REGIONAL COUNCILS AND THE INFLUENCE OF STATE LAWS ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

by

Holly Erin Cooper Whisman

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Public Policy

Charlotte, NC

2013

Approved by:

_____
Dr. Suzanne Leland

_____
Dr. John Szmer

_____
Dr. Martha Kropf

_____
Dr. Bill Graves

ABSTRACT

HOLLY ERIN COOPER WHISMAN. Regional councils and the influence of state laws on regional governance. (Under the direction of DR. SUZANNE LELAND)

Regional decision-making, in which multiple local governments seek to address concerns that affect communities across jurisdictional boundaries, has been approached by scholars from two opposing viewpoints. Some argue in favor of consolidated regional or metropolitan *government*, while others prefer voluntary cooperation or regional *governance*. The first approach represents structural regionalism, while the latter reflects the potential for functional regionalism. Regional councils are organizations that work to facilitate communication, and at least ostensibly cooperation, between local governments. Approximately 700 such organizations are currently operating in the United States. State statutes related to regional cooperation and regional councils are present in all but six states, and fall into one of two categories—enabling or prescriptive. Enabling legislation allows local governments to form partnerships with others while prescriptive legislation requires jurisdictions within a given state-defined "region" to belong to a particular regional council. This research compiled a list of all active regional councils in the United States, and administered a survey to the executive directors of those organizations to better understand the work they endeavor to conduct. This study also coded the type of state legislation and analyzed the directors' survey responses to determine the influence of the two different types of state laws. Results from logistic and ordinal logistic regression analyses suggest that the type of state legislation is less important than other organizational and community characteristics, such as whether or not the council operates as a metropolitan planning organization, the region's history of working together, and

recent population change. Qualitative review of open-ended survey responses provides context, suggesting the inherent weakness of voluntary regional councils, and the importance of support at the state level and strong leadership both within the regional council and within its member jurisdictions.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends for their endless support. I am particularly grateful to my parents, George and Mary Beth, for instilling the sense that anything is possible and giving me the space to find out what that meant for me. Joe and Henry also deserve a special sort of gratitude for their ongoing demonstrations that family is truly the cause of—and solution to—all of life's problems. Thanks for the inspiration, the good food, and the humor—tasteful and otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to this research and worked to ensure its completion. I acknowledge Dr. Suzanne Leland, the Chair of my dissertation committee, for keeping me focused on the goal and periodically guiding me back when tangents appeared. Dr. John Szmer assisted by ably ensuring my analyses were properly conducted and by offering alternate methods to consider. Dr. Martha Kropf lent her academic curiosity to the research design and asked pointed questions regarding the causal mechanisms. Dr. Bill Graves approached the issues from a geographer's lens and thus expanded my perspective of the questions as well as the findings. I am deeply grateful to each of the committee members for allowing their expertise to benefit my work.

Several capable and experienced individuals helped to pilot the survey of regional council directors, including people with backgrounds in regional councils, local government, and academia. Their detailed input enhanced the survey—and the results of my analyses—immensely. Both Dr. Leland and Millie Archila contributed in part to the collection of information including email addresses for each of the nearly 700 organizations comprising the population. Their assistance made a mind-numbing task much less daunting, and I am tremendously grateful for their willingness to help. The survey respondents themselves, the executive directors of almost 200 regional councils across the United States, provided the data for this study. Their thoughtful input, which took time away from their primary missions, made this dissertation possible and enriched our understanding of the current landscape of regional governance.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude for the guidance and mentoring I have received throughout my academic and professional journey. I must specifically

thank Dr. Mark Rosentraub for fueling my interest in this topic and furnishing a reading list in 2007, which formed the skeleton of the literature review that appears in this work. Thank you for never accepting anything less than my best work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, THEORY, AND LITERATURE

As local governments seek innovative responses to service demands, regional councils can utilize network governance to facilitate cooperation between two or more jurisdictions (Wolf & Bryan 2009; Visser 2004; Grigsby 1996). Regional councils of government provide a range of services to their member jurisdictions, some of which are directly related to interlocal problem solving, from overseeing joint purchase programs to providing a template for interlocal cooperative agreements between municipalities (Leland & Whisman 2012).

Many regional councils were formed in response to incentives from the federal government (Grigsby 1996) and a wave of state legislation adopted in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. Forty-four of fifty states have blanket laws pertaining to regional governance. Those state statutes typically fall into one of two categories—enabling legislation or prescriptive legislation. This research seeks to illuminate the role of state laws in the ability of regional councils to address both small-scale and large-scale issues that span across jurisdictional boundaries. How does state legislation affect the ways in which these organizations operate? Do the different types of legislation lead regional councils to function differently? Further, are regional councils able to facilitate cooperation between entire regions of jurisdictions, or are they primarily conduits for information, providing access to funding from higher levels of government and technical assistance?

The current literature provides mostly descriptive analysis and some case studies regarding regional councils (for example, Visser 2004; Wolf & Bryan 2009; Wood 2006; Vogel & Nezelkewicz; Gordon 2007). Though regional govern*ance* is often theorized to be an effective alternative to regional govern*ment*, very little empirical work has been conducted regarding regional councils and their efforts to coordinate service provision or solve region-wide problems[1]. This study seeks to fill that gap.

1.1: Theory

Public goods are those that are non-excludable and non-divisible. Because they do not readily generate profit, public goods are unlikely to be produced and provided by the market. A primary role of government is to ensure that socially desirable public goods are produced. This can be quite complicated as what is socially desirable is at least in part a subjective determination. Further complicating matters at the local level is the patchwork of multiple local governments operating in metropolitan areas. Which local government should be responsible for which goods and services?

Parks and Oakerson (2000) point out that the scale of the provision of public goods should ideally match the scale of the goods themselves. This implies that small-scale goods or services would be provided by small, local governments, while services that are more regional in nature should be provided at the regional level. However, the "correct" size of government does not exist to respond to some service needs or demands (Chakraborty 2010). While a proliferation of small local governments is capable of

[1] Bowman and Franke (1984) conducted a survey of regional council executive directors in 1981, at a time when these organizations were "retrenching" due to federal devolution and funding cuts. I am not aware of any such studies since that time.

providing the small-scale services, regional government is largely absent in the United States[2].

Another role of government is to mitigate the effect of externalities (Downs 1994). The potential for externalities that cross jurisdictional boundaries, particularly in highly fragmented areas with numerous local governments, creates a situation in which communicating (at the very least) and cooperating (ideally) with other local governments is in the best interest of the public. Local governments are further expected to achieve technical efficiencies and find cost savings (Oakerson 1999; Bish 2000), and provide opportunities for citizens to engage in democratic participation (Frug 2000) and express their voice (Warner & Hefetz 2002; Hefetz, Warner, & Vigoda-Gadot 2012). These numerous responsibilities have long led observers to theorize on the ideal or optimal governmental structure for addressing region-wide problems. Local government in a regional context provides a specific example of a broader issue of problem solving in complex environments.

Elinor Ostrom acknowledged the complexity of problem solving in the public sector, and referred to the social dilemmas that commonly emerge:

> "Social dilemmas occur whenever individuals in interdependent situations face choices in which the maximization of short-term self-interest yields outcomes leaving all participants worse off than feasible alternatives. In a public-good dilemma, for example, all those who would benefit from the provision of a public good—such as pollution control, radio broadcasts, or weather forecasting—find it costly to contribute and would prefer others to pay for the good instead. If everyone follows the equilibrium strategy, then the good is not provided or is underprovided. Yet, everyone would be better off if everyone were to contribute" (Ostrom 1998, 1).

[2] Metro in the Portland, Oregon, area and, in some regards, the Metropolitan Council in the Minneapolis – St. Paul area are the two examples most closely resembling regional government in the U.S.

Ostrom challenged social scientists to understand how people overcome such social dilemmas in certain situations and given certain variables, and to advance rational choice theory to understand why some groups fail to overcome the challenges of collective action. Regional problem solving provides a specific example of a public-good dilemma.

Two theoretical camps have guided the work on regional problem solving and the local public sector's role in the delivery of public goods and services and mitigation of externalities. The first indicates regional, metropolitan, or consolidated government, while the other calls for a voluntary approach to regional governance requiring individual local governments to cooperate with one another where appropriate. Researchers have applied a variety of titles to the opposing philosophies. Metropolitan government reformers called for consolidated government, among other Progressive Era reforms (Stephens & Wilkstrom 2000). Conversely, the term "new regionalism" was applied to a non-structural approach to regional cooperation (Savitch & Vogel 2000). Others have simply provided a distinction between regional *government* and regional *governance* (Rosentraub & al-Habil 2009). Others still use the labels of regionalists vs. localists to distinguish between the two opposing theories (Jimenez & Hendrick 2010). The two approaches, regardless of the labels applied to them, have sometimes resulted in rather polarized, ideological standpoints.

Jimenez and Hendrick (2010) point out that this debate has raged for at least a century. However, the question is far from resolved. From the mid-1980s through 2007, more than 8,000 new local governments emerged (an increase of more than seven percent), many of them special districts designed to carry out a single special purpose

(Jimenez & Hendrick 2010). Though the recent recession has resulted in a wave of consolidation discussions among local officials across the country seeking cost savings and greater efficiency, empirical research does not support the claim that such consolidations, even if approved by voters, would improve the lot of those local governments considering mergers. Leland & Thurmaier (2010) found that technical efficiency, economic development, and other promises of consolidation were not ensured by a successful consolidation referendum. Additionally, Boyne (1992) found higher costs associated with fewer, more consolidated local governments, and Deller & Rudnicki (1992) identified that improving managerial capacity was preferable to consolidating governments as it resulted in greater efficiency without aggregating citizen preferences[3].

Those advocating for metropolitan government have continued to argue that the current local government landscape is incapable of being efficient or capturing economies of scale[4], and too fragmented to address region-wide concerns. While some goods and services are small scale, can be produced cost-effectively, and the decisions of one jurisdiction have little or no impact on nearby communities, other local government decisions directly or indirectly affect the quality of life in other jurisdictions. Further, some public goods do not "belong" to any specific level of government, and therefore are frequently not addressed at all. Land-use planning and transportation planning, along with economic development and environmental protection, are examples of services that can easily affect surrounding communities, and which are frequently not considered in a coordinated, comprehensive manner, potentially resulting in socially undesirable

[3] Dollery & Crase (2005) and Dollery & Johnson (2006) also find fault with Australian state policies that force local government consolidations for their heavy-handedness and overlooking more effective alternatives.

[4] However, Boyne (1992) refutes the notion that fragmentation is associated with higher costs for services.

outcomes (Chakraborty 2010) or in externalities (Olberding 2009). Lowery (1998) uses such "quasi-market failures" to advocate consolidated local governments characterized by centralized decision-making. However, this approach is not supported by empirical research, or by the prevailing political will as gauged by the likelihood of failure for consolidation referenda (Leland & Thurmaier 2004, 2010). Therefore the utility of the theory that fewer, larger governments are preferable to a system of many small, and often overlapping, local governments, is obsolete. As metropolitan or regional government is rare and unlikely to emerge given political and feasibility issues, in addition to the concerns raised by public choice scholars, some academics and practitioners turned to voluntary cooperation as a solution to interlocal problem solving.

Public choice scholars, who valued a multiplicity of local governments for numerous purported benefits, pointed out that "polycentric political systems" are capable of providing public goods and services in a coordinated manner, while also mitigating potential externalities (Ostrom, Tiebout & Warren 1961). These theorists responded to the notion that fragmented systems of local government were inherently flawed, as the Progressive Era reformers had argued. Instead they cautioned that "gargantua," or large, centralized, metropolitan governments would be "insensitive and clumsy in meeting the demands of local citizens for public goods," (Ostrom, Tiebout & Warren 1961, 837).

Instead they advocated separating provision from production—in other words allowing for contracting out to a private company for services or coordinating with other local governments to individually provide, but collectively produce, public goods and services. Advantages of these approaches include greater flexibility to respond to

changing demands through market-like mechanisms (Rosentraub & al-Habil 2009), as well as promoting greater efficiency or capturing cost savings (Warner & Hefetz 2002)[5].

Networks of local governments in which leaders work across boundaries to solve problems became important to governance theory. Building on O'Toole's (1997) advice to "take networks seriously," Thurmaier and Wood (2002) used social network theory to explain public management networks as exchange networks. Warm (2011) and Silvia (2011) both address the importance of a particular type of network leadership that is increasingly important in overcoming the barriers to cooperation. Similarly, scholars have utilized collective action theory (Olberding 2009, 2002) and have developed an institutional collective action framework (Feiock 2005; Hawkins & Andrew 2010) to understand how partnerships between jurisdictions develop. These theories are in contrast to those that characterize jurisdictions in structurally fragmented regions as locked in fierce competition with one another (Tiebout 1956; Gordon 2007). Krueger (2006) argues that when "cities with comparable characteristics [are] in close proximity," we should expect them to compete with one another for relative gains. However, Krueger points out that fragmentation does not eliminate the possibility for cooperation, as "fragmentation is a double-edged sword" (Krueger 2006, 1). In other words, even in the presence of competition, having multiple neighboring jurisdictions presents local leaders with many opportunities to cooperate on at least some of the services they provide.

Calls for voluntary cooperation between local governments have long been met with the response that numerous examples of voluntary cooperation already exist (Nunn

[5] Warner & Hefetz (2002) found that both privatization and interlocal cooperation promote efficiency, however interlocal cooperation is associated with greater equity and citizen "voice." They remind readers that cities are not merely service delivery units, but also play a role in promoting democracy, civic discourse (including discussions about how best to provide and produce services) and community.

& Rosentraub 1997; Rosentraub & al-Habil 2010). Much of the literature on the topic of regional governance focuses on interlocal agreements, as a somewhat measurable form of cooperation between localities. Empirical evidence suggests that interlocal agreements are frequently used in regions throughout the country. ILAs allow for some jurisdictions to contract out the production of a service to another jurisdiction, for two or more jurisdictions to jointly provide and produce a good or service, or for multiple jurisdictions to collectively contract out the production of a good or service to a private firm. These mechanisms are evidence of the concepts the public choice theorists argued were possible many decades ago—that by conceptualizing provision and production separately, numerous arrangements were possible other than the model of each jurisdiction both providing and producing each good or service its citizens demanded.

Despite the many opportunities for cooperation within a fragmented system to which Krueger (2006) and Nunn & Rosentraub (1997) refer, cooperation on large-scale issues involving multiple jurisdictions is not a sure thing. The proliferation of ILAs does not suggest that regional governance through voluntary cooperation is resolving all region-level issues. Therefore, theorists' philosophies on voluntary cooperation may more aptly refer to small-scale service delivery issues rather than large-scale issues that span many jurisdictions.

Empirical evidence suggests that ILAs may not effectively address concerns that are truly regional in nature, but are primarily utilized for goods or services to be collectively delivered by a relatively small number of neighboring jurisdictions. In fact, adjacent borders are a statistically significant factor in models of both the likelihood and amount of interlocal service cooperation (LeRoux 2008). Therefore, claims that ILAs are

evidence of voluntary regional coordination are flawed in their neglect of the limited scale of many such agreements. Vogel & Nezelkewicz (2002) provide further evidence that large-scale cooperation, even when facilitated by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), does not necessarily take into consideration metropolitan-wide interests. Chakraborty (2010) continues to explore this concern, asserting that even though transportation issues are often addressed at the regional level, the accompanying issues of land use and environmental protection are not considered in a coordinated manner with transportation.

Organizations, whether regional councils of government or informal networks of local leaders, can play a role in brokering agreements between neighboring municipalities (LeRoux 2008). Such organizations are typically nonprofit organizations of a quasi-governmental nature. Governance theorists that advocate voluntary cooperation between jurisdictions for interlocal cooperation would expect these types of organizations to originate from the ground up—or voluntarily. However, the study of organizations and institutions suggests a more complex reality.

Olson (1965) pointed out that organizations exist to advance the *common* interests of their members. However, large organizations, unless they have the ability to apply sanctions, can result in free riders. Olson uses the example of the state collecting taxes. Taxes cannot be voluntary, because "those who do not purchase or pay for any of the public or collective good cannot be excluded or kept from sharing in the consumption of the good, as they can where noncollective [sic] goods are concerned" (15). This would suggest that regional council organizations will have greater likelihood of advancing

cooperation between their member jurisdictions—and less potential for free riders—if they are able to coerce participation.

On the other hand, Ostrom (1998) argued that policies based on the assumption that "rational individuals are helplessly trapped in social dilemmas from which they cannot extract themselves without inducements or sanctions from the outside" have in some cases caused problems worse than those they were intended to solve (3). Indeed, she argues, some "players" choose to reciprocate cooperation, even if that action seems irrational from an outsider's perspective.

Nonetheless, if a regional good or service is too costly for a single jurisdiction to provide, while others free-ride, that good or service is not likely to be provided. Similarly, even if individual local governments would like to address a region-wide problem, but do not have the cooperation of local leaders in enough communities throughout the region to make such action feasible, the problem in question is likely to go on unabated. This would be an example of a tragedy of the commons, such as Hardin (1961) detailed. His description of pollution is particularly relevant in terms of the debate about regional governance, as it involves a calculation of utility on the part of individual local governments and has implications that do not stop at a municipal border.

The federal government, by providing various incentives for the creation of regional councils, requiring regional plans in order to receive certain types of grant funding, and requiring local grant applications be reviewed by a regional council[6], encouraged the formation of regional councils of government (Grigsby 1996)[7]. It further encouraged the development of MPOs, a particular type of regional council, through

[6] A process called A-95 review

[7] Related legislation included the amended Housing Act of 1959, Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, and the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 (Grigsby 1996).

transportation legislation such as the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 and later the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century or TEA-21 (Giuliano 2004).

State governments have also provided the necessary structure to encourage and perhaps to coerce participation in regional councils through legislation. Forty-four of the fifty states have legislation regarding regional cooperation and regional councils. Between the 1950s and mid-1970s, the number of regional councils of government in the United States grew from roughly 50 to more than 650 (Grigsby 1996).

Vogel and Nezelkewicz (2002) write, "*Government* is based on coercive power and command-and-control processes embedded in hierarchical organization. *Governance* is rooted in a system of cooperation that may take the form of a policy network or a community-based 'governing regime' linking public and private elites" (108). When state or federal government requires, or even simply encourages, participation in regional councils, a situation arises in which government is attempting to establish governance with a top-down approach. Can policy makers reasonably expect coerced participation in governance to engender cooperation between local governments on regional concerns?

North (1990) wrote, "We usually observe cooperative behavior when individuals repeatedly interact, when they have a great deal of information about each other, and when small numbers characterize the group," (12). Like North, Ostrom (1998) highlights the importance of face-to-face interactions in generating cooperation and reciprocity. From this perspective, local leaders who are "coerced" to interact could develop a shared sense of trust and cooperation over time. On the other hand, membership in a regional council could be something that local governments maintain because they are required to

do so, but without actively engaging or developing meaningful relationships with other nearby communities that share the same regional issues.

What leads regional councils to address region-wide problems? State coercion? State support without coercion? Does state legislation regarding regional councils affect the likelihood of face-to-face interaction, which should in turn lead to a greater sense of trust and a greater likelihood of cooperation? This project seeks to advance the scholarly work regarding government and governance, specifically those aspects related to regional councils.

1.2: Literature on Regional Governance

The structural organization of local government in the United States has long been the focus of debate. An important distinction exists between metropolitan *government*, such as city-county consolidated government, and metropolitan *governance*, in which cooperative or collaborative arrangements are formed between jurisdictions without a structural consolidation (Parks & Oakerson 2000; Orfield 1997; Savitch & Vogel 2000; Stephens & Wilkstrom 2000; Olberding 2002).

Regional government is uncommon in the United States, with city-county consolidation being the form of government most closely resembling regional government[8]. However, such structural consolidations do not usually consolidate all the local governments within a given county, or all the functions of the local governments involved. Further, attempts to merge city and county governments typically fail. Even when referenda are successful, the resulting structurally consolidated governments largely fail to deliver on the intended goals such as technical efficiency (Leland & Thurmaier 2010).

[8] With the exception of METRO, in the Portland, Oregon, area

In light of these findings, many scholars have turned to regional governance as the answer to issues involving more than one jurisdiction or in pursuit of cost savings and efficiencies. So-called "new regionalists" have focused on the potential of governance strategies, acknowledging the difficulty of forming metropolitan governments, to solve problems that span jurisdictional boundaries (Savitch & Vogel 2000). However, the argument that regional governance holds more promise than regional government remains largely in the realm of theory, with little basis in empirical evidence or evaluation of outcomes[9].

1.3: Interlocal Agreements

An observable output of regional governance is the interlocal agreement (ILA). Much of the literature on regional governance has focused on ILAs, as a form of functional consolidation meant to capture economies of scale and reduce duplication. ILAs have grown more common in recent years (Kwon & Feiock 2010; LeRoux & Carr 2007; Thurmaier & Wood 2002). In fact, Wood (2006) estimated that 72 percent of the service delivery strategies in the Kansas City metropolitan area fell into one of six categories of inter-jurisdictional arrangements[10].

Scholars have attributed the proliferation of ILAs in part to a response to changing economic and community circumstances, as well as the influence of participating in regional networks such as councils of government (COGs) (Thurmaier &

[9] Some rare exceptions to the lack of empirical work on this topic include Olberding (2002; 2009), who has examined the outcomes of one type of regional network, economic development partnerships, and the work of Boyne (1992), which discredits the notion that consolidated governments are associated with lower costs than fragmented local governments.

[10] The six types of intergovernmental arrangements identified by Wood (2006) include: contracting out to a nongovernmental entity in association with other public entities; joint provision of a service with one or more other public entities; contracting out to another public entity; service provided to a jurisdiction's residents by another public entity; providing a service to the residents of another jurisdiction; and partnering with a regional council for a service. LeRoux and Carr (2007) provide just three types of ILA: intergovernmental service contracts; joint service agreements, and intergovernmental service transfers.

