:* Most new programs are structured to be implemented by single agencies rather than multiple units.

*Proposition 2:* Most new programs are implemented within a single government rather than intergovernmentally.

We explore the network hypothesis, that is, by examining the extent to which individual agencies or groups of two or more agencies—within or across governments—are charged with executing policy. These statements lie at the core of the debate referenced above regarding public programs in the United States. Additional issues are also worthy of exploration. For those programs that are not designed for implementation via a single administrative unit, just how complex are coordination requirements demanded in the implementation arrangements called for in public policy? As Kettl (1993a) indicates, the extent of managerial demands and difficulties of achieving implementation success are closely linked to how much coordination among multiple actors is actually required. If two or more formal organizations are linked in the implementation of a public program, these may be able to operate mostly on their own—with minimal close coordination. Under such circumstances, the implementation task looks much like the traditional job of public administration. On the other hand, if considerable interdependence is required, implementation is likely to be more challenging. The skeptics' argument referenced above implies that the former situation is the more common.

*Proposition 3:* When two or more units must work together to implement a program, they are usually not tightly interdependent.

Some suggest that the intergovernmental dimension is the principal manifestation of structural complexity. But complicated implementation

arrangements are possible even when different governments do not take part in carrying out public programs. It may be the case, therefore, that networked arrays for implementation include substantial numbers of cases in which multiple organizations within a single government must work together or in which profit-making firms and/or not-for-profit units participate in important ways. The contrary position would be that structural complexity in public programs comes primarily if not exclusively from intergovernmental partnerships.

*Proposition 4:* Interagency, public-private, and public/not-for-profit implementation structures are rarely authorized for public programs.

A final issue has to do with the important question of time. Among those researchers who have been emphasizing the networked nature of today's public management and policy implementation, a wide variety of causal forces have been cited. Some of these are of apparently longstanding importance. Note Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984) point that often a number of parties are added to an implementation effort to increase the supportive coalition rather than necessarily to add to the technical or administrative capacity of the implementing apparatus. Others are much more contemporary and, if validated, would seem to signal important shifts in the character of public programs and public management. Milward's (1996) hollow state image suggests recent and emerging developments rather than a continuation of a long tradition. Is the networking phenomenon—to the extent that it can be documented—a recent occurrence? Or can such structural patterns be found in earlier program initiatives?

*Proposition 5:* Networked structures for policy implementation are mostly recent phenomena rather than patterns discernible in earlier decades.

This set of testable propositions constitutes the basis for the empirical analysis conducted in this research.

## DATA AND METHODS

Addressing the issues raised above constitutes a difficult challenge because the number of policy initiatives is large and—especially—the data regarding the structure of public programs are difficult to find and document unambiguously. Indeed, it is for these reasons that debate and argument by anecdote have tended to dominate discussion. Our strategy

for handling the issues is to limit the analysis to a manageable set of data, but we take into account systematic information about a large number of policy initiatives.

More specifically, we review the full set of laws passed by two U.S. Congresses at two different time points 28 years apart to determine the explicitly required or encouraged structure formally stipulated for program implementation. In each case of a new or revised program, we record the nature of the structure, the type of interdependence specified, the kind(s) of institutional participants to be involved (as mentioned explicitly in law), and a few other key pieces of information.

Of course, national legislation is only one source of policy mandates established via the U.S. government. Executive orders, administrative regulations, and other even less formal stimuli can be significant in establishing and (especially) changing the operations of a program—and in influencing the types of participants and structures during implementation. So these data do not fully represent all the kinds of program initiatives or implementation structures of interest. Still, it can be argued that legislation is the single most important source of significant policy initiatives and should be considered a critical body of data.

The research literature documents the fact that often formally authorized structures for implementation are altered in highly consequential fashions by a variety of forces: the choices of managers during implementation, the informal preferences and pressures of political bodies, the moves made by stakeholder institutions, and so forth. What is more, structural shifts during implementation—or the results of informal influences over program structures—typically seem to add participants and coordinative links to the bare outlines specified in a legislatively authorized program. Again, the case of the Economic Development Administration in Oakland, California—as analyzed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984)—is instructive. Beneath the formal surface of the program they chose to study, these scholars discovered a web of structural links and decision points so complex as to nearly defy implementers' efforts. Therefore, one can consider that the initial formal structure for implementation often oversimplifies the complexity of the actual operating arrangements. This point does not diminish the significance of legislation as an important shaper of program patterns, but it does suggest that the explicit guidance of law almost certainly understates the degree of structural complexity that develops around programs as they become operational. The immediate practical point is that the results of the current analysis are surely a



conservative estimate of the degree of “networked-ness” of federal programs for the periods in question.

Any given Congress enacts a huge quantity of law, but much of this establishes or revises no public program. Some is merely symbolic, some consists of housekeeping measures of little consequence for policy implementation or public management. Some legislation affects programs in exceedingly minor ways or provides agencies with authority to carry out administrative transfer activities—conveying land, for instance. These types of legislation, when unaccompanied by more substantive or framing language, were considered outside the appropriate scope of this analysis. Our approach was to review every piece of legislation for the Congresses in question and to classify each law on the basis of whether it touches on the content of public policy or the design or redesign of one or more public programs. All those laws containing design, direction, amendment, or elaboration of a new or existing public program were included in the analysis. The remainder were omitted.

Any such initial coding must be carefully done. As a check on the reliability of the scheme used for classification, we first coded all relevant legislation and then checked these decisions against another set of coding decisions made by another researcher for a different but not incompatible purpose. In an investigation conducted by Cameron (1999; for coding rules and methodological details, see Cameron, et al., n.d.), laws enacted in these same Congresses were coded in terms of degree of importance. Cameron's coding was conducted by using media assessments—the degree of press coverage—as the measure of importance. The highest level of importance was attached to legislation covered by the mainstream press (*The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*), followed by legislation prominently covered by the inside-the-beltway press (the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*). Of course, the importance of national legislation, as assessed by media coverage, is not the same thing as the significance of the legislation for shaping public program design and implementation. But, at least roughly, the classifications should and do overlap. The main difference among the most highly visible pieces of legislation is for appropriations laws, which are included in Cameron's analysis but are obviously excluded here. We do not report the results on the basis of Cameron's coding in this article; instead, we restrict the presentation to the data produced explicitly for the research questions of present interest. But we have performed the analysis for Cameron's important legislation in all cases where structural data are provided in the law. Although the specifics

of the quantitative results differ between the data sets, on each of the propositions examined here, the findings are similar. Using Cameron's classification (important or unimportant) or our classification (program change/creation or residual matters) of legislation makes little difference; the results are parallel.

The data we considered for analysis were the entire output of public laws passed by Congress during two periods: the 89th Congress, which was responsible for enacting much of the legislation at the core of the Johnson-era Great Society (including the program studied by Pressman and Wildavsky) and the 103rd Congress, the last Democratic Congress during the 40-year period 1954-1994 prior to the recent Republican takeover. These periods have some similarities that provide greater validity to the analysis reported below. For one thing, both are drawn from periods of unified government under Democratic presidents. For another, during both Congresses the presidents were operating in their first term after election and both had campaigned on a platform emphasizing an activist legislative agenda. (Obviously, Lyndon Johnson had served 14 months as president prior to the beginning of the 89th Congress.) Other comparisons across time should also be interesting—consider the findings that could be deduced from the first Republican Congress of the 1990s—but the two included in this study provide the opportunity for a test on the time dimension without complicating matters with additional variables.

To compare the two Congresses, it was necessary to examine carefully each of the laws passed by the 89th and 103rd Congresses ( $n = 810$  and  $465$ , respectively). The legislation itself as contained in the *U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News* was content-analyzed for several characteristics. A key classification was the separation of substantive from housekeeping, appropriations, and symbolic legislation. The criteria were as explained above, and those laws included for full detailed analysis—those in the former category—turned out to be a much smaller set: 97 and 40 laws, respectively. (See Table 1. The other laws were also coded where possible on the basis of criteria of interest in this study, but the results are omitted from this article.<sup>3</sup>)

For the substantive pieces of legislation, a first step was to determine the actors explicitly required or encouraged to be involved in implementation. This part of the assessment was completed by undertaking a careful reading of the law and noting all actors specifically named as required to be involved. Again, we emphasize that this method certainly understates the number and types of institutional actors that have in fact become involved during the implementation process. Designated involvement by

**TABLE 1**  
**Programmatic and Other Legislation**  
**(excludes appropriations and symbolic legislation)**

	<i>89th Congress</i> <i>(1965-1966)</i>	<i>103rd Congress</i> <i>(1993-1994)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Program creation or change	13.6% (97)	13.7% (40)	13.6% (137)
Residual matters	86.4 (617)	86.3 (253)	86.4 (870)
Total	100.0% (714)	100.0% (293)	100.0% (1,007)

one or more federal agencies, state and/or local governments, businesses, not-for-profits, native American tribes, and international actors (e.g., secretariats of international organizations) were all noted. When more than one (institutional) actor was explicitly named in the law—for example, a national agency and states as coparticipants in a federal grant program—the case was classified as multiactor. When only one unit was named, the law was classified as single actor in type. Of those multiactor cases, some named federal administrative actors along with state and/or local units; these were further categorized as intergovernmental instances.