Wood 2002; LeRoux & Carr 2007; Parks & Oakerson 2000). One type of regional governance network—the metropolitan planning organization (MPO)—was promoted by the federal government, through transportation legislation, to coordinate transportation planning at the regional level (Vogel & Nezelkewicz 2002). Roughly half of all MPOs operate within a broader regional council within the same geographic area, according to the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)[11]. Other types of regional councils, such as councils of governments (COGs) also provide coordination for numerous local government functions, though the effectiveness of such councils is dependent on local government representatives being willing to enact local policies aligned with the regional goals (Visser 2004)[12].

More than a decade ago, O'Toole (1997) recognized that network governance was becoming more complex, and predicted that trend was likely to continue. Within the issue of network governance, Weber and Khandemian (2008) recognize the particular challenge of knowledge transfer across network participants in resolving "wicked" or complex problems that cross boundaries. Inter-jurisdictional cooperation is an example of networks of public management actors seeking to work together across boundaries, according to Thurmaier and Wood (2002, 585). ILAs "represent one alternative for managing multijurisdictional problems" (LeRoux, Brandenburger & Pandey 2010, 268). They are a "potential endogenous solution to fragmentation and the collective action problems that cities face in the provision of public service" (Kwon & Feiock 2010, 882).

Many types of interlocal cooperative agreements can be formed between two or more municipalities in order to leverage purchasing power, to plan for mutual aid, or to

[11] NARC website, retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://narc.org/
[12] Warm (2011) also focuses on the importance of leadership in overcoming barriers to cooperation.

contract with a service provider—be it a private firm or a public sector entity that has a comparative advantage in the production of a given service. Thurmaier and Wood (2002) assert that most cities and counties are engaged in at least one ILA.

Parks and Oakerson (2000) point out that the provision of public goods happens through a fragmented system of "nested" local governments, and many alternative forms of the production of those same goods exist. They focus particular attention on the scale of the service in question, arguing not only that the scale of a good should match its provision unit, but also that, "provision units and production units can be linked in various ways," including through interlocal cooperative agreements (171).

1.4: Motivations for Engaging in ILAs

Many motivations for participating in ILAs have appeared in the academic literature. These include cost savings or a desire to achieve economies of scale, the influence of fiscal stress, changing circumstances that reduce the capacity of any single jurisdiction to respond to public expectations, flexibility, the presence of a policy entrepreneur, the presence of administrative (rather than political) local leadership, and perhaps most importantly the influence of a social network of neighboring jurisdictions characterized by trust and long-standing relationships. This social networks explanation is central to the theory underlying much of the recent work on interlocal cooperation.

According to Thurmaier and Wood (2002), cost savings is one of the foremost reasons cited for entering into an ILA. Fiscal stress, or perceived fiscal stress, is recognized as a motivation for collaborative partnerships between jurisdictions (Cigler 1999; Olberding 2002). As conditions at the local government level change, particularly fiscal conditions, ILAs have become an increasingly common tool for delivering services

(LeRoux & Carr 2007; Kwon & Feiock 2010). In their two-stage model of ILA formation, Kwon & Feiock (2010) identified a statistically significant inverse relationship between own-source revenue and consideration of ILA, as well as a correlation between population decline and the likelihood of considering ILA as an option for service delivery[13]. This finding supports the notion that jurisdictions facing fiscal pressure may be inclined to consider the option of cross-boundary cooperation[14].

Frederickson (1999) argued that the capacity of public administrators to manage "complex social and economic issues has eroded significantly" (703). He placed the American metropolitan region at the center of his argument about the "disarticulated state," which he related to "the declining salience of jurisdiction [and] the fuzziness of borders" (707). This "fuzziness" of borders is particularly relevant in regard to issues that have the potential for spillovers or externalities. Such issues may be addressed through interlocal cooperation.

Interlocal agreements provide flexibility to respond to changing circumstances, as well as being relatively easier to develop and implement than more formal regional strategies such as structural city-county consolidations (Kwon & Feiock 2010; Wood 2006; LeRoux & Carr 2007; Stephens & Wilkstrom 2000; Parks & Oakerson 2000; Rosentraub & al-Habil 2009). The greater political feasibility of these alternatives to "massive jurisdictional consolidation" likely accounts for the increased focus on functional interlocal responses to service delivery (Parks & Oakerson 2000, 169).

---

[13] They used ICMA's survey Reinventing Government: Implementation at the Local Level, 2003.

[14] The second stage of the Kwon & Feiock (2010) model was the actual formation of an agreement, which they conceptualized as being a function of negotiation, political institutions, and the networks within with they are situated.

Note: Kwon & Feiock (2010) conceptualized the number of local governments in the county as a factor in ILA consideration, however this student argues their hypothesis (of a negative correlation) is flawed, because many ILAs occur between just a couple of neighboring jurisdictions, rather than county-wide.

Additional factors identified as influencing the development of ILAs are the presence of one or more policy "entrepreneurs" (Cigler 1999), and administrative leadership (Morgan & Hirlinger 1991). Conversely, the fear of losing control over the delivery of local services reduces the likelihood that local public administrators will enter into interlocal service contracts (Morgan & Hirlinger 1991).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, trust between jurisdictions, along with a sense of shared destiny (Cigler 1999), is recognized as a necessary precondition for the development of ILAs (Thurmaier & Wood 2002; Wood 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger, & Pandey 2010; Feiock 2005). As long ago as Wilkes (1975), scholars had identified the importance of trust, or a tradition of cooperation, as facilitating ILA participation. The concept of "cooperative norms—or the extent to which parties usually act in a collaborative or coordinated manner" (Olberding 2002, 482) has become embedded in much of both the theoretical and empirical work on inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

Cigler (1999) conceptualized a continuum of partnerships, leading from networking partnerships to cooperative, then coordinating, and finally collaborative partnerships. Similarly, Thurmaier and Wood (2004) categorize ILA into three levels: communication, coordination and collaboration. "First, communication-level activity is important for building trust between officials in different jurisdictions, and this in turn results in an increased likelihood of higher levels of intergovernmental relations such as coordination and collaboration" (Thurmaier & Wood 2004, 123).

Parks and Oakerson (2000) agree that the networks formed through participation in professional and voluntary associations "provide forums for raising and discussing issues as well as negotiating and resolving differences related not only to broad questions

of governance but also to operational relationships among local government agencies" (175). Indeed, Wood (2006) reports that in the Kansas City region, interlocal cooperative agreements are the "preferred structure" of metropolitan governance, partly due to the network connections local leaders form with one another through their participation in the area's regional council of governments, MARC. Likewise, LeRoux, Brandenburger and Pandey (2010) found that face-to-face interactions between local decision makers facilitated interlocal cooperation for service delivery.

However, LeRoux and Carr (2007) found that participation in regional policy and planning networks did not predict participation in interlocal cooperation in four service categories they tested using data from local governments in Michigan. Further, LeRoux (2008) demonstrated that, at least in the Detroit metropolitan region, participation in alternative "nonprofit community conferences," smaller than most regional COGs, was more closely related to the use of ILAs than participation in COGs, in five service categories. She cautions that generalizing these findings could be problematic, in part because of legislation in Michigan meant to encourage ILA formation.

LeRoux's work illuminated an additional aspect of participating in interlocal agreements—that of proximity. For at least some types of services, adjacent borders are a statistically significant predictor of whether jurisdictions engage in interlocal cooperation for service delivery (LeRoux 2008). This suggests that interlocal agreements might be better suited for small-scale service delivery than for addressing larger, regional concerns.

Complicating attempts to empirically test whether COG participation is a factor in the development of ILAs (or any form of regional problem solving) is the high level of

variability among COGs. COGs take many different forms, and other organizations not technically defined as COGs could play a similar role in facilitating interlocal cooperation, as LeRoux (2008) demonstrates using nonprofit community conferences. Additionally, county-wide mayors' and managers' associations or other less formal social networks could produce similar results in terms of interlocal cooperation, but without being accounted for in empirical analyses that only focus on formal COG participation.

Further complicating matters, some states determine precisely which local jurisdictions should form regional councils, in an attempt to promote cooperation. However simply complying through membership does not necessarily mean that a given jurisdiction is vested in the activities or initiatives of that regional council. The potentially vital role of regional councils calls for a closer examination of these organizations, their work, and the role they may play in facilitating interlocal cooperation. Empirical work on regional councils is not fully addressed in the scholarly literature.

The minimal knowledge about current regional councils across the United States presents a unique research opportunity. Though scholars have identified participation in regional councils as a factor in the development of interlocal cooperation, at least in some instances, the variations in regional councils and the laws that govern them remain to be studied.

Do regional councils facilitate cooperation between their members? If so, in what ways? Are they involved with doing so for both small-scale and large-scale/regional issues? Do state laws make a difference in whether, or how, regional councils work to

generate cooperation between their member jurisdictions? Does the type of state legislation matter?

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

This study serves to advance knowledge about the influence of state laws on regional councils and their role in inter-jurisdictional cooperation between local governments. The importance of interlocal cooperation stems from the desire to solve regional problems, find efficiencies and cost savings, improve effectiveness and performance, provide services in a more agile or flexible manner, and in some cases even to share risk across jurisdictions. Cooperation occurs when local government actors recognize a shared interest and attempt to work together to solve problems that affect two or more entities. Local governments have both incentives and disincentives to cooperate, and will only do so if the transaction costs of establishing working relationships do not exceed the expected benefits of cooperation (Kwon & Feiock 2010). Regional councils are organizations that work to bring together individual jurisdictions. What work do regional councils perform that might facilitate the decisions to cooperate? And does the type of state legislation affect the work of regional councils, on average?

A regional council that is established by its members, rather than by a top-down state mandate, is itself an interlocal agreement. From one theoretical perspective, one might expect that such a council will actively promote cooperation between its members for the delivery of services that exceed the scale of individual jurisdictions. Such a council exists because its members are aware that certain issues faced by each member affect the region as a whole. Beyond this realization is the *action* of establishing a

council, which indicates it takes seriously the potential for communication, at the very least, and possibly cooperation or coordination of efforts as well (Ostrom 1990).

From a different perspective, as Olson (1965) put forth, collective action in large groups may not occur if the parties are not encouraged or required ("coerced") to participate. If following this theoretical perspective, one might expect regional councils that are prescribed by legislation to be more involved in the development of interlocal cooperation and addressing regional issues than those organizations that are purely voluntary.

2.1: Types of Regional Networks

Scholars have identified regional councils, such as COGs and MPOs, as potentially facilitating inter-jurisdictional cooperation and the development of ILAs. Currently, no organization maintains a single complete list of regional councils. The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) has the most comprehensive list of organizations to date[15]. NARC serves as "a national voice for regionalism by advocating for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities and issues[16]." NARC's list includes region-wide COGs, associations of local governments (AOGs), regional planning and development agencies (RPDs), and MPOs. Additionally, the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) also maintain lists of regional councils currently operating within the United States. Numerous labels are applied to regional councils, however they each fall into one

[15] NARC's list contains 715 organizations, however some of these are actually county planning departments, rather than regional councils.
[16] According to the NARC website: www.narc.org

of three broad categories: COGs; MPOs; and "Super-COGs," which include an MPO within a broader COG organization (Leland & Whisman 2012).

2.2: Preliminary Research

In August and September of 2011, I communicated with executive directors of several regional councils across the United States. The organizations I contacted were selected through a web-based search of regional councils of government. At that point in time, I did not establish strict criteria for selection, as I was simply conducting a scan of regional councils. Of the nine directors I contacted, eight responded with information regarding the operation and formation of their organizations. The most commonly cited work conducted by these councils pertained to joint purchasing cooperatives, solid waste management, emergency response or emergency operations centers, hazardous materials response, and public transit. One regional council director reported that some of the members were involved in a purchasing cooperative, but that it had been developed through the work of local leaders without the assistance of the regional council[17].

The regional organizations in my initial research reported being involved with cross-jurisdictional programs in categories including local government business services, public works, transportation, workforce and economic development, and emergency management. Specific examples of the regional councils' activities within local government business services include employee assistance, drug testing, and IT and GIS functions. Within public works, examples include stormwater education, solid waste management, joint purchasing of goods ranging from rock salt to fire trucks, and animal control. Within the area of transportation, directors cited interlocal planning efforts,

[17] This provides evidence, as Thurmaier and Wood (2002) suggested, that social networks among local leaders can lead to cooperative behavior.

regional traffic teams, public transit, and "alternative" transportation efforts, as well as trail maintenance. Economic development efforts included workforce development programs and other economic development or marketing services. Emergency management, as a common category of cooperation, includes operation and call centers as well as hazardous materials response.

Most of the regional council directors who provided information noted that their membership consisted of elected officials from area local governments. Voting on issues or initiatives was generally not weighted, however in a couple of cases the regional councils have a system for more heavily weighting the votes that correspond to communities with larger populations.

2.3: State Laws and Regional Councils: Enabling Legislation and Prescriptive Legislation

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 drew national attention to cooperation, both between jurisdictions and across various levels of government[18]. Most states across the U.S. enacted laws affecting interlocal cooperation at the local level, within a few years of the national legislation. Such legislation affected the activities of the regional councils within each given state. Though a handful of regional planning or service delivery organizations existed prior to the passage of such laws, many regional councils formed in direct response to state statutes[19].

My initial research of state legislation focused on whether or not enabling legislation existed at the state level. However, as I began researching state laws regarding regional councils and cooperation between local governments (in the spring of 2012), I

[18] This followed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, which established Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to coordinate transportation planning in areas with at least 50,000 residents.
[19] MPOs also formed as a response to legislation, particularly federal transportation requirements rather than state laws. According to NARC, roughly half of the MPOs in the United States are embedded within a broader COG.

observed a fact that became fundamental to this study's research design[20]. Not only do most states have legislation pertaining to regional councils, such laws fall into one of two distinct categories. Some states have laws that are truly "enabling," in the sense that they allow or enable local governments to establish regional councils as they see fit. Other states have what I will refer to as "prescriptive" legislation, meaning that a state has determined that regional councils shall exist and has detailed exactly how those councils will operate, often indicating exactly which local governments will be grouped together into regional councils.

The difference in the two types of state legislation has not been observed or noted in the literature to date. However, this may be an important distinction, because it indicates the level of involvement of the state. Therefore the type of state legislation serves as an independent variable for this study.

Arkansas legislation provides an example of *enabling* legislation. An excerpt of the law reads[21]: "Any two (2) or more cities of the first class, cities of the second class, incorporated towns, or counties, or other civil subdivisions having adjoining planning jurisdictions, or any counties and cities adjacent to or within the county may jointly cooperate in the exercise and performance of planning powers, duties, and functions as provided by state law for cities and counties." Without spelling out exactly how such cooperation might take place, or drawing boundaries for regions within the state, the

[20] The methodology entailed identifying state statutes through searches of each state's legislative websites, and in some cases external sites such as http://law.justia.com/ and http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/ when an individual state's website did not contain the necessary information.

[21] 2010 Arkansas Code, Title 14 - Local Government, Subtitle 2 - County Government, Chapter 17 - County Planning, Subchapter 3 - Metropolitan or Regional Planning Commissions, § 14-17-302 - Authority generally. Retrieved from: http://law.justia.com/codes/arkansas/2010/title-14/subtitle-2/chapter-17/subchapter-3/14-17-302/

language gives local governments the authority to choose how to arrange and implement agreements and organizations with nearby jurisdictions.

One example of *prescriptive* legislation is provided by Virginia's Regional Cooperation Act. The law first explains that it is intended, "To improve public health, safety, convenience and welfare, and to provide for the social, economic and physical development of communities and metropolitan areas of the Commonwealth on a sound and orderly basis, within a governmental framework and economic environment which will foster constructive growth and efficient administration." It further states that in order to accomplish this goal of orderly development, "'Commission' means a planning district commission. Planning district commissions are composed of the duly appointed representatives of the localities which are parties to the charter agreement. 'Planning district' means a contiguous area within the boundaries established by the Department of Housing and Community Development."[22] The law continues defining exactly how the regional councils will be formed and governed—in other words, prescribing the structure and function of the councils.

Additional clues to the type of state legislation are available from the organizations that serve, in some states, as state associations of regional councils. Some state association websites include maps of the regional councils within a particular state. Maps of regional councils will take one of two forms. The regional councils may cover the entire state, indicating prescriptive legislation at the state level. Or the regional councils will cover portions of the state, leaving other areas without a regional council,

[22] Code of Virginia, § 15.2-4200. Regional Cooperation Act. Retrieved from: http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+15.2-4200

indicating that councils have formed from the ground up. Virginia's map (Figure 1) shows the regional councils and commissions neatly covering the entire state.

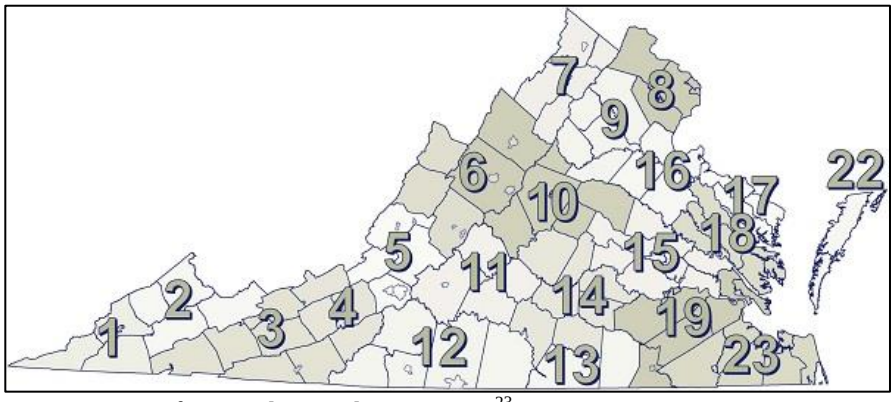

Figure 1: Map of regional councils in Virginia[23]

Similarly, Texas Association of Regional Councils provides a map of the regional councils in Texas, showing that they cover the entire state of Texas (Figure 2). This confirms that the legislation in Texas is of the *prescriptive* type, consistent with the wording of Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 391: Regional Planning Commissions. This codes states that regional councils must be organized in a manner "consistent with the geographic boundaries for state planning regions or subregions that are delineated by the governor and that are subject to review and change at the end of each state biennium." It further defines a regional commission as a "political subdivision of the state[24]."

[23] Retrieved from Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions website: http://vapdc.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=21
[24] Retrieved from http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.391.htm

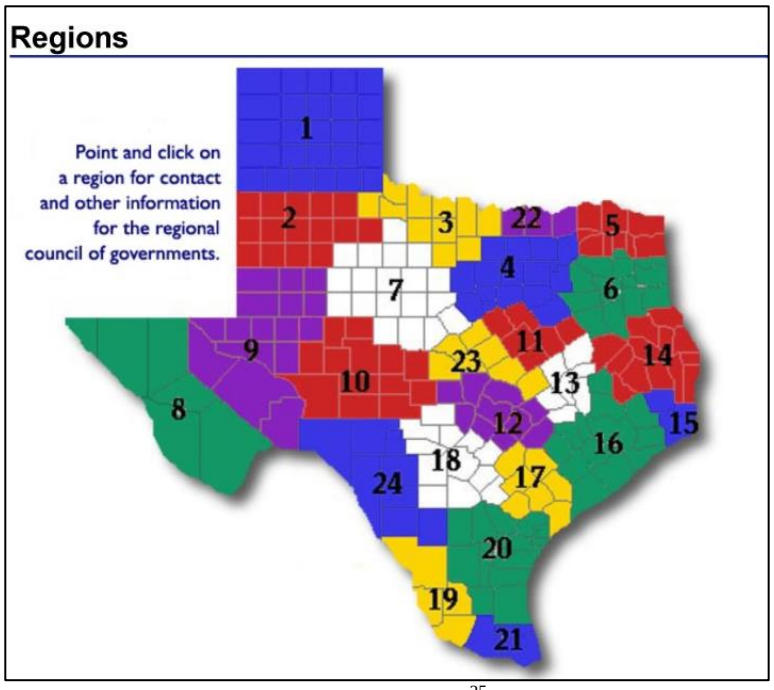

Figure 2: Map of regional councils in Texas[25]

On the other hand, state associations of regional councils in states with enabling legislation provide maps that are distinctly different from those with prescriptive legislation. New York State Association of Regional Councils operates in a state with enabling legislation, and the map the association displays on its website shows regional councils that do not cover the entire state (Figure 3).

[25] Retrieved from Texas Association of Regional Councils website: http://www.txregionalcouncil.org/display.php?page=regions_map.php

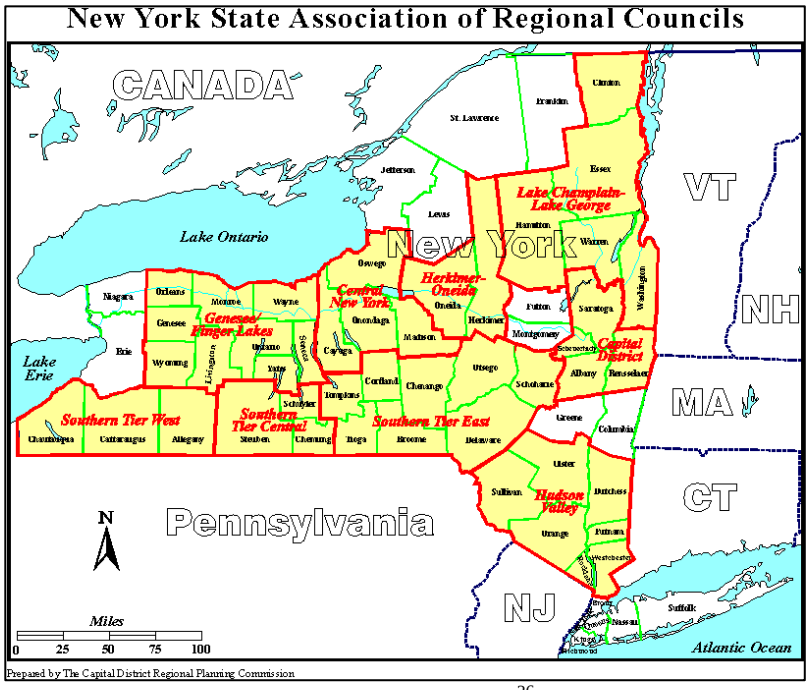

Figure 3. Map of regional councils in New York[26]

Unlike states in which the state government defines each region and details the area of each COG, planning and development district, or similar regional council organization, states with *enabling* legislation permit local governments to work with nearby jurisdictions to create regional councils in the manner they deem appropriate. According to New York State Association of Regional Councils, 45 of the state's 62 counties belong to a regional council.

Forty-four of the fifty states have some type of blanket legislation regarding regional councils or regional cooperation. Of those, 17 have enabling legislation (34 percent of states), while 27 have prescriptive legislation (54 percent of states). I have designed this project to illuminate whether these differences in legislation at the state

[26] Retrieved from New York State Association of Regional Councils website: http://www.cdrpc.org/nysarc.gif

level have an influence on the functioning of regional councils. (See Appendix C for a table displaying the type of legislation, by state.)

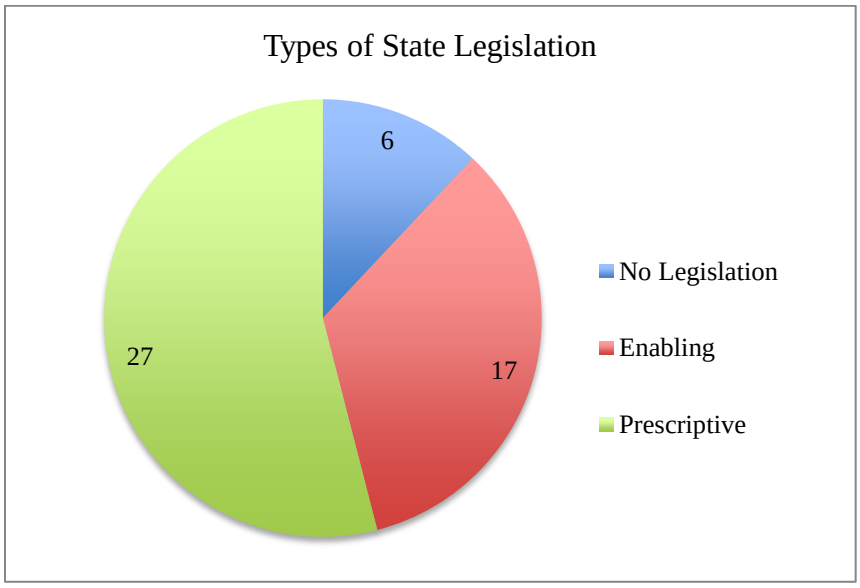

Figure 4: Type of blanket state legislation related to regional cooperation

Some patterns emerge by region, and this section will detail that landscape (Figure 5). In the Northeast region[27] of the United States, Connecticut was the earliest to enact legislation focused on regional coordination, with its 1959 law forming 15 regions. Most states in the Northeast passed legislation regarding regional councils in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The last to do so was Maine in 1987. The only state in the Northeast without a state law regarding regional councils is Rhode Island, presumably on account of its small size. In the Northeast the number of state-formed regional councils varies from New Jersey's single regional planning board, established in 1975, to Pennsylvania's 96 Councils of Government.

[27]I followed the U.S. Census Bureau definitions to categorize the states into four regions: Northeast, South, Midwest, and West.

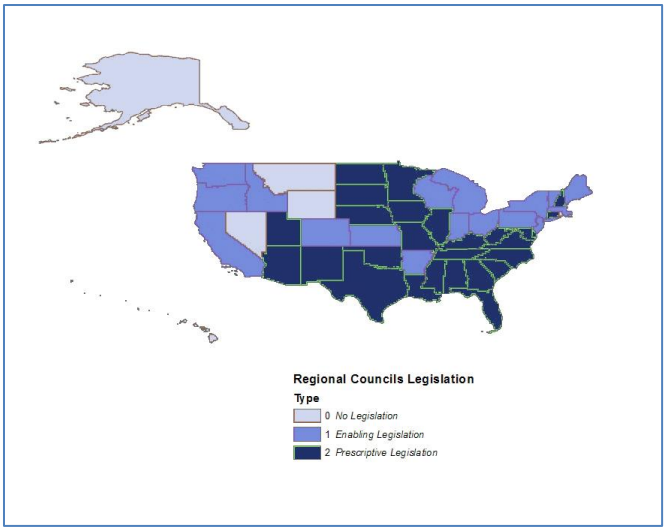

Figure 5. Types of legislation by state. Map Credit: Reid Wodicka

State laws related to regional councils are also common in the Southern United States. All sixteen of the Southern states have blanket legislation pertaining to regional councils, with prescriptive legislation being the predominant form in the South. Alabama enacted a law in 1935, providing for the establishment of regional councils. Later laws further defined the roles of those regional councils, and in 1985 an Alabama state law ratified the existing 12 regional planning commissions as the state's official regional councils[28].

Examples of regional councils organized through prescriptive legislation are prevalent throughout the Southern states. Texas has 24 regional councils, North Carolina has 16, Georgia has 12 regional commissions, South Carolina has ten councils of government, Virginia has 21 planning district commissions, Kentucky has 15 area development districts, Tennessee has nine development districts, and Louisiana has eight regional planning and development districts. Like the Northeast United States, most of

[28] According to the Alabama Archives, see http://www.archives.alabama.gov/officials/rdas/local/regplanrda09.pdf

the Southern states enacted laws establishing regional councils in the 1960s and early 1970s. With the exception of Alabama, Delaware is the earliest example within this region, with a law passed in 1953. However, because it is a comparatively small state, it has just one regional planning commission, which was organized by that legislation[29].

Regional councils formed by state legislation are also common in the Midwest Census region. Like the South, all of those 12 states have some type of state law regarding regional councils. Illinois was the earliest, adopting a law in 1929, the oldest such law this research has identified, that allowed for the formation of regional planning commissions. Other states followed, with Michigan adopting its Regional Planning Act of 1945, and Wisconsin allowing the establishment of regional planning commissions in 1956. Later adopters in the Midwest are as recent as 1992, when Nebraska established eight development districts, and Kansas authorized the establishment of joint planning commissions.

The region of the United States least likely to have legislation establishing or enabling the formation of regional councils is the West. I did not identify legislation related to regional councils in Montana, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, or Hawaii. While Hawaii is likely too small to require much in the way of regional planning, the other states are geographically sizable. One possible explanation for the absence of regional councils in those states is the size of counties. Counties in the Eastern and Midwestern portions of the United States are quite small, while the counties in the Western states are much larger by comparison. Counties located in the West might more closely represent regions because of their size than the smaller counties of the East, perhaps reducing the

[29]In addition, Delaware has two MPOs.

perceived necessity of states adding an additional layer of governance through the formation of regional councils.

Though it is challenging to trace the history of regional councils, particularly considering many of them were formed decades ago, evidence suggests that at least some regional councils were established prior to blanket state legislation establishing or enabling them. One such example is the Cowlitz Regional Planning Commission, established in Washington state in 1961. After the state passed blanket legislation in 1965[30], the commission was reorganized and renamed Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments.

2.4: Intended Contributions

Existing scholarly work tends to mention state laws regarding regional governance as a footnote, if at all. Further, the differences between regional councils in states with enabling legislation, as opposed to prescriptive legislation, have not been explored. Even a basic understanding of what councils of government do, how they are structured, and their priorities, is lacking in the literature. Wolf and Bryan (2009) provide a broad description of COG capacity, and COG membership has been used as a dummy variable in models meant to predict ILA participation by local governments (LeRoux 2008; LeRoux & Carr 2007; LeRoux, Brandenburg & Pandy 2010), however nothing approaching what this study examines has been conducted since Bowman & Franke (1984) conducted a survey of regional council directors in 1981.

This research seeks to provide a broad base of information on regional councils of government across the United States. Simple as this goal may be, those data will vastly improve the current understanding of this topic. Beyond that basic knowledge, this study

[30] Revised Code of Washington (RCW) chapter 36.64.080

contributes to scholarly knowledge by moving beyond descriptive inference to an understanding of the role of state laws in shaping regional councils and the particular services they offer to their members. This research also provides some insight into the perceptions of COG leaders regarding the services they provide. This information is valuable to the field of public administration because it improves an understanding of attempts to facilitate cooperation in the pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and equity, and in terms of urban policy for its implications for flexibility and problem solving. This research fits into a broader picture of interlocal cooperation and regional governance. Ultimately, this information may be of use to COG staff, local government leaders, state and federal level policymakers seeking to promote communication and collaboration between jurisdictions, and scholars.

The collection of data for this research is, in its own right, a contribution to this field of study. A complete list of currently operating regional councils, though a snapshot in time, does not exist elsewhere. Likewise, data regarding blanket state laws related to regional governance are not readily available. Finally, the data collected from regional councils themselves will paint a picture of their operation, on average, that has not been clearly drawn in recent years. This study seeks to provide all three of these items in one comprehensive attempt to better understand the work of these potentially important organizations.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1: Research Questions and Unit of Analysis

This project builds upon the existing scholarly literature addressing interlocal cooperation and regional governance. Regional councils were identified by Thurmaier and Wood (2002) as potentially facilitating the development of cooperative arrangements between local government leaders. Since then, membership in a regional council has been included as an independent variable in numerous studies examining interlocal agreements (for example, LeRoux & Carr 2007; Kwon & Feiock 2010). However, regional councils themselves have largely been neglected in terms of scholarly attention in recent years.

The regional council organization is the unit of analysis in this study. This research first seeks to understand the work of regional councils, on average, across the United States. Specifically: do these organizations facilitate cooperation among their members? And if so, are they involved in both small-scale and large-scale interlocal arrangements?

Further, as state laws either enabled or prescribed the formation of regional councils and the manner in which they are organized, this project asks whether the differences in blanket state laws (enabling legislation vs. prescriptive legislation) influence the behavior of the organization or the perception of the regional council director.

3.2: Data about State Laws

The presence of enabling legislation or prescriptive legislation, at the state level, is the primary independent variable in this study. In my preliminary research, I noticed that regional council staff and directors commonly consider their organizations to be voluntary, even if the state in which they operate has a prescriptive blanket law requiring jurisdictions within specified boundaries to be members of a particular regional council. For the sake of accuracy and consistency, I coded each state based on its actual laws, rather than relying on the perception of an organization director as to the voluntary or mandatory nature of member participation. This process entailed searching for legislation within each state related to regional councils, their formation, and requirements for participation (see Chapter 2, footnote 20). Once I had a complete list of the type of legislation for each state, I merged those codes with the survey data (described in the following section) to create a variable for each survey response that indicates the type of state legislation under which each organization operates.

3.3: Survey of Regional Council Directors

The information provided during the initial scan of regional councils[31] forms the structure upon which this project is built. The next phase involved identifying all of the regional councils in the United States and compiling as comprehensive a list as possible, in order to administer a survey of the organizations' directors. This goal proved challenging, as no national organization maintains a list of all regional councils. The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) provides a list of 714 Councils of

[31] I interviewed the Executive Directors of nine regional councils across the United States in 2011. See chapter two for more details.

Government, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and other regional councils,[32] which was used as the basis for compiling an accurate and current contact list of the directors of regional councils operating in the United States. The NARC list was supplemented by similar lists from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). Some of the members of the three national organizations are not actually regional councils, but are county planning agencies or other local government organizations. Those were excluded from the final list, with the exception of those that operate an MPO from within a public agency. Regional councils that no longer operate were removed. Additionally, a limited number of regional councils that were not included on one of these three organizations' lists were found through web searches and added to the compiled list. The resulting list forms the population of 695 regional councils.

I administered the survey that provides the data for this analysis to the executive directors of the population of regional councils throughout the United States. The reason I selected executive directors is to draw upon their expertise regarding the day-to-day work of regional councils. Therefore, the sampling frame is the population of executive directors of regional council organizations operating in the United States.

During the fall of 2012, web searches were used to collect email addresses for the executive directors of each of the regional councils on my compiled list. The survey tool, which was based on information gathered through interviews of executive directors conducted the previously year, was refined concurrently.

The survey asked questions about the leaders' perceptions of the willingness of local government representatives and other organization members to work together, the

[32] Available on NARC's website, http://narc.org/resource-center/cogs-mpos/listing-of-cogs-and-mpos/

types of interlocal agreements they facilitate (if any), the frequency of meetings and whether the organizations offer incentives to participate, the presence and structure of fees where applicable, and any resistance the directors observe to members working together. Refining the exact wording of the questions began in 2011 through the preliminary research. Pretesting involved vetting the questions through interviews and conversations with individuals working in regional councils. Finally the survey tool was piloted with the help of several volunteers from the academic community, local government, and regional councils in December, 2012 and January, 2013. The complete survey instrument is in Appendix A.

On January 29, 2013, the UNCC Survey of Regional Council Directors was sent electronically to each of the 685 individuals for whom email addresses were available, using the web-based survey software Surveyshare. An additional ten paper surveys were mailed to regional council directors whose email addresses were not available. In all, 695 survey invitations were sent.

3.4: Response Rate

The survey closed on March 8, 2013, with 197 respondents to the web-based survey. One paper survey was completed and returned by U.S. mail. The response rate was 28.5 percent, based on the 695 invitations to the population of executive directors. In order to provide context to this response rate, I looked to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), which conducts surveys on a regular basis related to public administration and local government. The ICMA 2012 State of the Profession Survey sent to city and county governments received a response of 24 percent[33]. The

[33]http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/305096/ICMA_2012_State_of_the_Profession_Survey_Results

ICMA Police and Fire Personnel, Salaries, and Expenditures, 2012 survey, sent to city-type local governments with 10,000 or greater population, received responses from 35 percent[34]. The Local Government Employee Health Insurance Programs, 2011, administered to municipalities and counties over 10,000 population, had a response rate for cities of 30 percent and for counties 20 percent, with an overall response rate of 26 percent[35]. The response rate for this study of 28.5 percent is within the expected range for surveys with similar target respondents conducted by a well respected organization.

3.5: Non-Response Bias

The primary independent variable is the type of state legislation, with three possible alternatives: no legislation[36], enabling legislation, or prescriptive legislation. While compiling the list of regional council directors and their contact information, I also collected information on the state in which each regional council operates. This allowed me to examine the population of regional councils, and the percentage of the population governed by each type of state legislation. I then compared this to the sample, and the percentage of each type of state legislation for those who responded, to ensure that no significant difference exists between the population and the survey sample, based on the primary independent variable. (See Figure 6.) Because I did not have data for the population on the values for dependent variables of the models tested in the analyses outlined in the remainder of this chapter, I could not conduct a similar check of dependent variables.

---

[34]http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/304841/ICMA_2012_Police_and_Fire_Personnel_and_Expenditures_Survey_Summary

[35]http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/303133/ICMA_2011_Local_Government_Employee_Health_Care_Survey_Summary_Results

[36] Only three organizations responding to the survey operate in states with no blanket legislation regarding regional councils. Therefore, only the type of legislation—either enabling or prescriptive—was examined during the statistical analysis of the survey data.

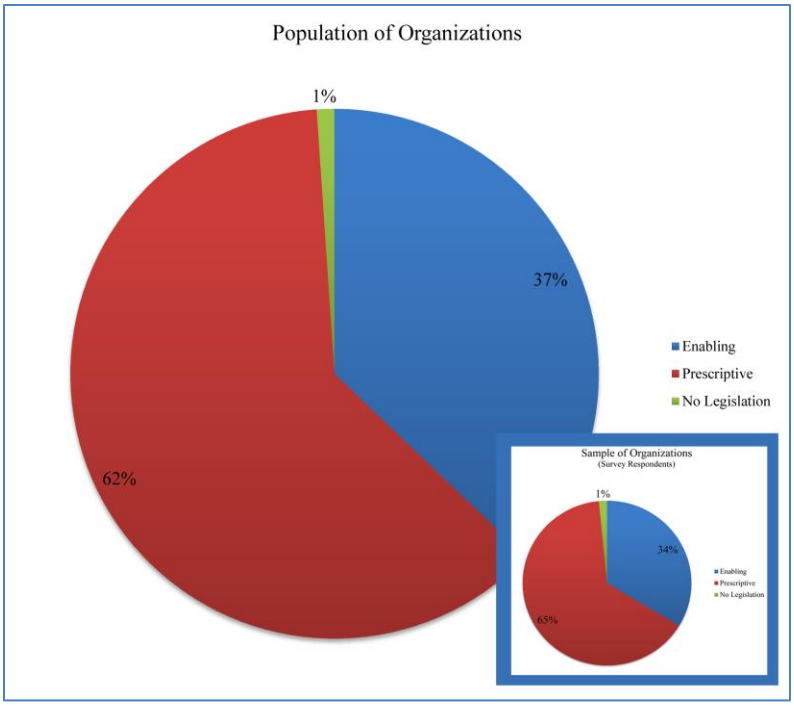

Figure 6. Comparison of population to sample for potential response bias

One percent of the regional council organizations in the United States operate in states with no identifiable legislation related to regional councils. The percentage of organizations in the survey sample is the same. Organizations in states with enabling legislation make up approximately 37% of the population, while comprising 34% of the sample. The remaining 62% of organizations in the population operate in states with prescriptive legislation; in the sample, organizations under prescriptive legislation comprise 65%. Further analysis using a one-sample t-test revealed that these differences are not statistically significant. This methodology aligns with the recommendations of Bryman & Cramer (2009); Sorensen (2006); and Columbia CNMTL (2002).

3.6: Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical concepts related to regional government and governance, this research tests the following hypotheses. In addition to listing the hypotheses, the

causal mechanisms and the questions used to operationalize each variable are discussed in this section.

H_1: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to foster frequent face-to-face interaction between leaders in member jurisdictions, than those in states with enabling legislation.

The frequency of interaction between local leaders is used as a proxy for working together. This assumes that leaders from different jurisdictions that have a culture of meeting together on a regular basis are forging relationships, a shared sense of purpose, and the trust required to work together on issues that affect more than one jurisdiction (Thurmaier & Wood 2002). Research has indicated that face-to-face interaction is a precursor for substantive cooperation such as interlocal agreements (Wood, 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger and Pandey 2010). This face-to-face interaction should logically lead to the building of trust and therefore cooperation. Does one type of blanket state law more effectively generate interaction between regional council members? The Olson philosophy would support this hypothesis, as "coercion" would be seen as necessary in order to overcome the resistance to collective action in large groups. Elinor Ostrom would argue that it is possible to achieve collective action without state coercion, but only under specific circumstances. Therefore, I have stated the first hypothesis with the theoretical expectation that prescriptive legislation from the state will positively influence the frequency of interaction between regional council members. Two different survey questions asked respondents about the frequency of meeting—one that is purely objective and another that reflects the perception of executive directors.

The survey asked respondents, “How often does your organization hold meetings at which members meet in person?” The response choices included never, annually, quarterly, monthly, and weekly. These responses form a categorical dependent variable, which will serve as the dependent variable in an ordinal logistic regression model, with the following codes: never = 0; annually = 1; quarterly = 2; bimonthly (anything between monthly and quarterly) = 3; monthly = 4; and weekly =5.

In addition to the primary analysis, data were collected regarding whether or not incentives are offered to members for attending formal meetings, and whether disincentives or consequences exist for members who do not attend. These data allow for supplemental descriptive analysis.

Directors were also asked to rate this statement on a scale of one to ten (with one meaning “do not agree” and ten meaning “strongly agree”): “This organization is able to effectively facilitate face-to-face interactions between leaders in member jurisdictions.” This provides additional analysis, from the perspective of directors, regarding the effectiveness of face-to-face interactions among members, and allows for triangulation with the first question regarding meeting frequency. These responses provide the data for the dependent variable of a second ordinal logistic regression model.

H_2: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to assist member jurisdictions in the development of interlocal agreements, than those in states with enabling legislation.

Does the type of state legislation have an influence on whether or not regional councils play a role in the development of ILAs? Depending on which theoretical perspective is embraced, one could expect either a greater or lesser degree of involvement

on the part of regional councils, based on the type of blanket state law. For the purpose of this study, I have stated the hypothesis with the expectation that prescriptive legislation increases the likelihood of regional councils being involved with interlocal agreements, building on the causal mechanism outlined above in regard to the first hypothesis. If we assume that regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are likely to meet more frequently than those in states with enabling legislation, we might further expect those organizations to be more likely to facilitate formal interlocal agreements among their members.

Executive directors responded to the question, "Does your organization assist member jurisdictions with forming, implementing and/or maintaining interlocal agreements?" The dichotomous responses will form the dependent variable in logistic regression analysis. Respondents were also encouraged to provide any details they wished to share in an open-ended response, which is the basis for supplemental qualitative analysis.

H_3: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to report large-scale interlocal agreements, than those in states with enabling legislation.

Respondents were also asked about the number of jurisdictions that participate in the "typical" interlocal agreement among their members. According to LeRoux (2008), adjacent borders are a statistically significant predictor of whether jurisdictions engage in interlocal cooperation for service delivery. Based on that earlier finding, I anticipate that much of the interlocal cooperation reported by regional councils involves only a small number of jurisdictions, rather than being truly regional in nature[37]. This hypothesis seeks

[37] Transportation is a possible exception to this expectation, as MPOs are specifically designed to coordinate regional transportation planning, with incentives tied to federal funding.

to further examine whether state legislation influences the scale of interlocal agreements brokered through regional councils.