The next stage of analysis was conducted on those cases that were determined to be multiactor. We sought information on how much the multiple institutional actors were required to rely on or coordinate with each other during implementation. We used the typology that O'Toole and Montjoy (1984) borrowed and adapted from James Thompson's (1967) intraorganizational theory for interorganizational cases. All substantive pieces of legislation requiring multiple actors to participate in implementation were coded as establishing either a pooled, a sequential, or a reciprocal type of interdependence among the actors. Pooled interdependence means that the actors have to contribute to the overall result but they can act independently, without waiting for anything from any of the others. Sequential interdependence involves two or more units, with the output of one being needed as (part of) the input for one or more others. Reciprocal interdependence, the highest of the three forms, is found where the output of one unit provides input for another, and vice versa. (A number of cases required different types at different program coordination points. These

were coded via the highest form of interdependence.) The goal here was to develop an estimate of the coordination requirements of the legislation, at least at the initial stage.

Third, each law was scrutinized for additional content items, including (a) requirements for issuing reports to Congress for oversight purposes, (b) crosscutting mandates—policy requirements that apply to a considerable number of different federal agencies and existing programs, and (c) new institutional creations, such as agencies, boards, or commissions. The laws were found to state clearly in most cases if reports were to be required and/or new institutional forms created. Similarly, the establishment of a new crosscutting mandate was generally straightforward and easily coded.

## FINDINGS

Analyzing the data on legislation from the two Congresses allows for answers to several of the most interesting questions about implementation arrays, as sketched earlier.

What about the relative proportion of new or substantively revised programs that require multiple actors during implementation (Proposition 1, above)? Table 2 shows a clear pattern. By a huge majority (85% overall), significant new legislation has called for involvement on the part of multiple actors rather than a single administrative unit. And although the proportion of multiactor cases is greater for the recent Congress, it was also high during the 1960s. (There is no statistically significant difference between the two periods.) Again, it is useful to bear in mind that Congressional action signals only the bare minimum of institutional actors involved. In many cases, the contracting for services of governmental units with private and nonprofit actors, the involvement of stakeholder groups, as well as other developments in practice, raise the complexity considerably. It seems uncontested that, if “network” is used to reference the regular involvement of two or more nonhierarchically arrayed units, the development of new and revised public programs in the United States has been taking place—and administrators have been working—in a networked world for some time. Proposition 1 is rejected.

The complexity evidenced in this analysis strongly suggests that a focus on complex cases by researchers studying policy implementation is appropriate, even critical. For these seem to portray important elements of

**TABLE 2**  
**Structures for Implementation, as Stipulated by Law**

	<i>89th Congress</i> <i>(1965-1966)</i>	<i>103rd Congress</i> <i>(1993-1994)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Single agency	16.5% (16)	10.0% (4)	14.6% (20)
Multiactor	83.5% (81)	90.0% (36)	85.4% (117)
Total	100.0% (97)	100.0% (40)	100.0% (137)

the institutional environment for the management of new public programs better than does a traditional emphasis on the single agency.

In the multiactor cases, are intergovernmental instances a relatively small fraction? Here too the answer is no. In both the 89th and 103rd Congresses, a majority of the significant substantive legislation established or amended programs that are intergovernmental in nature (see Table 3). Once again, the findings are similar for the two different time periods. Proposition 2 is rejected.

Table 3 also demonstrates, nonetheless, that businesses and not-for-profits have also played important roles in a significant minority of the cases—in being specifically involved in the implementation of public programs by stipulation of the Congress. Formally authorized business involvement remained at a constant level between these periods, whereas somewhat surprisingly, nonprofit institutional involvement as measured by legislative designation declined (statistically significant at the .05 level).

Clearly, when managing the implementation of new programs at the national level, U.S. public administrators need to be prepared to work with a variety of different kinds of actors both within and without government—from different organizational cultures, influenced by different sets of incentives, and directed toward different goals. Proposition 4 must also be rejected.