The responses to this question will form the dependent variable in an ordinal logistic regression model. Rather than require respondents to guess at an exact number as an average, and anticipating that would reduce the number of valid responses received, I provided ranges from which respondents could select. The coding of the variable is as follows: 1 to 3 = 1; 4 to 6 = 2; 7 to 10 = 3; 10 to 14 = 4; 15 to 19 = 5; 20 to 24 = 6; 25 to 29 = 7; 30 or more = 8.

H_4: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely (than those in states with enabling legislation) to report cooperative attitudes among members.

Substantive cooperation must be preceded by a willingness to cooperate. Research has established that trust, or the presence of cooperative norms, is a precondition for the development of interjurisdictional cooperation (Cigler 1999; Thurmaier & Wood 2002; Wood 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger, & Pandey 2010; Feiock 2005; Olberding 2002). The fourth hypothesis is stated in this manner with the assumption that prescriptive legislation leads to a "culture" of cooperation. This is, in part, related to the causal mechanism described with the first hypothesis. Those organizations in which members are required to interact with fellow members may, over time, develop a culture of shared norms and cooperative attitudes.

The survey sought two responses to provide data for this analysis. Both are statements with a one-to-ten scale of agreement (where one means "do not agree" and ten equals "strongly agree"): "Members in this organization believe that working together can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes," and "Members in this organization have

competitive attitudes or rivalries that get in the way of working together." The first is a positive statement that indicates cooperative attitudes; the second is stated in the reverse with competition representing an impediment to cooperation. The responses form the dependent variables for two separate models to be tested using ordinal logistic regression.

3.7: Additional Variables

Regional councils that have a long history of operation will likely have developed a culture of shared interests, in which trust and norms of cooperation have emerged (Thurmaier & Wood 2002). Though conflict is a reality in any attempt at cooperation, the resolution of conflict, and the ability to weather disagreements, is a characteristic that is likely to develop in councils with a lengthy history of working together. The length of time a regional council has been in existence will be a control variable in the models used to test these hypotheses. This variable is reported by executive directors in their survey responses.

A metropolitan planning organization is a distinct type of regional council (Vogel & Nezelkewicz 2002; Giuliano 2004; Leland & Whisman 2012). Therefore it is treated differently in the analyses. A dichotomous variable with a "one" for organizations that are MPOs or include MPOs within their structure, and a "zero" for all others, is included in the models employed to test the hypotheses. This information was collected via the survey.

The number of members in each organization is an independent variable in the analyses. This variable controls for any differences between organizations that attempt to coordinate large numbers of jurisdictions and those that have just a few jurisdictions with which to work. Olson (1965) made the case that large organizations can lead to free

riders, providing justification for including this variable. The executive director of each regional council reported the number of members in his or her organization, providing a continuous control variable.

In the models that examine interlocal agreements, two additional variables are added: one that measures population increase or decline, and another that represents economic growth or decline. LeRoux & Carr (2007) identified that fiscal strain, which could be associated with economic conditions or rapid population change, can lead local governments to consider interlocal agreements as an alternative method of service delivery. Kwon & Feiock (2010) found the same was true for population decline within a jurisdiction. Therefore, both variables are included in this study's models related to interlocal agreements. Because regions are not coterminous with other well-defined boundaries, such as cities or counties, which could be assessed using Census data, executive directors provided this data through their survey responses. These are objective measures, with which the director of a regional council should be familiar, so there is little concern that a respondent would seek to inflate, deflate or otherwise falsely report these values.

3.8: Limitations

As with any research endeavor, limitations and challenges exist. Perhaps the most daunting is the sheer scope of research questions related to regional governance and the limited slice of those larger questions that this research will be able to illuminate. I have already addressed another concern earlier in this chapter with the discussion of non-response bias, which I have satisfactorily ruled out.

More substantively, this research design relies, in part, on perception to examine the work of regional councils. Most of the survey questions are of a purely factual nature. However, by administering the survey to directors of regional councils, this study relies partly on the perceptions of those individuals who respond. There may be a tendency on the part of some directors to inflate the value of their work in the broader community. Andrews (1984) cautions that researchers be aware of bias in survey measures: "…while bias can produce serious distortions in percentages, means, and other measures of central tendency, and hence is a threat that must always be considered, a bias that is constant for all respondents does not affect linear relationships at either the bivariate or multivariate level," (410). Given the similar nature of work among directors, I must apply the assumption that any bias will be fairly consistent in the few questions that rely on directors' perception.

Because no one knows the regional council business better than the organizations' directors themselves, their perceptions and experiences are valuable to this research. Through carefully wording the survey, I attempted to mitigate my concern about bias. I have followed the advice of Patten (1998) when using attitude scales to write some statements favorably and others unfavorably. Most of the questions are objective, and for those that are of a subjective nature, I have worded them thoughtfully and treat the responses with the appropriate measure of caution.

Unit of analysis introduces an additional concern to this research. For some measures, directors were asked to consider the region as a whole in their responses. Two examples are provided by the economic wellbeing of the region and population change (growth or decline). These questions could be difficult to answer if some jurisdictions

within a region are growing—either economically or in terms of population—while others are experiencing decline. Additionally, most of the literature that guided the design of this project used the individual jurisdiction as the unit of analysis. This is only a concern in the sense that the researcher must be mindful when drawing connections to the results of prior studies. I have been careful to note where this occurs, to ensure any comparisons to the findings of other studies are valid and not misleading.

Finally, this study was only able to reach the directors of formal regional council organizations. Other associations between local government leaders exist, and might result in interlocal cooperation of a different nature and scope. The current research regrettably only reaches formal organizations, thereby not taking into account the work of less formal, more grassroots regional associations.

The previous work related to interlocal cooperation, as one aspect of regional governance, has largely focused on a single state or a single metropolitan area [for example, Gordon (2007) studied 14 counties in Central Illinois; LeRoux & Carr (2007) examined local governments in the state of Michigan; LeRoux (2008) utilized the 7-county Detroit MSA; Vogel & Nezelkewicz (2002) studied the area served by Louisville's MPO; and Thurmaier & Wood (2002) examined the Kansas City metropolitan area]. This research has the advantage of generalizability, because it examines the work of regional councils throughout the United States. Therefore, it seeks to make a substantive contribution to the development of regional governance theory as it pertains to regional councils.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Participants in the Survey of Regional Council Directors provided an abundance of information regarding the functioning of councils of government and similar organizations across the United States. This is the first national study that focuses specifically on regional councils and attempts to generalize the findings to the population since Bowman & Franke (1984) conducted a survey of regional councils in 1981. The experience shared by the executive directors of regional councils forms the fabric from which these findings are constructed.

4.1: Organizational Characteristics

Regional councils bear a variety of names, the most common of which is Council of Governments (COG). Regional Commission, Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planning Agency, Regional Planning Organization, Economic Development District, Regional Development Commission, and Association of Governments are some other names given to regional councils.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are a special type of regional council (see the previous discussion of MPOs, beginning in Chapter 1). Their primary purpose is the regional coordination of transportation planning; their existence is legislated by the federal government and is necessary for the channeling of federal funds to transportation projects in urbanized areas[38]. Many MPOs are housed within regional

[38] MPOs were originally organized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962.

councils with broader purposes, which Leland & Whisman (2012) labeled SuperCOGs. Some MPOs are physically housed within local government offices, such as a county planning department, though their staff members are typically independent from the local government.

The organizations represented by the survey were categorized by their executive directors as COGs, MPOs, or both. Approximately 55 percent of the organizations are COGs (or similar organizations); roughly 21 percent are MPOs; about 24 percent are SuperCOGs.

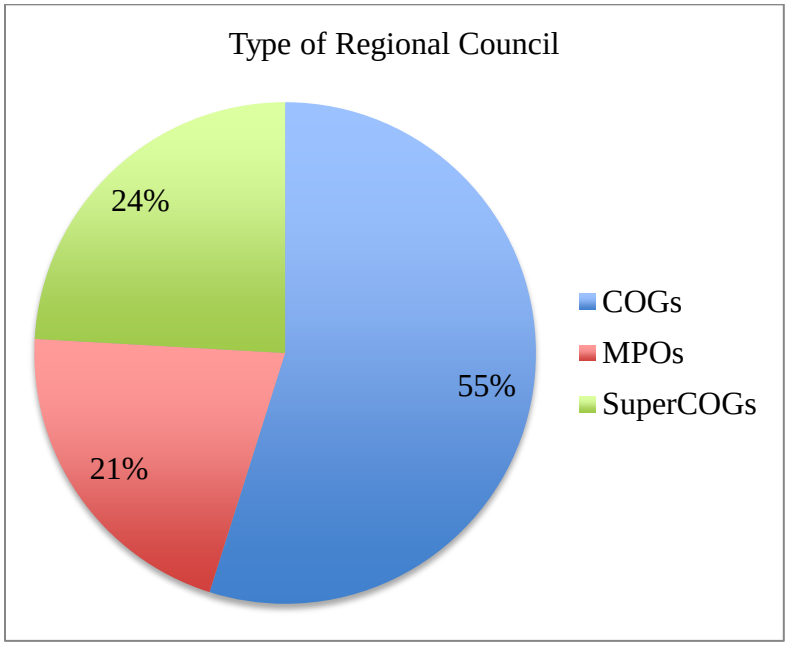

Figure 7: Type of regional council (n=195)

4.2: Formation of Organizations

Many of the organizations in this study came into existence during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is not the least bit surprising, given the many laws related to regional governance that were passed during that time. These laws included the

Intergovernmental Cooperation Act at the federal level, and numerous blanket laws at the state level authorizing regional councils[39]. Approximately 61 percent of the organizations included in the survey trace their origins back to the years between 1965 and 1975. Those regional council organizations have decades of experience working together.

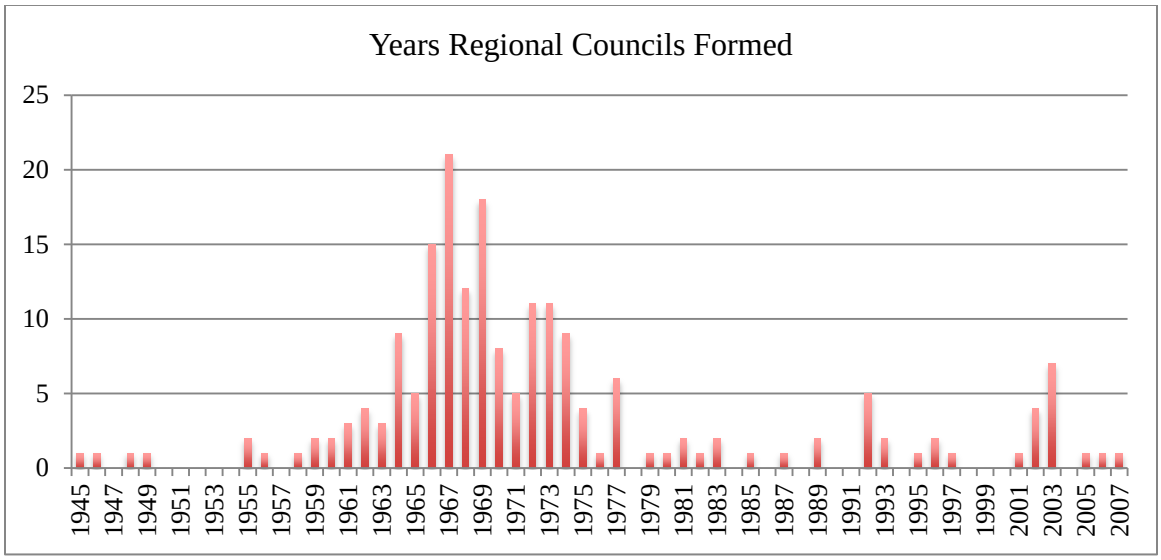

Figure 8: Formation of regional councils (n=194)

4.3: Members

Members of regional councils typically include a combination of local governments such as counties and municipalities. In some cases regional council members also include local Native American tribes, nonprofit organizations, local Chambers of Commerce, and occasionally states. Local governments that are regional council members are typically represented on the councils by their elected or appointed officials. In fact 95 percent of respondents noted local government elected officials, such as mayors and city or county council members, were active in their organizations. Fifty-

[39] Appendix C contains a table displaying the legislation related to regional councils and regional cooperation in 44 states.

two percent responded that local appointed officials, such as city managers, county managers, or town managers, were involved in representing member jurisdictions.[40] Additionally, about 11 percent of survey participants responded that tribal leaders represent their tribes as members of the organizations.

When asked whether their members included representation from the private sector or business community, about 55 percent responded affirmatively[41]. The most common other response was that individual private citizens represent their communities on the regional councils (in about 11 percent of responses). In a handful of cases, other members were involved, including representatives from universities and school systems and representatives from transit agencies.

4.4: Number of Members

The number of members in regional council organizations varies widely, from three members to 295 members (Figure 9). The mean number of members reported by the participating organizations is 37. Not surprisingly, the number of members in a regional council has a statistically significant, positive correlation with both the area (in square miles) which an organization serves and the population of the region served.

[40] All but three of those also had elected officials representing the organizations' member jurisdictions. Those include a COG in New Hampshire and two in Vermont.

[41] This question was posed twice on the survey. Respondents were asked whether their membership included members from the private sector. They were also asked whether their members included business leaders from the community. These two responses were highly correlated, indicating respondents understood both questions to be measuring the presence of non-governmental members on their regional councils.

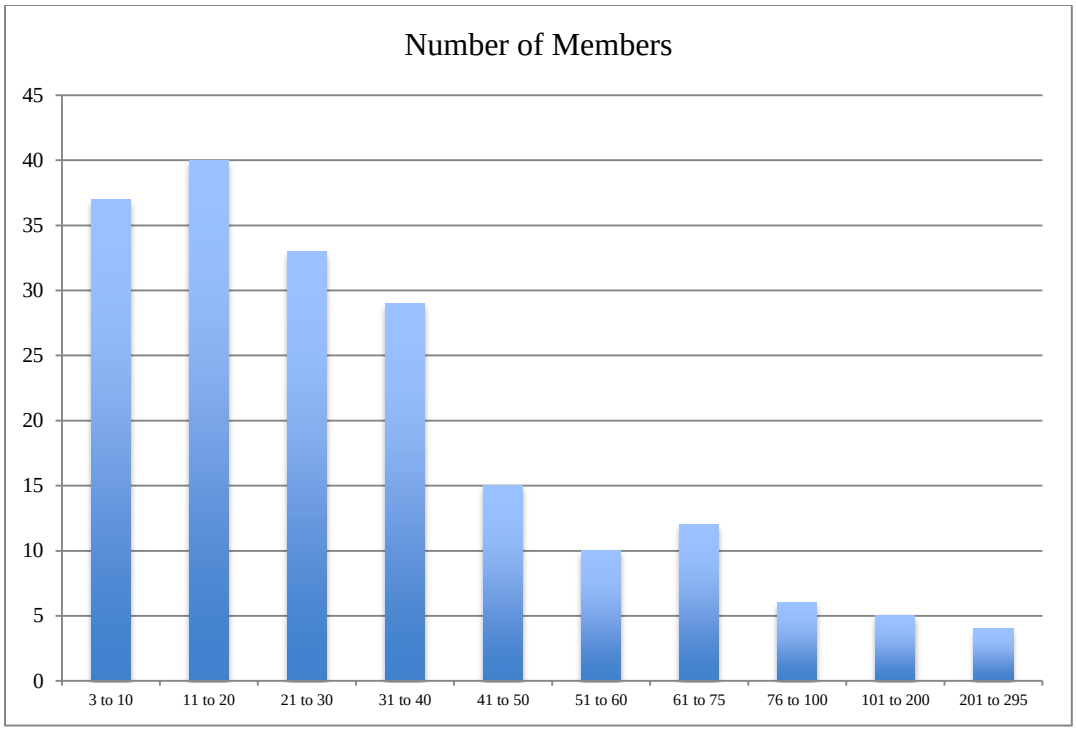

Figure 9: Number of members (n=191)

4.5: Area and Population Served

The area in square miles served by these organizations varies from quite small regions of less than 100 square miles to regions representing 20,000 square miles or larger (Figure 10). The most common area reported by respondents is between 1,000 and 4,999 square miles, with 67 directors selecting this category. Sixty-one percent of participating organizations fit into the area between 500 square miles and 9,999 square miles (represented by three mid-range categories on the survey).

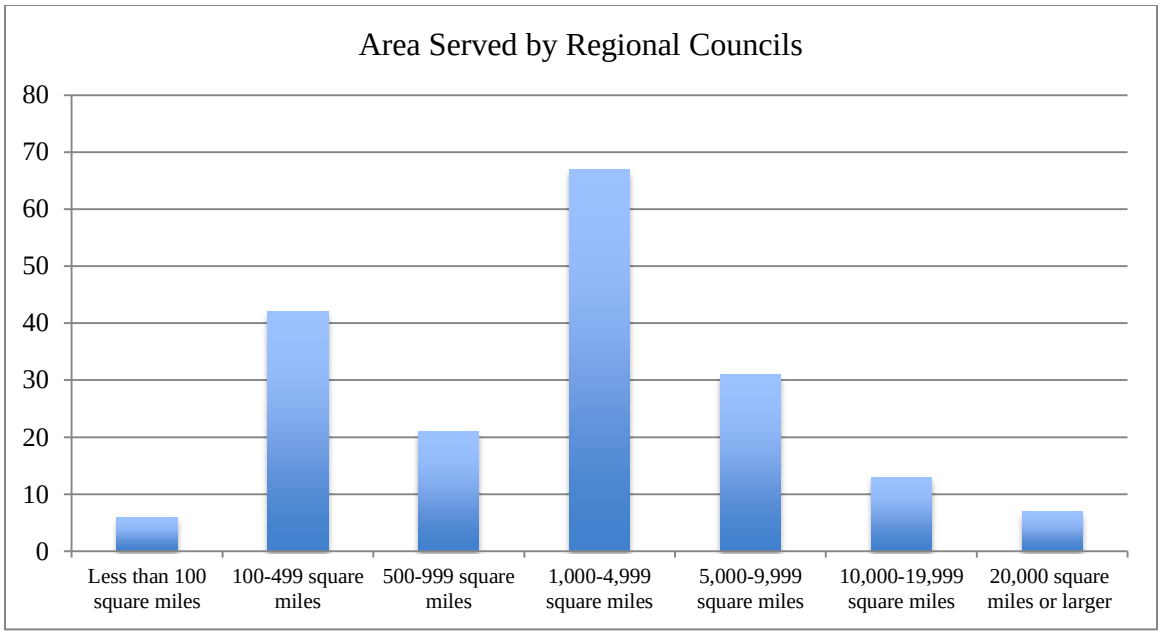

Figure 10: Area served by regional councils (n=187)

The population served by regional council organizations varies from less than 50,000 to over five million (Figure 11). The most common response was between 100,000 to 499,999, with 54 percent of respondents selecting that category.

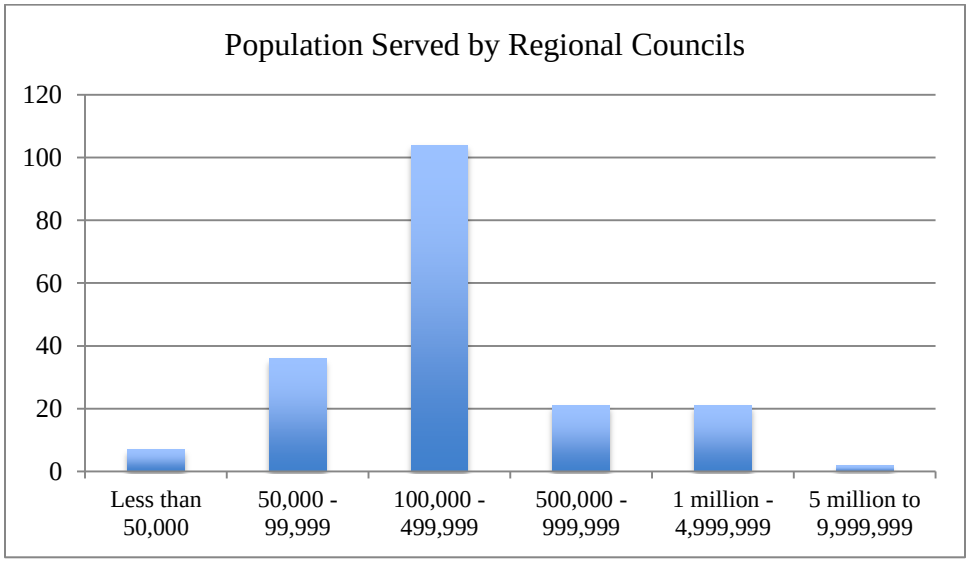

Figure 11: Population served by regional councils (n=191)

4.6: Types of Work

This question was based on the preliminary research I conducted regarding regional councils, including interviews with regional council directors in 2011. While the types of work addressed by regional councils varies widely, these options represent the most common types of work reported in that preliminary research. Nearly all of the participating organizations noted that they have some involvement in transportation planning, even those that are not MPOs (Figure 12).

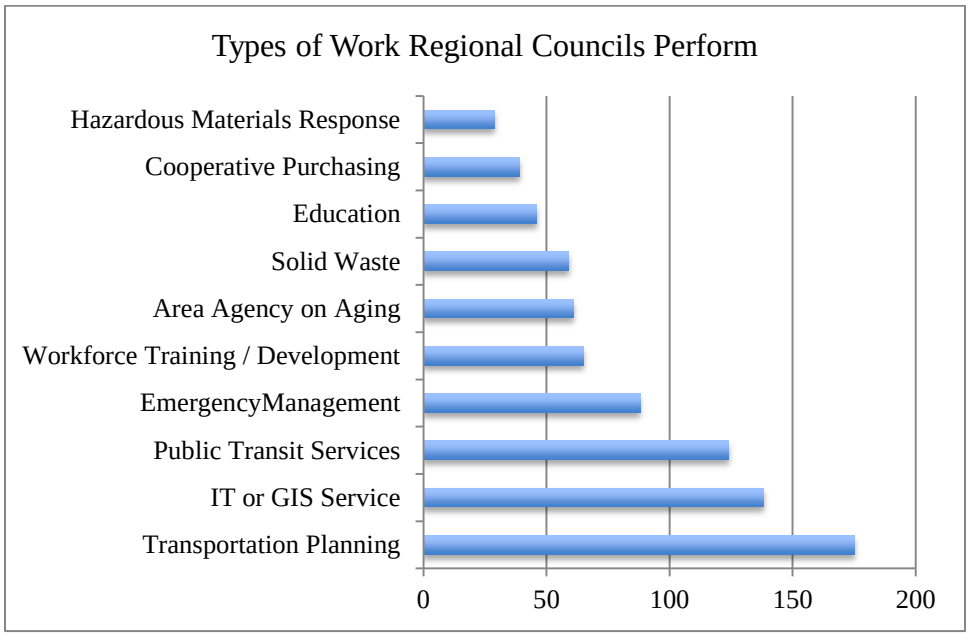

Figure 12: Types of work performed by regional councils (n=194)

4.7: Most Important Offering

Directors responded to the question, "What do you consider to be the most important service your organization offers to its members?" Understanding that regional councils perform many tasks, this question was intended to gauge the director's sense of what is the most valuable service his or her organization provides to the region in which

they operate (Figure 13). While some directors provided a laundry list of activities, and one even copied and pasted the organization's mission into the response, most provided a single response[42]. Responses included technical assistance, transportation-related functions, economic development, planning, and others[43]. Twenty-nine percent of respondents regard technical assistance to member jurisdictions to be the most important service they offer. Of those that elaborated, assistance with grant writing was the most common, followed by research and subject matter expertise (such as GIS assistance, project management, zoning, IT, historic preservation, or stormwater management).

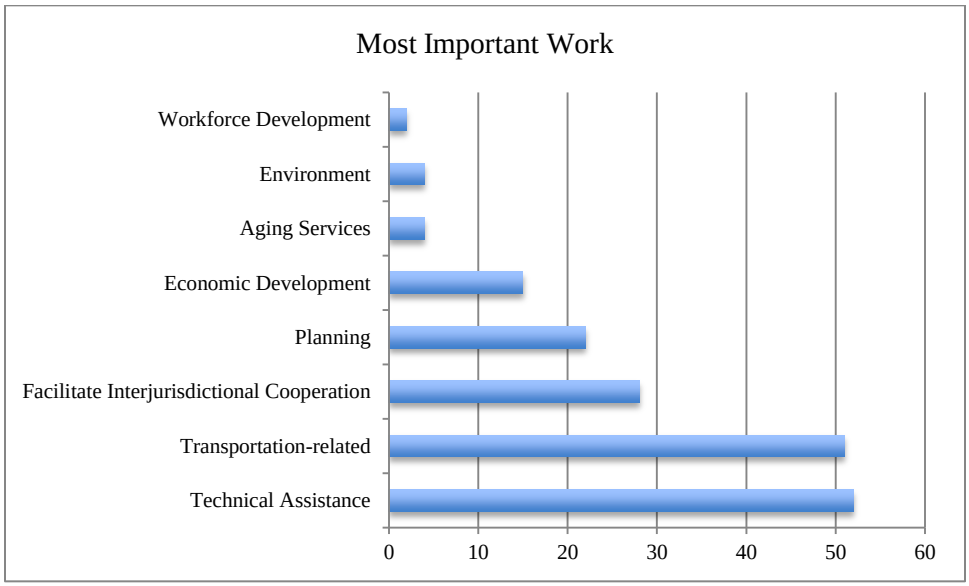

Figure 13: Most important work according to regional council directors (n=178)

Following closely behind technical assistance were responses related to transportation planning. This is not surprising, given that roughly 45 percent of the organizations surveyed are MPOs or include an MPO in their structure. Several of these

[42] I focused on the first response in cases where multiple responses were provided.
[43] One director of an organization operating in South Carolina responded, "That's a loaded question."

responses mentioned transportation funding. Only two of them specifically indicated involvement in public transit or "alternative" modes of transportation.

Despite the fact that researchers have focused on the role of regional councils in facilitating interaction between member jurisdictions within a region (Thurmaier & Wood 2002), only sixteen percent of respondents cited this as their organization's most important work. The word "forum" appeared repeatedly in these responses, along with "networking," "linking," "connecting," and "communication." One director replied that his organization, which operates in Virginia, is a "neutral forum for dispute resolution," indicating that some level of contention exists between jurisdictions attempting to function as a region. Another director referred to his North Carolina organization as providing "impartial problem solving and collaboration." Others mentioned consensus building, and one indicated that through collaboration, cost savings is quickly becoming the primary focus of his New England organization's members.

The next most common response was planning. This category is distinct from the transportation planning response, as it pertains to comprehensive or strategic planning with member jurisdictions. This response represents twelve percent of participating directors.

Economic development was cited by roughly eight percent of directors as being their foremost function. Water quality and environmental sustainability issues were the primary focus of only four directors, as was aging services. One director of an Alabama organization mentioned "public involvement guidance" as the primary focus of his organization.

Finally, one director of an organization in the state of Washington responded that his organization works primarily on the "recognition of the nexus of land use/transportation planning with economic development." This response stands out among the others as transcending localized thinking with a focus on the interrelated nature of land use and transportation, and their associated outcomes.

4.8: Economic Conditions

Directors were asked to gauge the economic condition of their regions over the past three years, and to offer their prediction of their regional economy during the next three years (Figure 14). Options were framed as either growth or decline (slow, moderate, or rapid), or stable, meaning no growth or decline. In terms of the prior three years, 27 percent of directors indicated a stable economic base. Thirty-three percent noted economic decline, whether slow, moderate, or rapid, while 23 percent responded that there had been slow economic growth. Thirteen percent selected moderate growth and only four percent experienced rapid growth.

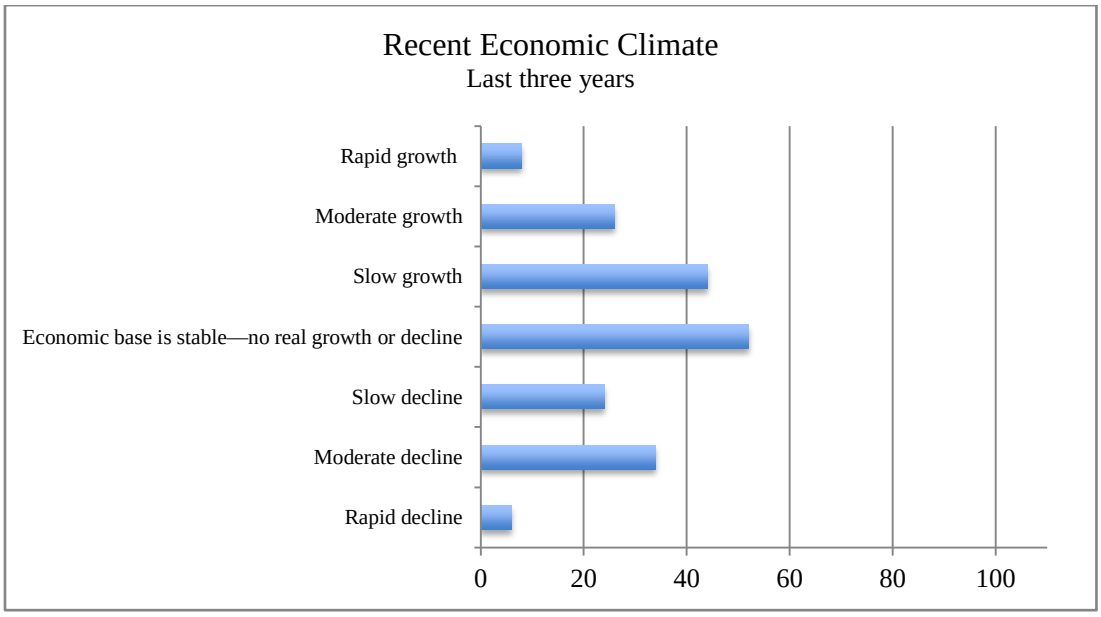

Figure 14: Recent economic climate (n=194)

Directors were on the whole much more optimistic about the next three years (Figure 15). This may signal that as the recession wanes, along with its effects on communities, leaders foresee a time of improving economic conditions. In looking to the future, not a single director selected rapid economic decline, whereas six (three percent) had described the previous three years in that manner. Only four percent of directors predict economic decline of any severity in their regions in the near future. Sixteen percent expect the economic conditions to remain stable. Fully 84 percent believe the economy of the region they serve will grow over the next few years. Some amount of optimism could account for these responses, although it is likely the positions these individuals hold provide them with a certain amount of insight into economic development efforts currently underway.

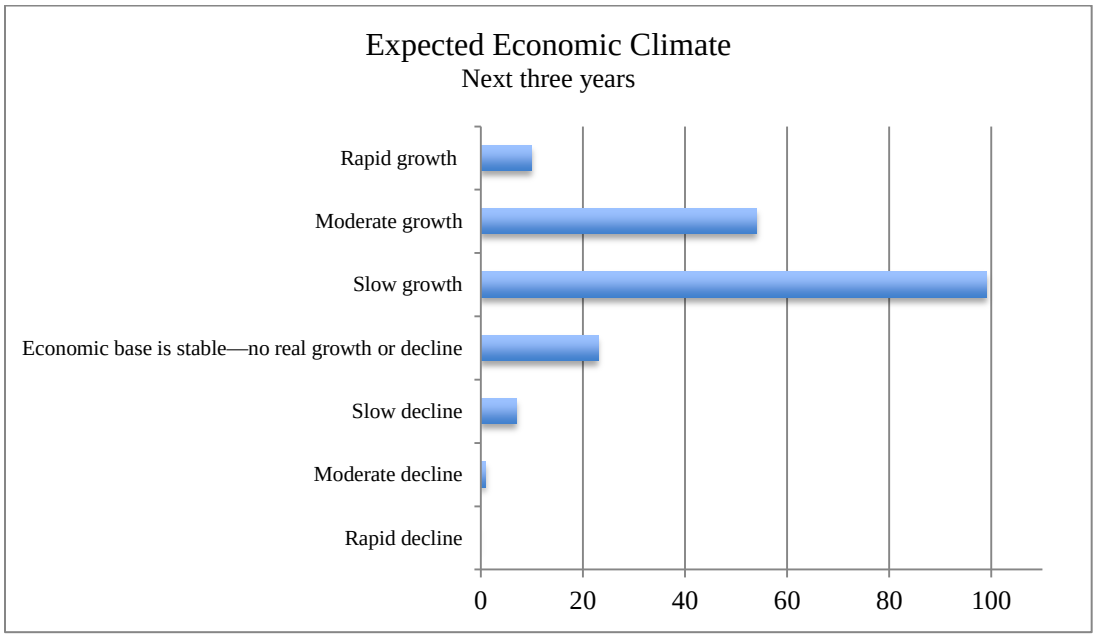

Figure 15: Expected economic climate (n=194)

4.9: State Laws

This research hinges on the presence of blanket legislation at the state level, which either *enables* or *prescribes* the work of regional councils. As discussed in chapter three, the organizations in the survey sample closely reflect the organizations across the United States, in terms of the percentages of each under the two types of legislation, as well as without any blanket state legislation. Approximately 34 percent of organizations in this sample are in states with enabling legislation, 65 percent are governed by prescriptive legislation, and the remaining one percent of organizations operate in states that do not have blanket legislation in regard to regional councils (Figure 16).

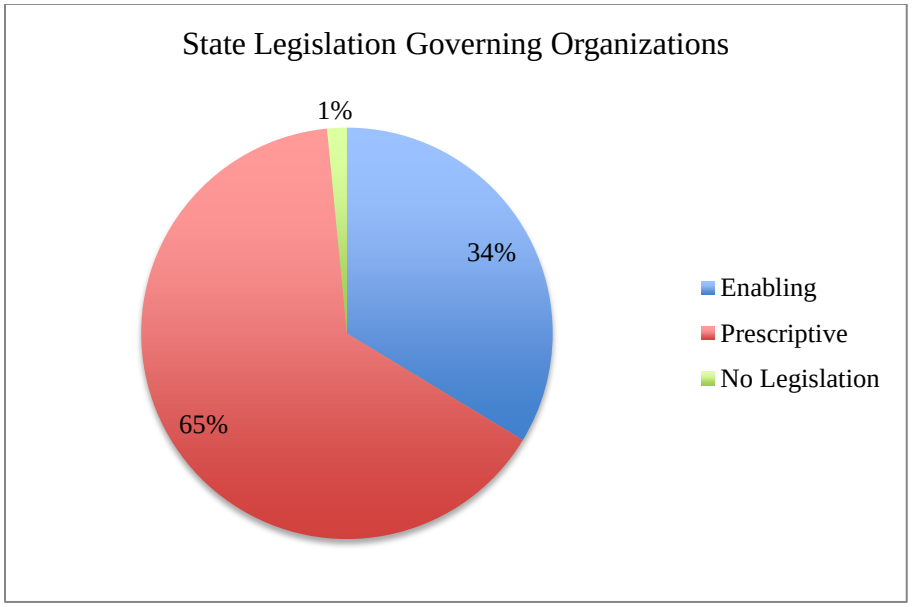

Figure 16: State legislation governing organizations in the survey sample (n=193)

The models used to test this study's hypotheses operationalize the type of state law as either enabling legislation or prescriptive legislation. Since only one percent of the sample (representing two organizations) operate in states with no identifiable blanket

legislation, any substantive results to emerge regarding the significance of no legislation are unlikely. Those two organizations are coded as "missing" on the independent variable for type of legislation[44].

Despite the fact that most respondents to the survey operate within states governed by prescriptive legislation, the vast majority of directors answered that their organizations' members join voluntarily (Figure 17). This is somewhat surprising, given that the type of state legislation in the majority of states, and governing the majority of regional councils, is prescriptive legislation. I noticed this phenomenon when conducting preliminary research. Even in states in which I knew the legislation outlined the boundaries of a "region," and required jurisdictions within each region to belong to a particular regional council, staff at regional councils told me membership in their organizations was "voluntary." For this reason, I knew I could not simply ask whether organizations were mandatory or voluntary on the survey, but instead conducted in-depth research into the state laws in each state and coded regional councils as being governed by either prescriptive or enabling legislation based on the state(s) in which they operate.

There is a statistically significant bivariate correlation between the type of state legislation within which an organization operates and the director's perception of whether his or her organizations' members join voluntary. Those in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to respond that their members are required to belong to the council. However, the coefficient is quite low (.174, with a significance level of .042).

[44] I also ran each of the models, which are described in greater detail throughout the remainder of this chapter, with the three types of legislation coded as dummy variables. In none of those models was the "no legislation" variable statistically significant. Furthermore, all of the other variables in the models remained unchanged in terms of whether or not they were significant and the direction of their influence. This, combined with the lack of substantive meaning in regard to states without blanket legislation related to regional councils, support the validity of structuring the models as they appear in this chapter.

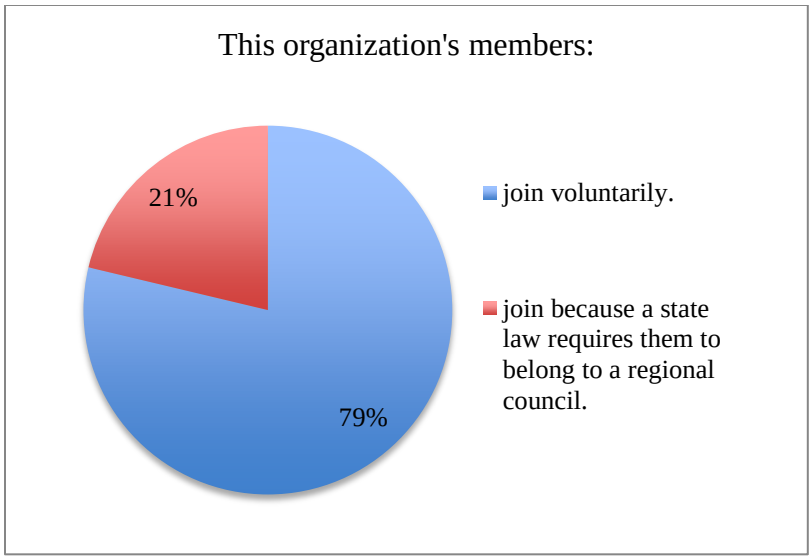

Figure 17: Voluntary membership (n=188)

Some possible explanations exist for this mismatch between governing legislation and the responses of regional council directors to this question. A lack of clarity on the part of regional council directors regarding the details of state legislation is perhaps the simplest explanation. It is also possible that sanctions are not in place for jurisdictions that do not wish to participate in regional council activities, or that sanctions, if in place, are not enforced. This finding might alternately suggest that such a culture exists within regional councils that most jurisdictions within a regional council's boundaries choose to participate; therefore directors in states with prescriptive legislation are not faced with what to do in the case of non-participating jurisdictions. If this is the case, such a culture may be due to the fact that state legislation has, in most states, been on the books for four decades or longer—long enough for regional councils to establish their value in the eyes of potential participants. Finally, regional council directors might simply find it more palatable to consider their organizations voluntary associations, though the actual conditions set forth by the state in which they operate might be more heavy-handed.

Further research into this anomaly would be required in order to arrive confidently at a conclusion.

4.10: Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 is stated: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to foster frequent face-to-face interaction between leaders in member jurisdictions, than those in states with enabling legislation. Because research has indicated that face-to-face interaction between local leaders is a precursor to developing cooperation (Thurmaier & Wood 2002; Wood, 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger and Pandey 2010), often observed through the presence of interlocal agreements, this study examines the role of regional councils in facilitating face-to-face meetings and the role state laws might play in predicting the behavior of regional councils in this regard. The most common response, by far, to the survey question gauging the frequency of meetings among regional council members is monthly (Figure 18).

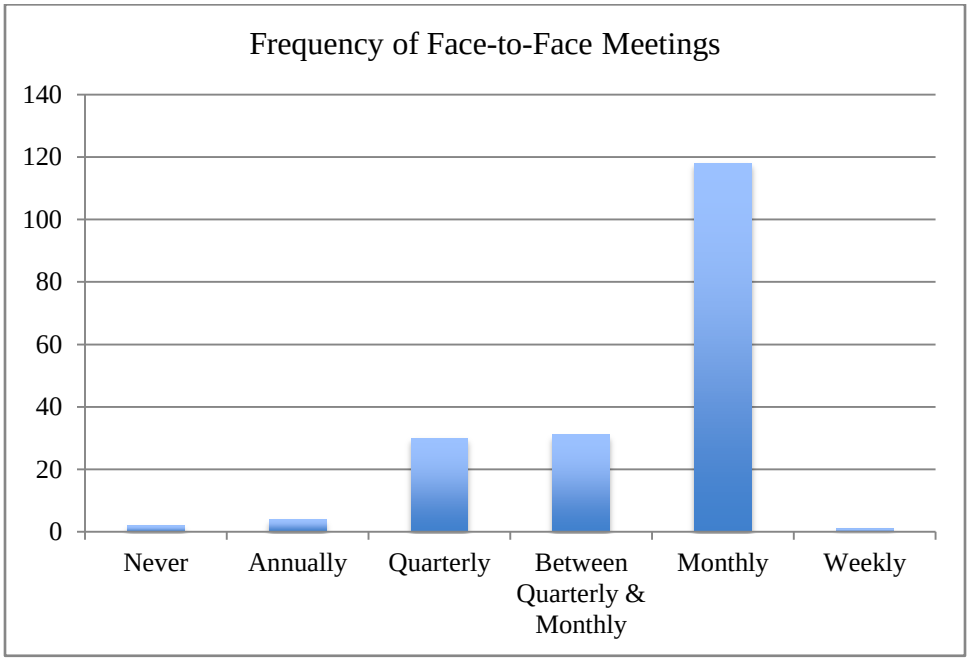

Figure 18: Frequency of face-to-face meetings (n=186)

The frequency of meeting responses form an ordinal dependent variable, therefore in order to test whether the different type of state laws influence how frequently regional councils hold member meetings, I utilized an ordered regression model (Long & Freese, 2006).[45] In addition to the type of state law, variables in the model include the number of years the regional council has operated, the number of members in the council, a dichotomous variable representing whether or not the regional council includes an MPO, and control variables for the executive director's level of education and length of time with the organization.

Table 1: Model for frequency of meetings

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law	0.303 (0.338)	0.37
Years in Operation**	0.030 (0.013)	0.02
MPO (dummy)*	0.603 (0.323)	0.06
Number of Members	-0.002 (0.003)	0.45
Director's Tenure**	-0.036 (0.017)	0.03
Director's Education	-0.039 (0.230)	0.87

n = 173
Pseudo R^2 = .034
LR Chi^2 = 12.19
Prob > chi^2 = 0.058
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

[45] After estimating the model, I attempted to run the Brant test to rule out the possibility that any of the variables in the model violate the parallel regression assumption. I was unable to run the test, however the results for the primary independent variable were consistent when I used multinomial rather than ordinal logistic regression. Because the dependent variable is indeed ordered (from least frequent meeting to most frequent), I selected the more simply interpreted ordered model.