And what of the coordination requirements? This is a difficult question to answer clearly, particularly from a mere reading of legislation. Nonetheless, the rough classification performed for this analysis is instructive. As Table 4 indicates, some of the multiactor laws in each Congress

**TABLE 3**  
**Actors Involved in Program Implementation, as Designated by Law**

	<i>89th Congress</i> <i>(1965-1966)</i>	<i>103rd Congress</i> <i>(1993-1994)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Intergovernmental	52.6%	55.0%	53.3%
Business actors	28.9	27.5	28.5
Nonprofit actors	39.2%**	10.0%**	30.7%**

\*\*Difference is significant at the .05 level.

demand only minimal—pooled—links between or among the participating institutions during implementation.<sup>3</sup> But approximately two thirds of the overall cases during each Congress specify higher coordination requirements. Furthermore, the most demanding—reciprocal—form is higher in the recent period, although the difference is not statistically significant. It seems clear, therefore, that the program environments for U.S. managers are not only institutionally complex but demanding in terms of the kinds of links that must be developed and maintained regularly. Proposition 3 is also rejected.

In addition, as the results regarding reports, mandates, and new institutional creations indicate, even the foregoing findings are likely to have missed some of the increased networking demands and the further development of institutionally rich and dense program settings. Table 5 shows that a high proportion of programs—just more than half of the total for both Congresses—are created or modified with a Congressional reporting requirement attached. Reporting to Congress regularly can be a sound method of oversight; the stipulation nonetheless adds to the coordination demands and networking pattern with which program managers must deal. The data from the two Congresses show that these requirements seem to be escalating (the statistical difference between the two falls slightly short of .05 significance, however).

The results in Table 5 also show that by the 103rd Congress crosscutting mandates had become an important component of legislation, although they had not been numerous during the 89th Congress. (The difference is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .) Because crosscutting mandates affect agencies and programs in many fields, their influence in rendering implementation settings more complex has probably been especially important. The finding of substantially greater mandating is

**TABLE 4**  
**Relationships Between or Among Actors**

	<i>89th Congress (1965-1966)</i>	<i>103rd Congress (1993-1994)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Pooled	17.5% (17)	25.0% (10)	19.7% (27)
Sequential	47.4 (46)	32.5 (13)	43.1 (59)
Reciprocal	18.6 (18)	32.5 (13)	22.6 (31)
Single agency	16.5 (16)	10.0 (4)	14.6 (20)
Total	100.0% (97)	100.0% (40)	100.0% (137)

**TABLE 5**  
**Reports, Mandates, and New Units Created**

	<i>89th Congress (1965-1966)</i>	<i>103rd Congress (1993-1994)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Reports required	44.3%*	62.5%*	50.4%*
Crosscutting mandates for federal agencies	5.2**	22.5**	10.3**
New entities created	33.0%**	15.0%**	27.7%**

\*Significant at the .053 level.

\*\*Significant at the .05 level.

consistent with the claims of analysts during the 1990s (e.g., Conlan, 1998). The impact of the effort on the part of the 104th Congress early in 1995 to cut drastically the amount of such requirements through passage of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act can obviously not be seen in these results because the data covered here reach only to the period just prior to the Republican takeover of Congress. Finally, the number of times new institutional entities were created in legislation is lower in the more recent period than earlier ( $p < .05$ ). This finding is not unexpected, given the

flurry of new formations in earlier years and thus the relatively heavily populated administrative landscape during the 1990s. It appears that in the later period, new program initiatives or substantive amendments to existing programs more frequently required new forms of coordination and information, and more often demanded new multiorganizational collaborative initiatives. Only infrequently did Congress set up entirely new agencies or bureaus to handle high-profile tasks. Although such an approach holds down the proliferation of separate entities and thus limits certain kinds of complexities during implementation in the future, it also places ever-greater coordination demands on existing and new programs.

Finally, the results presented thus far allow for a conclusion regarding the remaining proposition sketched earlier, on whether networked arrays—to the extent that they can be discerned in program settings—are recent phenomena rather than structures detectable in earlier periods. The evidence above indicates that Proposition 5 too must be rejected. Shifts can be identified between the kinds of legislatively required implementation arrangements established in the earlier Congress and those authorized by the more recent one, and it is true that by the 103rd Congress crosscutting mandates had become a common and likely complicating feature of national programs. In particular, the required new involvement of not-for-profits in program execution and the creation of entirely new administrative entities were clearly lower in the 1990s than during the parallel Congress examined from the 1960s. But the dominant finding on the across-time comparison is that complex structures were an important institutional form earlier and remain so more recently. Even in 1965-1966, multiagency arrays were commonly selected, these were frequently intergovernmental and often included additional partners as well, and the forms of interdependence required of participating entities meant that considerable coordination was necessary. In short, networked implementation forms seem to have changed in some particulars over time, but it is not true that multiactor forms are products of recent times. Public programs in the United States, at least as judged by national legislation, have long prescribed a networked world.