Based on this model, the type of state law (prescriptive vs. enabling) does not have a statistically significant influence on the frequency with which regional councils facilitate meetings among their members. In other words, I am unable to reject the null hypothesis—that there is no difference between state enabling legislation and prescriptive legislation in influencing meeting frequency. Variables that do have an influence on the frequency of meeting include the number of years the organization has been in operation, as well as whether or not the organization is an MPO or includes an MPO in its structure. The length of time an organization has existed is positively related to meeting frequency. This could be due to a culture of interaction that develops over time, becoming stronger as an organization ages and its members become accustomed to working together. Having an MPO in the regional council is also positively associated with the frequency of face-to-face meetings among members. This could be an indication that transportation-related projects require more frequent meetings, or that regional organizations tasked with transportation issues are more likely to recognize the importance of meeting regularly with their members. Frequent meetings could also be the result of the deadlines that are tied to the receipt of grant money.

Meeting frequency is one of two ways I attempted to gauge the face-to-face interactions of each organization's members. An additional survey item was designed to gauge the director's perception of his or her organization's effectiveness at facilitating face-to-face interactions between member jurisdictions[46]. Thurmaier and Wood (2002) advanced the idea that cooperation between local governments can develop due to

[46] A correlation does not exist between the measures of meeting frequency and effectiveness of facilitating face-to-face meetings. This could mean that simply conducting meetings is not the same as being effective at bringing members together. Though this finding is outside the scope of this project, it bears mentioning, and perhaps further investigation. It could also indicate that organization leaders are working to bring together member jurisdictions outside of formal meetings.

interactions taking place as a result of participation in a regional council. The perception of how well regional councils perform this function provides a second dependent variable to test the first hypothesis (Figure 19).

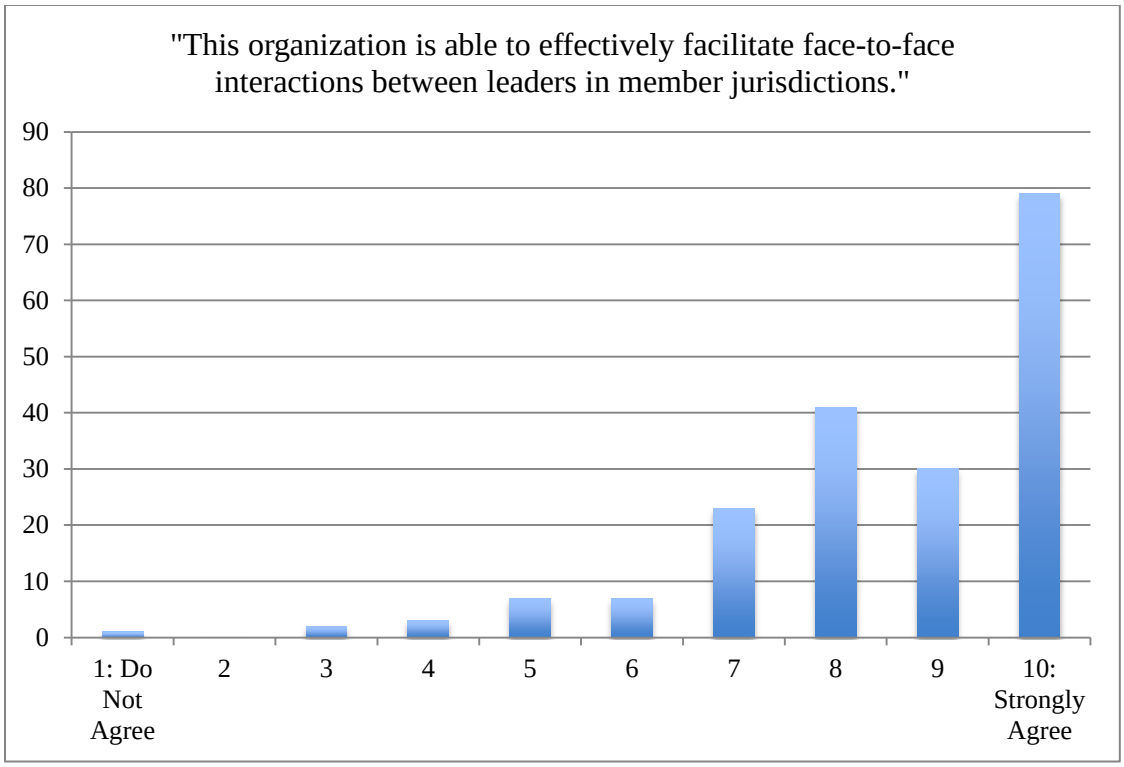

Figure 19: Director perception of effective face-to-face meetings (n=193)

Not surprisingly, executive directors of regional councils are much more likely to assert that they are effective in facilitating face-to-face interactions among their members, than to admit that they are ineffective in doing so[47]. Approximately 40 percent of respondents selected "strongly agree" (or ten on a scale of one to ten, where one means

[47] Please refer to the discussion in Chapter 3 of the limitations related to perception bias. Andrews (1984) indicates that this type of bias, if consistent, will not be problematic for the estimation of this model.

"do not agree" and ten means "strongly agree") in response to this question[48]. Only 12 percent of respondents selected a "seven" or below.

When examining the effectiveness of facilitating interactions, rather than the frequency of meeting, the type of state law is a statistically significant independent variable (Table 2). Executive directors of organizations operating in states with prescriptive legislation, rather than enabling legislation, are more likely to respond that their organizations effectively facilitate face-to-face interaction between their members. This is consistent with the first hypothesis, though only in terms of perceived effectiveness and not frequency of meeting. This finding supports the Olson theory of collective action, as discussed in chapter one. In working toward the common interests of members in a large group, the sanctions applied through prescriptive legislation appear to reduce the likelihood of free riders and allow directors to feel that they are more effective in their efforts. It would suggest that directors of regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation perceive that they have the support of the state in operating their organizations, and are therefore effective at facilitating the sort of interactions that are intended to result in cooperation between jurisdictions.

However, this analysis is not sufficient to conclude that a prescriptive type of state law singlehandedly generates effectiveness. Because we are relying on the perception of the executive directors to report this dependent variable, I think we should interpret this result with a grain of salt. It is simply an indication that when a state requires

[48] When using ordered logistic regression models, having a skewed dependent variable is not a concern. I did attempt to standardize participants' responses to questions that address perception of effectiveness, and run an OLS model with the standardized dependent variable. However, perhaps due to the fact that there were only three such variables on the survey, the models using standardized dependent variables were not statistically significant. Therefore, I stayed with the ordered logistical regression model.

jurisdictions within a particular region to participate in a regional council, the directors of those councils feel they are better able to facilitate interactions between their members.

Table 2: Model for effective meetings

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law**	0.648 (0.302)	0.03
Years in Operation	0.005 (0.011)	0.62
MPO (dummy)	-0.345 (0.282)	0.22
Number of Members	0.000 (0.003)	0.92
Director's Tenure	0.012 (0.014)	0.39
Director's Education***	-0.595 (0.216)	0.01

n = 179
Pseudo R^2 = .026
LR Chi^2 = 15.13
Prob > chi^2 = 0.019
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

Just as regional councils vary widely in other characteristics, their policies toward meetings also vary. Some regional councils require members to attend meetings, others do not. Some directors used the word "encouraged" to describe their meeting policy. Others simply mentioned that a quorum is required in order to conduct business. One director, of an organization from Arkansas, indicated that attendance at meetings is not required, but that "it is hard to get a quorum sometimes." Another, from a regional council in Virginia, replied that meeting attendance is not mandatory, but that "attendance is almost always excellent."

When asked whether they provide incentives for attending meetings, 66 percent responded that they do not (Figure 20). Of the 34 percent of organizations that do incentivize meeting attendance, food is a common incentive. The food response ranges from snacks or pizza to a full, hot meal. Mileage reimbursement and covering the cost of travel were also common responses. One organization from Virginia provides a $35 stipend for attendance. Another, from California, offers a $100 stipend to encourage members to attend. Within this range, two directors of organizations from Minnesota noted they provide $50 per diem plus expenses or travel for attending, and an organization from New Mexico offers $75 to help cover travel and lodging.

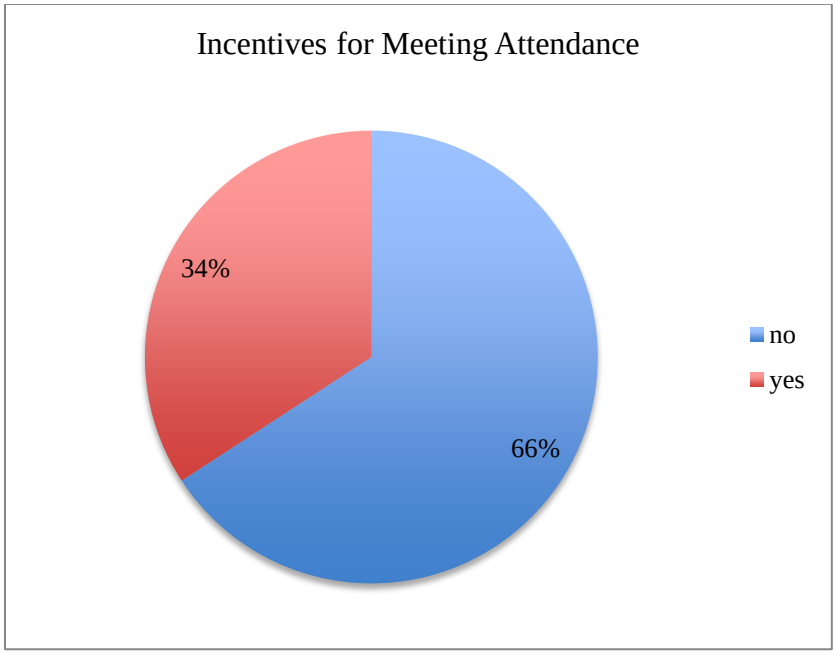

Figure 20: Incentives for meeting attendance (n=193)

The topics of the meetings themselves were counted as an incentive by some directors. Training and information about upcoming projects or available funding were in this category. Some directors offered humorous responses, such as “our smiling faces” or

"I am very charming" when asked about incentives for attendance. One mentioned "Vermont artisan cheese and pepperoni" as his organization's incentives. Others simply mentioned they did not perceive a need to provide incentives.

One MPO director from Florida admitted that, "Members are motivated by funding." This director elaborates, however, the belief that members primarily "participate because they recognize the importance of transportation planning and its influence on the economy."

The survey also asked directors whether there were consequences for members or their representatives who fail to attend meetings (Figure 21). Only about 25 percent responded that members face any formal sanctions for not attending. The responses occasionally varied based on whether it referred to the representatives of members or to executive board members of the regional councils, where such a distinction exists.

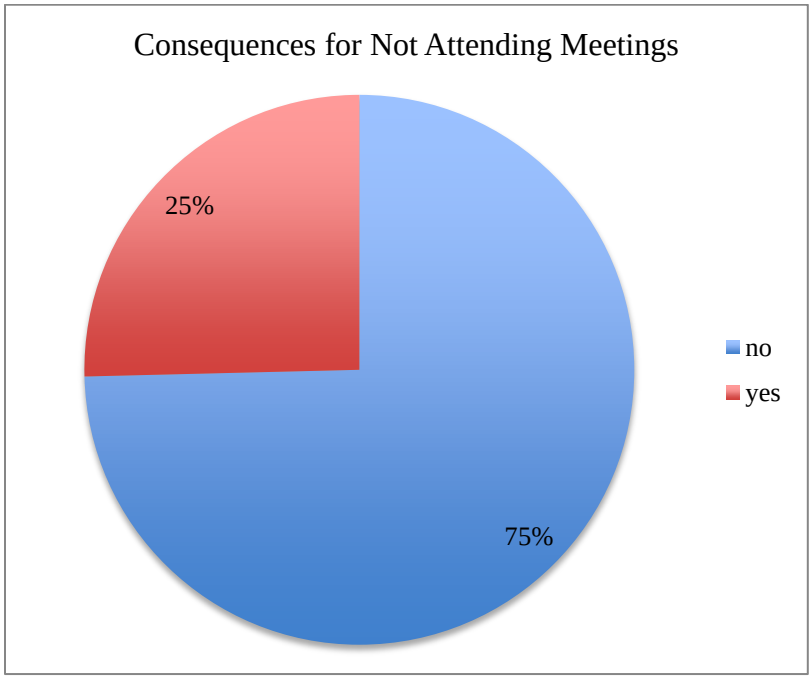

Figure 21: Consequences for not attending meetings (n=193)

Some organizations indicated that if more than a set number of meetings are missed, action is taken. For example, one organization notifies the local government of the poor attendance and provides suggestions for improvement. Others ask for the appointing body (such as a local government) to replace its representative if that person fails to attend meetings as expected. Others still remove voting privileges from those members who do not meet attendance requirements.

One director of an organization from South Dakota replied that sanctions exist, but are rarely enforced because it would likely mean the loss of a dues-paying member, upon whom the organization relies for its continued existence. Some indicated that missing a meeting could mean not getting to weigh in or vote on an issue of concern to the entire region, and their members respond to this concern by being present. For example, a COG director from West Virginia noted that, "Other than the typical loss of the networking, presentations, and knowledge gained through participation, a member could miss knowing of an approaching grant opportunity or deadline" if they fail to attend meetings.

A director from New York replied that, "A rolling quorum has been considered but never adopted." A COG director from Texas wrote, "Bylaws allow removal for 3+ missed meetings, but it is not enforced." Another Texas-based director replied that, "Four absences causes a member to lose their slot on the board; however, they can appeal to the board to stay on. The appeal has only happened twice; both times they were allowed to stay on."

Some of the responses to the question about disincentives border on the absurd. A SuperCOG director from Utah wrote that members who do not attend meetings regularly

are subject to “teasing from other officials.” A Connecticut MPO director wrote, “if a member misses three consecutive meetings, we write asking them about their interest in continuing on our board.”

These responses confirm what Visser (2004) observed when he wrote that regional councils are “‘weak’ examples of new regionalism” (61), and Wolf and Bryan (2009) confirmed when describing regional councils as “relatively weak and ineffective” (61). The ability of regional council organizations to generate the participation of member jurisdictions is mixed, at best.

4.11: Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 is stated: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to assist member jurisdictions in the development of interlocal agreements, than those in states with enabling legislation. The literature on regional governance has focused on the measureable output of interlocal agreements (ILAs) as a way to examine cooperation between jurisdictions. Membership in a regional council has been considered one of the factors predicting whether local governments engage in ILAs (beginning with Thurmaier & Wood 2002). What influence do regional councils themselves have on the development of ILAs?

Respondents from 61% of the regional councils surveyed are involved in interlocal agreements (Figure 22). Many of the organizations work on ILAs related to transportation. Mutual aid and emergency communication (interoperability) are frequently cited, as are joint purchasing arrangements, HAZMAT, disaster preparedness, water and sewer, solid waste, economic development, services for the aging and other healthcare related services, transit, trail development, and GIS services. Only five

organizations specifically mentioned environmental protection, conservation, or restoration (such as air quality related work) in their list of interlocal agreement activities. One organization was working on a project designed to "erase jurisdictional lines with respect to domestic violence issues." Most of these are the types of services that one would expect to be sufficiently large to, at least potentially, achieve economies of scale or greater effectiveness through interjurisdictional cooperation. Others address equity, or work on issues that could create externalities if only considered by individual jurisdictions rather than regionally[49].

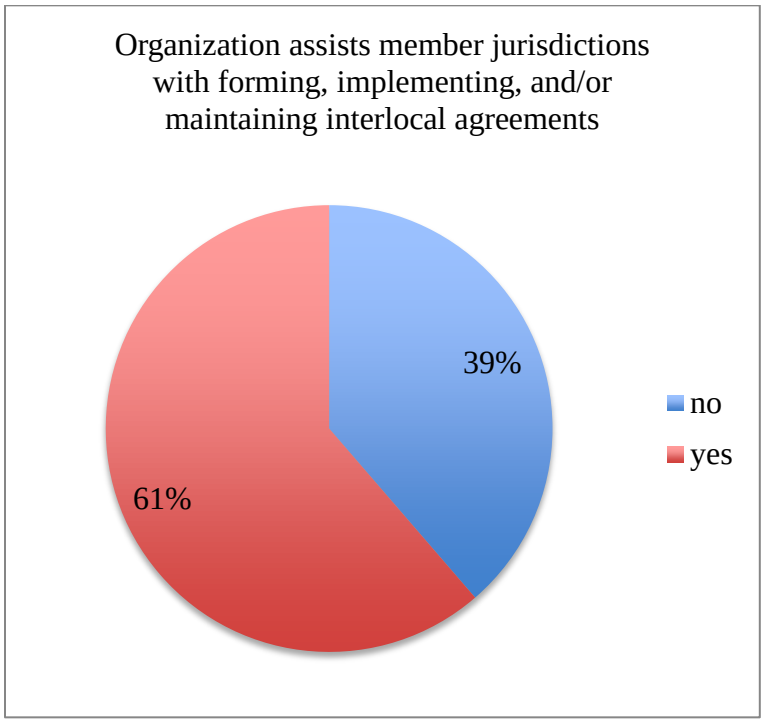

Figure 22: Organization assists members with interlocal agreements (n=194)

[49] In the comments following the question about involvement with interlocal agreements, several directors admitted that they have attempted to facilitate ILAs, but for one reason or another, those agreements or partnerships have not materialized. A couple of the directors mentioned that they are aware of some ILAs that are of a less formal nature, in addition to those that are facilitated by their organizations.

The response to whether or not an organization is involved with interlocal agreements forms a dichotomous dependent variable for testing the second hypothesis. In addition to the primary independent variable—the type of state law—the model includes population growth, economic circumstances in the region, years in operation, whether or not the organization is or includes an MPO, the number of members in the regional council, and a control variable for the director's tenure with the organization. The literature on interlocal agreements has identified changes in population and economic circumstances as providing impetus to communities considering coordinating with other jurisdictions for service delivery. Cigler (1999) and Olberding (2002) identified fiscal stress or perceived fiscal stress as a motivation for interjurisdictional cooperation. Kwon & Feiock (2010) identified population decline as a factor in local governments' consideration of ILA as a service delivery method. This model was constructed with those findings in mind (Table 3).

The type of state law does not emerge as a statistically significant factor in predicting whether regional councils assist member jurisdictions with forming, implementing and/or maintaining interlocal agreements. The number of years an organization has operated and population increase are statistically significant variables. The importance of the age of an organization is consistent with theory, as one might expect an organization in which members have a shared history of working together to facilitate interjurisdictional cooperation in a tangible way.

Some earlier studies observed a decline in population associated with interjurisdictional cooperation, while others showed no relationship or a positive

correlation[50]. This model, which looks at each region as a whole, shows a positive relationship between population increase and a regional council's likelihood of working on interlocal agreements with its members. A possible explanation for this finding is the difference between population change within an individual jurisdiction, and population change at the regional level. The finding published by Kwon & Feiock (2010) measured population change in each jurisdiction, and included that as a variable in a model examining the likelihood of a jurisdiction to consider ILA as an option. LeRoux & Carr (2007) and LeRoux (2008) also considered population change at the individual jurisdiction level. This survey asked regional council directors whether the population of the *region* they serve has changed in the past ten years. Therefore, the unit of analysis differs between this and the earlier studies.

In this model, growing regional populations are associated with a greater likelihood of the regional council working with its members on ILAs. An examination of current scholarly literature does not clearly indicate why this might be the case. This may be explained by larger numbers of residents placing increased demand for services on local governments, which then look for alternative service delivery options to meet those higher levels of demand. It might also be that some jurisdictions are experiencing growth while others are declining in population. Perhaps jurisdictions experiencing decline are the catalysts for developing interlocal agreements. When examining growth at the regional level, we are not able to tease out the nuance of growth, decline, a combination

[50] Kwon & Feiock (2010) found that population growth was negatively associated with the consideration of cooperating through an interlocal agreement. On the other hand, LeRoux & Carr (2007) and LeRoux (2008) found mixed results when examining cooperation by service type. Population growth was not related to the likelihood of interlocal agreements for some service types (such as police and fire services and streetlights). Population growth was positively and significantly related to five out of six water and sewer categories (LeRoux & Carr 2007), and to cooperation on roads and bridges (LeRoux 2008), but negatively and significantly correlated to cooperation on utilities (LeRoux 2008).

of the two, and which of these circumstances is the primary contributor to the development of interlocal cooperation. It does appear, however, that population growth at the regional level is a factor in the likelihood of regional councils' involvement in the development and/or management of interlocal agreements.

Table 3: Model for interlocal agreements

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law	-0.304 (0.350)	0.38
Population Increase*	0.592 (0.364)	0.10
Economic Growth	0.163 (0.114)	0.15
Years in Operation*	0.022 (0.013)	0.09
MPO (dummy)	0.416 (0.330)	0.20
Number of Members	-0.002 (0.004)	0.57
Director's Tenure	0.004 (0.017)	0.80

n = 181
Pseudo R^2 = .054
LR Chi^2 = 12.93
Prob > chi^2 = .074
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

In an attempt to further examine the perceptions of regional council directors and the effectiveness of regional councils in facilitating cooperation between members, I conducted additional analysis (Table 4). This is not related to one of my original hypotheses, however it may shed some additional light on the second analysis used to test hypothesis one, building on the findings about interlocal agreements. Directors'

perception of their organizations' effectiveness was the dependent variable in the second model testing the facilitation of face-to-face meetings. Does an organization's involvement in interlocal agreements influence the director's perceived effectiveness?

Table 4: Reexamining perceived effectiveness

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law**	0.699 0.306	0.02
Years in Operation	0.002 0.011	0.88
ILA Involvement**	0.585 0.293	0.05
MPO (dummy)	-0.421 0.285	0.14
Number of Members	0.001 0.003	0.83
ED's Tenure	0.012 0.014	0.39
ED's Education***	-0.590 0.215	0.01

n = 179
Pseudo R^2 = .033
LR Chi^2 = 19.12
Prob > chi^2 = .008
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

Using the second model I built for testing hypothesis one (see Table 2), I simply added the variable for ILA involvement (Table 4). The results of this analysis did not change with the addition of the interlocal agreement variable—type of state law remains significant, and the other variables such as years in operation and MPO remain statistically insignificant. However, an organization's involvement with interlocal agreements is also statistically significant as a predictor of effectiveness. This would

suggest that, though perception of effectiveness is positively skewed, it is based at least in part on the organizations' ability to work with its members to facilitate cooperative agreements[51].

4.12: Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 is stated: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely to report large-scale interlocal agreements, than those in states with enabling legislation. LeRoux (2008) studied interlocal agreements and found that adjacent borders are a factor in a jurisdictions' decision to enter into an ILA. Others have hinted at the difficulty of getting many jurisdictions to cooperate on a given issue (Vogel & Nezelkewicz 2002). This led me to examine the scale of interlocal agreements. Those directors who responded that their organizations are involved with interlocal agreements received a follow-up question regarding how many organizations are involved in the "typical" interlocal agreement in their region. Recognizing that these sorts of arrangements vary widely, this question was designed to probe a bit further into the realm of interlocal agreements and the cooperation they represent.

According to survey respondents, 72 percent of interlocal agreements, in which the regional councils have some involvement, are among six or fewer jurisdictions. Eighty-five percent are among fewer than fifteen jurisdictions (Figure 23). This suggests that interlocal agreements are being used more often between a relatively small number of jurisdictions than as a truly region-wide tool for interjurisdictional cooperation.

[51] Just as it appears that experiencing success as a broker of interlocal agreements positively influences a director's perceived effectiveness, the sense that one is effective could also further influence an organization's future involvement in facilitating interjurisdictional cooperation. A limitation of cross-sectional data is the analysts' inability to test which comes first. In this case, it seems more likely that success leads to a sense of effectiveness rather than the reverse.

To further explore the scale of interlocal agreements, I examined the nine responses indicating their typical interlocal agreement involved twenty or more jurisdictions. One might expect those truly large-scale agreements to be facilitated by MPOs, as their role is to address transportation on a region-wide scale (Chakraborty 2010). However, this was not the whole story. Of these nine organizations, six are (or include) MPOs, but the three others are not. When asked whether they worked on transportation planning, though, eight of the nine responded affirmatively. The nine organizations formed between 1964 and 1982. With the exception of one organization based in New York and one based in the state of Washington, the other seven are within the southern United States.

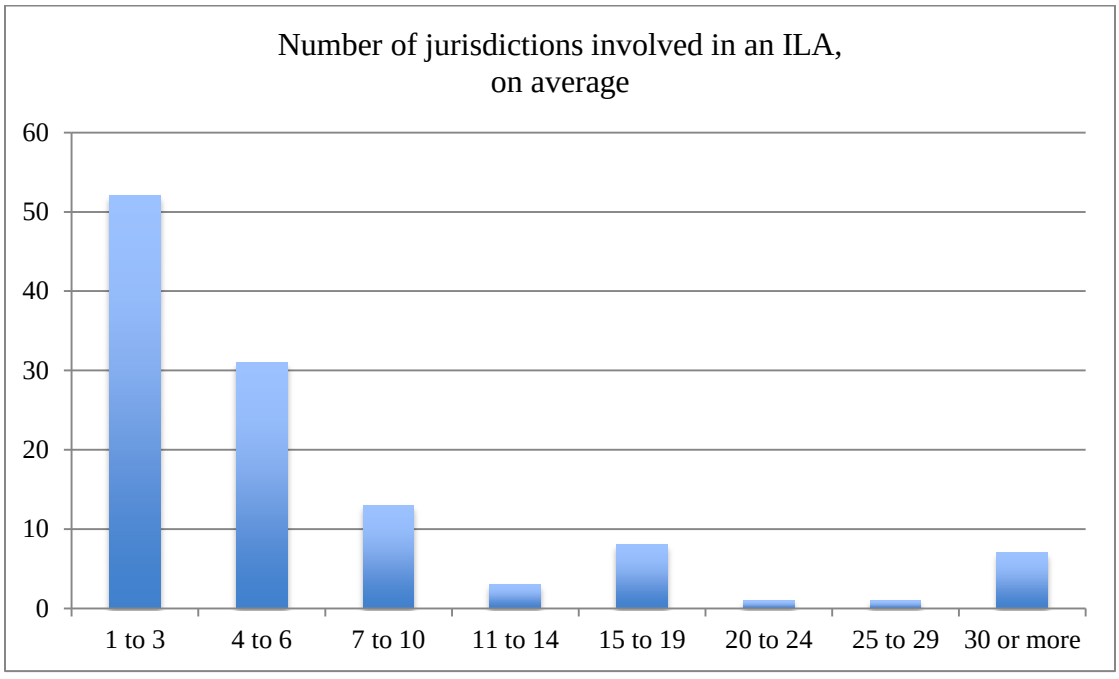

Figure 23: Number of jurisdictions in typical interlocal agreement (n=116)

The type of state law is not a statistically significant factor in the scale of interlocal agreements in which a regional council is involved (Table 5). The only variable

in the model that is statistically significant is population increase over the past ten years. Population growth appears as a factor in both whether a regional council is involved with ILAs, and the scope of the agreements being formed with the assistance of a regional council. Chapter five will further consider the potential implications of this finding.

Table 5: Model for scale of interlocal agreements[52]

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law	-0.023 (0.377)	0.95
Population Increase**	0.957 (0.486)	0.05
Economic Growth	0.113 (0.137)	0.41
Years in Operation	0.014 (0.015)	0.37
MPO (dummy)	0.517 (0.372)	0.17
Number of Members	-0.002 (0.004)	0.72
Director's Tenure	0.028 (0.019)	0.13

n = 110
Pseudo R^2 = .037
LR Chi^2 = 12.32
Prob > chi^2 = .090
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

While the prevalence of ILAs is undeniable, the vast majority of regional councils report that the "typical" ILA involves relatively few players. This sparks the question of

[52] The pool of respondents to this question included only those who had responded affirmatively that their organizations work with members on interlocal agreements. Therefore, the selection is a subset of the survey sample. The results of this model must be interpreted with additional caution due to this small sample size, which raises concerns that the maximum likelihood estimations will not be efficient and unbiased.

whether the ILA tool provides a workable method of promoting regional governance, or is better suited for small and medium-scale, systems maintenance service provision—somewhere between individual local government provision and full regional cooperation. This is a topic for further examination.

4.13: Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 is stated: Regional councils in states with prescriptive legislation are more likely (than those in states with enabling legislation) to report cooperative attitudes among members. Survey participants were asked to rate the statement "Members in this organization believe that working together can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes" (Figure 24) on a scale of one to ten (where one means "do not agree" and ten means "strongly agree"). This item was intended to measure the sense of a shared "destiny" that Cigler (1999) described among jurisdictions that develop trust and a tradition of cooperation (see also Thurmaier & Wood 2002; Wood 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger, & Pandey 2010). This was the first of two ways in which I attempted to measure cooperation among members.

Like other questions measuring perception, the responses to this survey item are skewed toward "strongly agree." Seventy-eight percent of participants responded with between eight and ten, on a scale of one to ten. Only seven directors assigned a five or lower to this item.

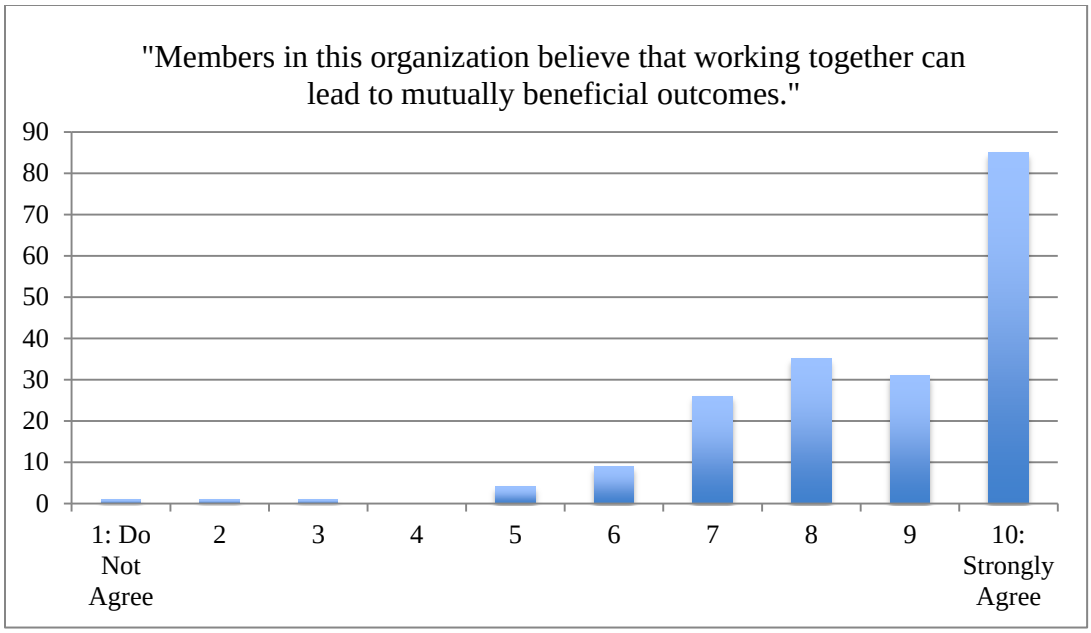

Figure 24: Director perception that members believe in mutually beneficial outcomes (n=193)

The type of state legislation does not have a statistically significant influence on directors' perception of the belief in mutually beneficial outcomes among regional council members (Table 6). Of the other independent variables in the model, only the MPO variable and the directors' tenure and education are statistically significant. Organizations that are MPOs, or include an MPO in their structure are significantly less likely to report high levels of believing that working together will lead to mutually beneficial results. It is possible that the types of work conducted through an MPO are more contentious than the work of other types of regional councils, or that members perceive that transportation outcomes are a zero-sum game—leaving some jurisdictions worse off while others benefit.

Table 6: Model for perception of attitudes on mutually beneficial outcomes

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law	0.129 (0.303)	0.67
Population Increase	0.478 (0.325)	0.14
Years in Operation	0.006 (0.012)	0.64
MPO (dummy)**	-0.579 (0.290)	0.05
Number of Members	-0.002 (0.003)	0.61
Director's Tenure**	0.033 (0.015)	0.03
Director's Education***	-0.650 (0.227)	0.00

n = 179
Pseudo R^2 = .035
LR Chi^2 = 19.20
Prob > chi^2 = .008
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

The second survey item intended to measure cooperation was worded in the reverse: "Members in this organization have competitive attitudes or rivalries that get in the way of working together" (Figure 25). This item was also on a scale of one to ten (where one means "do not agree" and ten means "strongly agree"), however it was not nearly as skewed as the two perception-based items discussed previously. There is, nonetheless, a statistically significant, negative bivariate correlation between the responses to this item and the responses to the previous item about mutually beneficial outcomes. The fact that more directors admitted rivalries than responded with a low number on the mutual benefit question suggests that in some cases, local government

leaders acknowledge there could be benefit in working with other jurisdictions, but that competitive attitudes prevent that from becoming a reality.

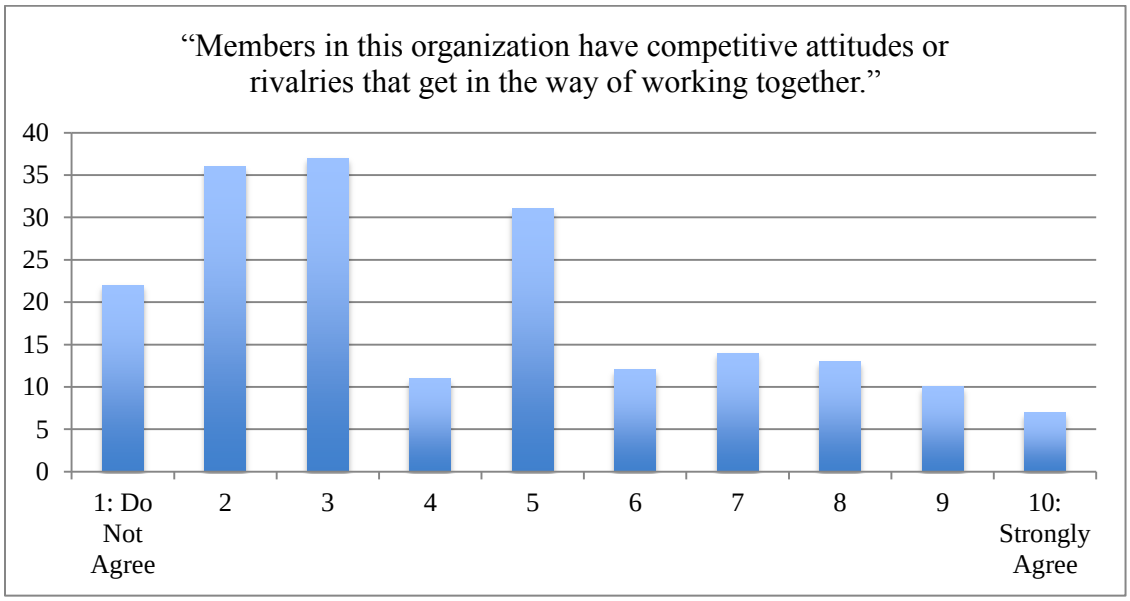

Figure 25: Director perception of competitive attitudes (n=193)

The open-ended responses reflected a similar dissonance between working together and coming up against crippling rivalries. While some directors report "a great sense of regionalism" in the area in which they work, as one director of a SuperCOG in Arkansas expressed, other feel less optimistic. A COG director from New York expressed, "We could do a better job at addressing interlocal issues."

A COG director from Missouri stated their members "believe in working together, but we serve five counties. One county is the concentration of population and development (50 percent of regional population), [and the] four remaining rural counties exhibit defensiveness." On the other hand, a COG director from Utah described a different attitude among it members: "The Six County Region is very diverse. Utah's regions were organized in the late 1960s. There have been significant changes since then

but the region(s) continue to work well together. There is give and take for each county involved which makes for success." This director's comments even suggest that there are different ways of defining a region—that regions within the larger region may exist. In this case, the longevity of the organization appears to be influencing its ability to broker cooperation among members.

The level of competitive attitudes or rivalries among members is not predicted by the type of state legislation (Table 7). Only population growth is a statistically significant factor in this model, having a negative relationship with competitiveness. In other words, in regions that have experienced population growth over the past decade, regional council directors are less likely to report competitive attitudes among members that prevent working together. One possible explanation for this finding is that "new blood" in a community does not carry with it a region's old ways of doing things. If rivalries existed between communities within a region in the past, perhaps new residents and leaders do not harbor those attitudes. This may be a finding of importance for growing regions, indicating that they might have an opportunity to seize, while regions experiencing population decline might want to focus on building good will and actively working to diminish the rivalries that jurisdictions may still hold against others in the region.

Table 7: Model for perception of competitive attitudes

	Coefficient	Significance Level
Type of State Law	-0.343 (0.289)	0.24
Population Increase**	-0.603 (0.306)	0.05
Years in Operation	-0.007 (0.011)	0.52
MPO (dummy)	0.414 (0.272)	0.13
Number of Members	-0.001 (0.003)	0.70
Director's Tenure**	-0.026 (0.014)	0.07
Director's Education	0.119 (0.200)	0.55

n = 180
Pseudo R^2 = .017
LR Chi^2 = 13.18
Prob > chi^2 = .068
*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

4.14: Does Proximity Matter?

Two other questions on the survey provide some insight into the scale of work conducted by regional councils, and the ease or difficulty with which local governments work with others in the region, based on proximity. LeRoux (2008) identified adjacent borders as a significant factor in the decision of jurisdictions to engage in an interlocal agreement. The first of these two questions asked directors whether they observed this tendency among the jurisdictions in their region by having them rate this statement: "Members are more likely to work together with other members who share a jurisdictional boundary, than those who are geographically located farther away," (where

one means “do not agree” and ten means “strongly agree”). Sixty percent of respondents selected seven or higher (Figure 26). This suggests that the majority of directors perceive a greater level of cooperation between jurisdictions that are located near one another than between those that are farther apart. The concept of shared destiny or mutual benefit appears throughout the literature regarding regional cooperation. This finding, supported by LeRoux’s (2008) work, indicates that the individual players within a region might not always view themselves as being on the same team.

A director of an organization in Arizona elaborated by writing, “members are more likely to work with other members if they are about the same size.” This suggests that feeling a sense of similarity with another community helps to generate cooperation, but that sharing a boundary is not the only similarity local leaders might recognize.

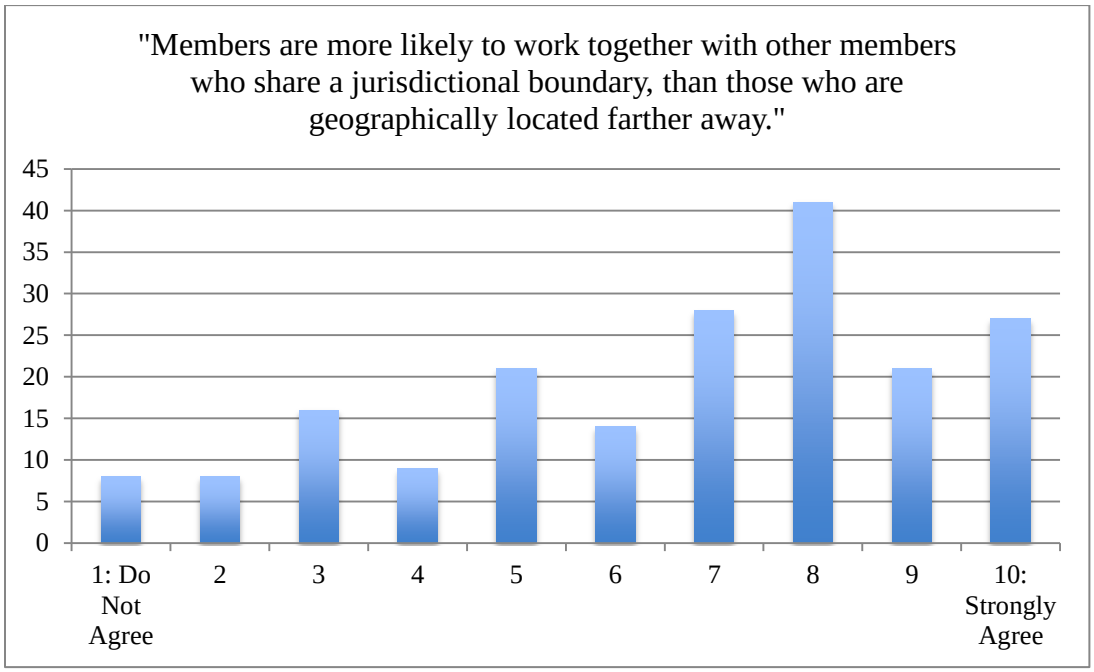

Figure 26: Proximity as a factor in cooperation (n=193)

Directors were also asked whether their organizations were effective at addressing issues that involve many jurisdictions. Seventy-four percent selected between seven and ten on a scale of one to ten (Figure 27). This indicates that despite the difficulty they may face in getting individual members to view themselves as part of a region, directors believe their organizations are capable of doing just that. Without further defining effectiveness and providing evidence of an organization's effectiveness, this question must be treated as simply reflecting the perception of a director. Further work is needed in order to truly understand what constitutes regional council effectiveness and how to measure it.

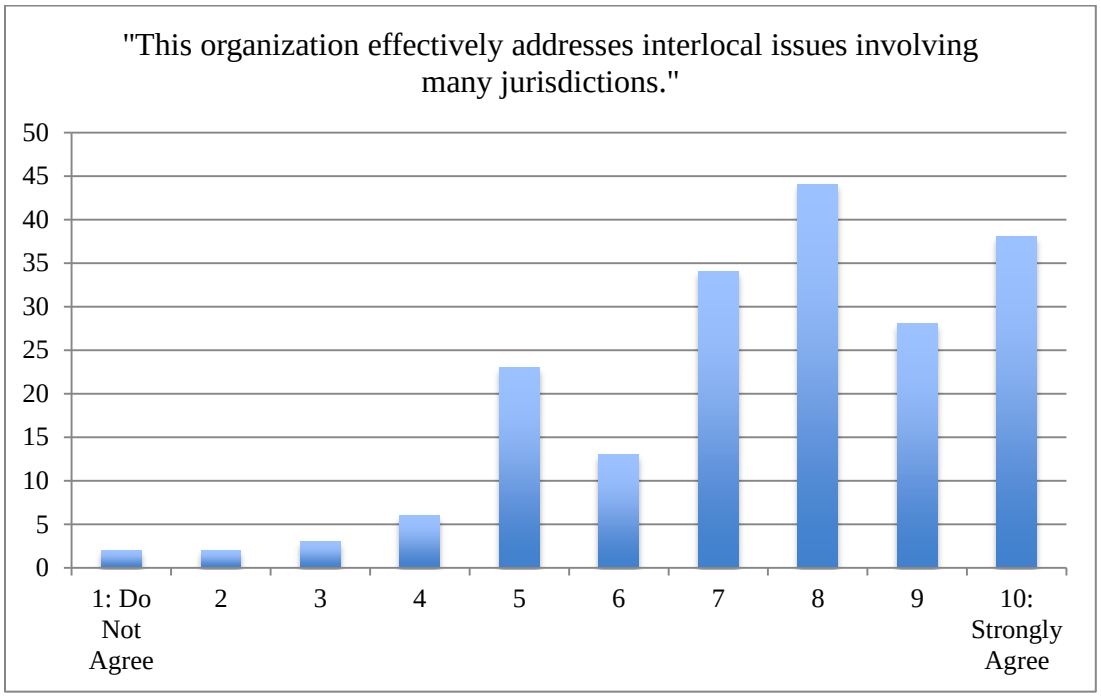

Figure 27: Director perception of effectiveness working with many jurisdictions (n=193)

4.15: Demographic Characteristics of Executive Directors

The executive directors of regional councils exhibit little diversity, at least in terms of typically measured demographic characteristics. The majority of directors are white males with a graduate or professional degree. In fact, 76 percent are male (Figure 28).