### IMPLICATIONS

The findings presented in this article clearly demonstrate that the institutional settings in which public programs are placed, at least via national legislation, are multiorganizational and networked rather than unitary and



unambiguously hierarchical. Most new and amended programs encounter implementation settings of the more complicated varieties—with intergovernmental and/or cross-sectoral involvement more the rule than the exception. The arrays for program execution also require significant and skilled public management, particularly because the extent of interunit coordination required for program success is often substantial. The coordination demands may be even greater than a program-by-program assessment would suggest, because crosscutting mandates specify further, less visible, but no less intricate managerial requirements on the basis of multiple and sometimes competing program requisites. The networked reality of today's public management, furthermore, is important but clearly not unprecedented. This comparison of Congressional requirements spaced 28 years apart shows that the earlier period contains just as much evidence of networked requirements as does the more recent one.

The results presented here should not be taken as the last word on the subject of implementation structures in the United States. The analysis focuses on national policy only and for only two Congresses. Broader samples, both by governmental level and through time, could be useful. Still, the findings are probably conservative in their documentation of the multiactor character of public programs. It is likely that the functioning reality of operating programs is more multiactor and more complicated than even these data suggest. But the results of this study provide sufficient evidence to answer in broad outline some of the issues under debate.

It is clear, for instance, that treating single administrative units as the primary unit of analysis in the performance of public programs is likely to miss some of the complex interorganizational dynamics specified as important in policy. And it is equally certain that although the generalizations and skills consequential in the management of single agencies remain highly relevant in the more complex institutional settings demanded by modern programs, the challenges of managing public programs demand further attention to patterns and tasks that arise in networks of interdependent actors. Inducing coordination in a nonhierarchical institutional setting—"making a mesh of things" (Appleby, 1949) in a multiactor world—almost certainly demands analytical perspectives and practical abilities on the part of public managers that have received only passing attention thus far in the traditional perspective of public administration.

This point in turn suggests the importance of expanding the systematic study of public administration into more complicated settings. It is crucial that administrators have the types of skills needed to operate in this less orderly, more multilateral world (see, e.g., Stoker, 1991)—negotiating

ability, coordination talent in nonauthoritative contexts, and facilitation skills in settings involving interactions among different actors with different interests and goals. Treating networks seriously as a crucial institutional setting for the study and practice of public administration would require a reorientation of curricula for professional education, as well as a shift in research agendas aimed at enhancing knowledge of today's central administrative challenges.

The field of public administration has offered much of value for understanding and improving the performance of public programs. In the complex world of the national programs that have been important for some time, nonetheless, attention to broader institutional forms and the kinds of coordination that can be induced in these toward the long-term public interest would seem to be a subject of high priority.

### NOTES

1. Although he has challenged the overemphasis on complex cases in the implementation literature, Kettl (1988, 1993b) has also written enlighteningly on intergovernmental programs as well as contracting arrangements in public programs. We use his presentation of the issue here precisely because he has clearly and explicitly expressed a perspective that is sometimes only hinted at in others' research.

2. To the extent that they can be sensibly coded for the research questions of interest here, even the residual cases show fairly high levels of complexity, and this complexity has increased over time. A number of cases in the residual category do not involve the creation or change of an ongoing program but instead initiate a one-time action or perform a housekeeping function. Even here, nonetheless, multiactor initiatives are not uncommon. Some laws, for instance, convey public lands to new parties but require multiple actors to be involved. Or, to take another example, the CIA's retirement plan was altered to allow for an early retirement option, but the Office of Personnel Management was required to approve the regulations. In the 89th Congress, 18% of residual laws were multiactor. But by the 103rd Congress, more than one third of laws in this category were multiactor. Similar findings can be discerned regarding trends and levels of complexity for intergovernmental cases and for oversight reporting requirements.

3. In practice, however, operating interdependence is likely to differ somewhat from formative interdependence, as O'Toole and Montjoy (1984) show. We can often expect actual operating interdependence to require more coordination than the law stipulates.

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