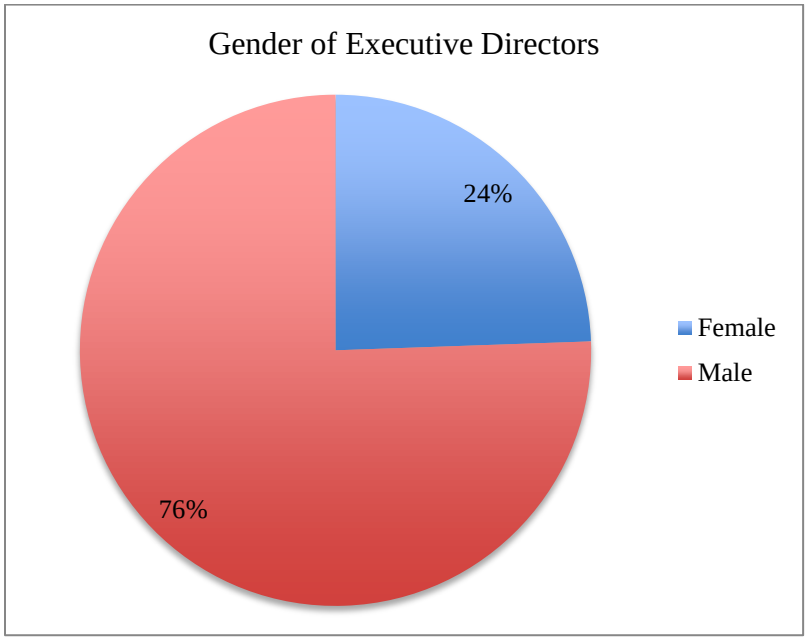

Figure 28: Gender of executive directors (n=180)

Most directors identified themselves as Caucasian/white. Only five percent identified themselves as belonging to any other race or ethnicity, including multiracial (Figure 29).

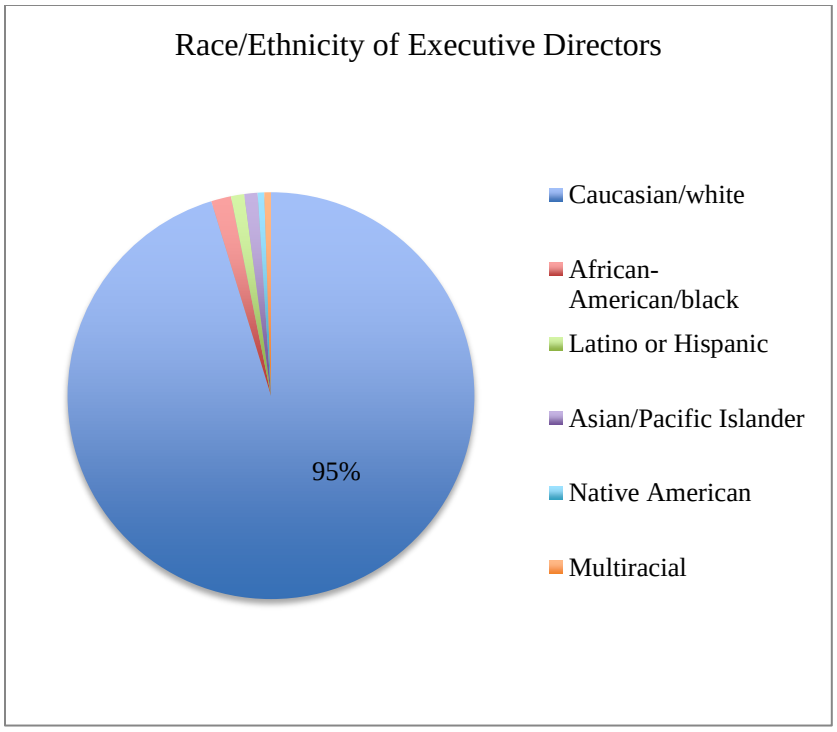

Figure 29: Race/ethnicity of executive directors (n=190)

The vast majority of directors hold a college degree (Figure 30). Only three percent report having less education than a four-year degree. Thirty-two percent currently have a bachelor's degree. Fifty-eight percent have a graduate or professional degree. Many of those with graduate degrees specified a degree in planning or an MPA degree. Seven percent indicate that they have earned a post-graduate degree.

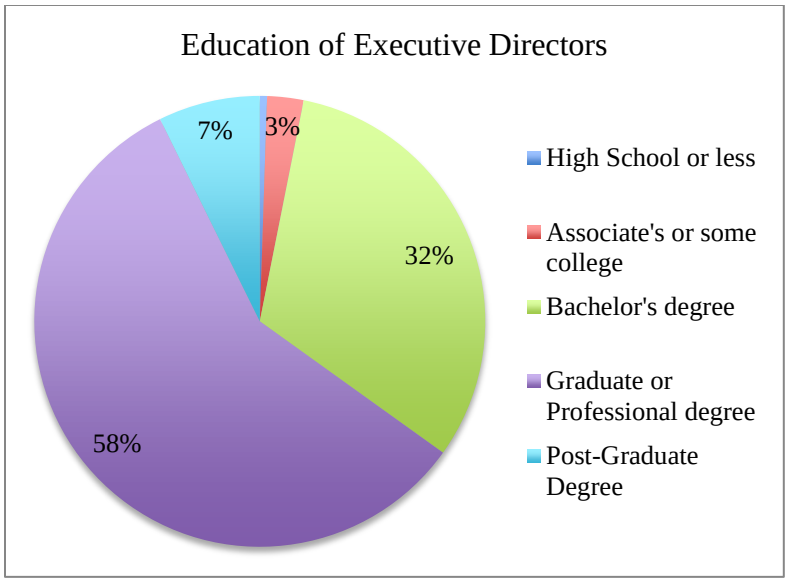

Figure 30: Education of executive directors (n=192)

Ninety-seven percent of regional council directors are over the age of 35. In fact, more than half are over the age of 55 (Figure 31).

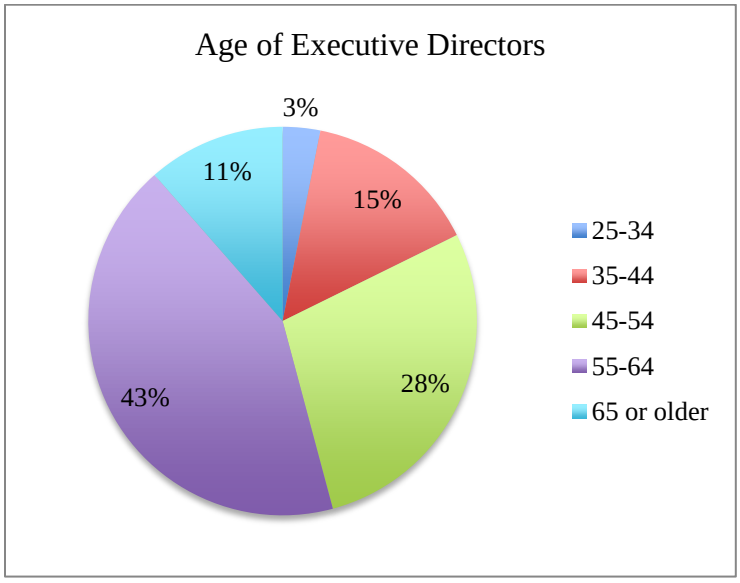

Figure 31: Age of executive directors (n=192)

Most directors identify themselves as politically moderate. Only 16 percent consider themselves liberal, while 20 percent respond they are conservative (Figure 32).

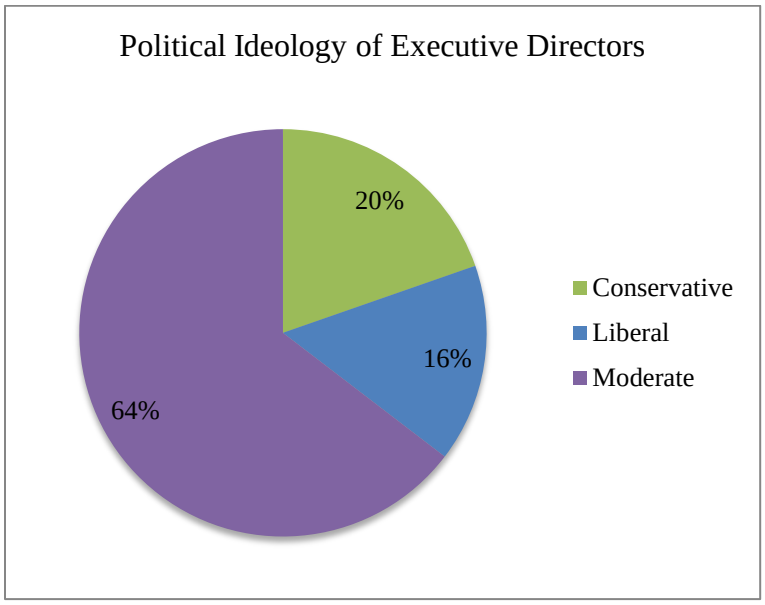

Figure 32: Political ideology of executive directors (n=178)

When asked about political affiliation, almost half responded they are unaffiliated with a political party. The percentage of directors that are affiliated with the Republican Party is roughly equivalent to those that responded they are politically conservative, at 21 percent. Thirty-two percent are affiliated with the Democrats. The remaining two percent are Libertarians (Figure 33).

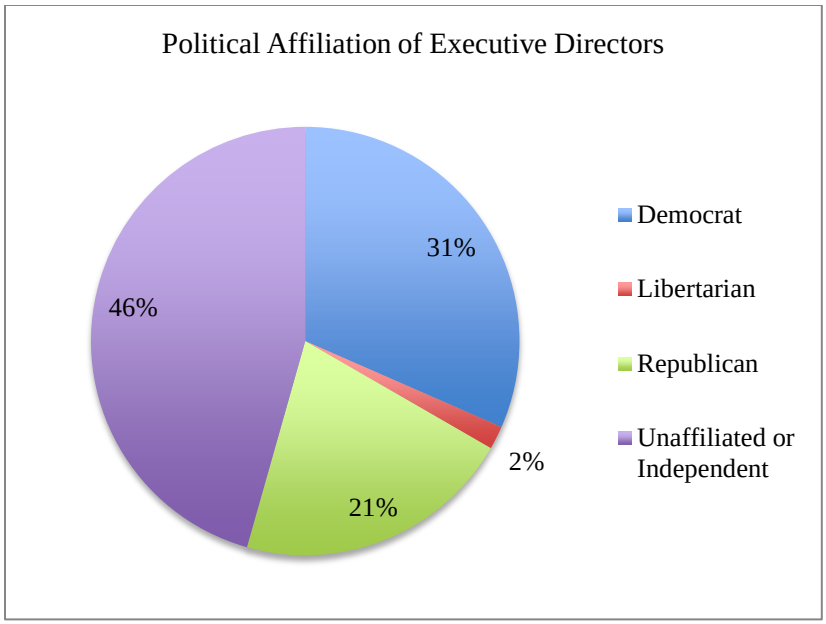

Figure 33: Political affiliation of executive directors (n=178)

4.16: Summary of Findings

Chapter five will discuss the substantive aspects of this study's findings and explore the implications for state and local governments seeking to improve upon regional cooperation. Overall, the type of state legislation—prescriptive or enabling—does not appear to exert a statistically significant influence on the functioning of regional councils across the United States. The only model in this research in which the type of legislation emerges as statistically significant pertains to the regional council director's perception of his or her effectiveness at facilitating face-to-face meetings among members (Hypothesis one, part two).

Perhaps the most salient, and also most surprising finding pertains to population growth within a region. Population growth is positively correlated with both the likelihood of regional councils facilitating interlocal agreements, and the scale or size of those agreements as measured by the number of participants in a "typical" agreement.

This finding is particularly interesting, given that some other studies found population growth to be negatively correlated with (or unrelated to) the likelihood of a jurisdiction engaging in interlocal agreements[53]. Population growth in a region is also negatively related to reports of competitive attitudes or rivalries between member jurisdictions within a region. Chapter five will examine this finding in more depth.

The length of time a regional council has operated is significantly related to both the frequency of face-to-face meetings among council members, and the likelihood that the organization is involved with facilitating interlocal agreements. This is consistent with the stream of literature that springs from Thurmaier & Wood (2002), and their melding of the literature on public management networks with the work of sociologists.

The classification of an organization as an MPO (or containing a region's MPO within its structure) is positively related to the frequency of meetings an organization holds, and also negatively significant in the model of member attitudes about mutually beneficial outcomes. Chapter five will examine MPOs as a special type of regional council, and review these findings in light of those special circumstances.

Given the dearth of empirical data on regional councils, this research seeks to contribute to a clearer picture of the work of regional councils across the United States. It is also my hope that theory related to regional governance will be strengthened by the findings of this research.

[53] See footnote 50, which details the findings of LeRoux & Carr (2007), LeRoux (2008), and Kwon & Feiock (2010).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Scholars and practitioners alike have long recognized the importance of regionalism, even as disagreement over the form it should take has persisted. Regional councils and similar organizations that exist alongside local governments serve the purpose of facilitating discussion and cooperation between individual jurisdictions on matters that extend beyond municipal boundaries. In some cases, their work might create economies of scale, greater technical efficiency, and other forms of cost savings to the local governments they serve. Despite the potential importance of regional councils, and the fact that they have frequently been cited in the literature as a factor in interlocal cooperation, little empirical work has examined these organizations themselves.

This study paints a broad portrait of the regional council currently operating in the United States. It finds the directors of these organizations, on average, to be a homogeneous group of well-educated, mid-career professionals. They are mostly white, mostly male, and frequently identify themselves as politically moderate and unaffiliated to a political party. The majority of regional councils in the study were formed between 1965 and 1975. Sixty-five percent of participating organizations operate in states with prescriptive legislation related to regional cooperation, while 34 percent are in states with enabling legislation. Only one percent of organizations are in states without either of these types of blanket legislation. On the whole, regional council organizations report they do not have the "teeth" to ensure meaningful participation on the part of members,

or to "coerce" cooperation. They report their members, on average, understand the importance of working together for mutual benefit, however they acknowledge that individual local governments are more likely to be willing to work with other local governments who share a jurisdictional boundary, or have other similarities with their own community, rather than engage in broader regional efforts at problem solving.

This study provides evidence for the following five concepts, which this chapter explores in greater depth:

1. Differences in state laws, identified in this study as prescriptive or enabling, do not generally have a significant influence on the manner in which regional councils operate or their effectiveness.
2. Population growth appears to be an important factor influencing interlocal cooperation.
3. A history of working together as a regional council increases the frequency of face-to-face meetings and likelihood of ILA facilitation.
4. MPOs operate differently than broad-based COGs.
5. Proximity is a factor in cooperation.

5.1: Influence of State Laws

This study examines face-to-face interaction between members of regional councils, previously identified as a precursor to cooperation (Thurmaier & Wood 2002; Wood, 2006; LeRoux, Brandenburger and Pandey 2010). The type of state law does not have a statistically significant influence on the frequency of formal meetings; rather the

length of an organization's operation and the existence of an MPO within the organization's structure predict the frequency of meetings.

The type of state law is significant in the model that examines an organization's effectiveness at facilitating face-to-face interactions between members, as judged by the executive directors. Those in states with prescriptive legislation are statistically more likely to respond that they are effective in this regard. This could support the theory that coercion to participate is generating more effective face-to-face interaction—and therefore leading to cooperation at some future point in time. However, we must interpret this finding with caution, as it is based on the leader's own perception of his or her effectiveness.

In the models that examine the regional council's facilitation of cooperation through interlocal agreements, the scale of a "typical" interlocal agreement within a given region, and the level of competitiveness of members (and conversely their perception that cooperating can be mutually beneficial), the type of blanket state legislation does not emerge as a statistically significant factor. The difference between enabling legislation and prescriptive legislation does not appear to play a substantive role in the current functioning of regional councils.

It is possible that the state laws, many of which have existed for four decades or longer, no longer have the influence they once had on the formation and operation of regional councils. Another possibility is that state laws, though influential in the formation of organizations, were not as influential as the federal legislation, which provided incentives in the form of various types of financial support for the creation of regional councils.

Providing further evidence for the limited influence of the type of state law on the work of regional councils is the response from executive directors in states with prescriptive legislation that their organizations are "voluntary." This suggests that, even in states in which the governor or other state official has designated which local governments shall form a regional council, the law is either loosely interpreted or does not result in a penalty for municipalities that select not to participate. Therefore, even the more heavy-handed of the two identified types of state legislation is not particularly coercive.

5.2: Population Growth

An increase in population within a region is statistically significant in three of the models in this study—positively related to the regional council's facilitation of interlocal agreements, positively associated with the number of jurisdictions involved in a region's "typical" interlocal agreement (in which the regional council has some involvement), and negatively related to the level of competitive attitudes among members, as reported by the executive director of the regional council.

Changes in population can lead to changes in the way local governments provide services. Increases in population could result in the fiscal stress that scholars have identified as encouraging local governments to consider interlocal agreements (Cigler 1999; Olberding 2002; LeRoux & Carr 2007). However, population decline could also be a motivating factor in the consideration of interlocal cooperation (Kwon & Feiock 2010). Prior studies have examined population change at the level of individual jurisdictions, rather than the region, as this study specified.

Though the literature does not provide a clear causal mechanism, I argue that population growth, at the regional level, could influence the work of local leaders—and the work of regional councils—by infusing new ideas about how to provide services, as well as larger scale land use/transportation planning challenges. In addition to bringing new ideas to the table, experiencing growth within the region likely brings people into the area who do not harbor any long-standing mistrust or negative attitudes toward other jurisdictions within the region that could hamper efforts to cooperate. This topic deserves further investigation.

5.3: Trust

Trust develops over time, through repeated interactions, allowing regional councils with a long history of operation to more effectively facilitate partnerships or cooperation between member jurisdictions. The number of years a regional council has been operating is statistically significant in the models representing the frequency of face-to-face meetings and the likelihood that the regional council works to facilitate interlocal agreements among its members. In both cases, the relationship is positive—regional councils that have been in existence longer are more likely to have frequent meetings and more likely to assist with formal interlocal agreements.

This finding supports the work conducted by Thurmaier & Wood (2002), who closely studied the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) in the Kansas City metropolitan area, and others that have followed along similar lines. While trust itself is a difficult concept to operationalize, the development of a shared history and "norms of reciprocity" appears to occur over time, generating a culture that supports cooperation.

5.4: MPOs are Different

MPOs were initially formed when the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 gave them a role in regional transportation planning for MSAs with at least 50,000 residents. Being the product of federal legislation, rather than state legislation or an organic development on the part of local leaders, MPOs are distinct from other regional councils. Their focus on transportation planning sets them apart from organizations with other primary goals or broader based organizations that work in numerous service areas. The federal devolution of authority on urban policy that occurred in the 1980s affected MPOs profoundly—perhaps more so than other types of regional councils (as predicted by Bowman & Franke 1984). Only as the twentieth century drew to a close did MPOs get a renewed sense of purpose through the ISTEA legislation and TEA-21 (Wolf & Farquhar 2005).

When a regional council operates as an MPO, or includes an MPO within its structure, it behaves differently in the quantitative models that represent the frequency of meetings and the belief among members that cooperation can lead to mutual benefit. On the one hand, MPOs are more likely than non-MPO regional councils to facilitate frequent face-to-face meetings among members. On the other hand, MPO directors are significantly less likely to report that members believe cooperation is mutually beneficial. This signifies that MPOs, by their very nature, address issues that are inherently more contentious than basic service delivery or abstract discussions of cooperation. Local communities stand to gain or lose from decisions related to transportation, land-use, and urban form (Downs 1994; Turner, Wial, & Wolman 2008). As Wolf and Farquhar (2005)

argue, local governments carefully guard their authority over issues related to the integration of land use and transportation (1072).

At the same time, MPOs are modeled as regional councils, dependent on the voluntary cooperation of member jurisdictions (Wolf and Farquhar 2005). This leads to a conservative approach to decision-making (Leland & Whisman 2012), and weakness on matters that do not reach consensus among members (Wolf and Farquhar 2005). These weaknesses have generated concerns that the institutional structures to address truly regional issues in a comprehensive manner simply do not exist (Downs 1994; Grigsby 1996; Visser 2004; Wolf and Farquhar 2005).

Respondents to this survey confirmed scholars' concerns with their comments. According to a Florida MPO director, "Dues are voluntary and lack of payment does not limit voting authority," in that regional council. The director of a North Carolina MPO offered that members who do not actively participate in the organization receive a "slap on the wrist," indicating that the MPO lacks authority. Considering the far-reaching influence of the types of work MPOs are meant to conduct, these limitations are significant.

5.5: Proximity is Important

This study examined whether local governments are engaging in truly regional efforts, or if they are more likely to work together with other local governments who are their immediate neighbors. While not one of the primary hypotheses of this study, the findings suggest that in many cases, proximity is indeed an important consideration in voluntary cooperation. LeRoux and Carr (2007) suggested that adjacent borders could

influence the likelihood of a local government engaging in interlocal agreements for service delivery.

While small scale regionalism is undeniably occurring through the use of interlocal agreements between small numbers of jurisdictions, similar sorts of agreements do not appear as likely to form when larger issues, and therefore larger numbers of jurisdictions, are concerned. Those large-scale agreements would represent correspondingly large-scale issues such as transportation, land use, and the environment (Downs 1994; Jimenez & Hendrick 2010; Wolf and Farquhar 2005; Turner, Wial, & Wolman 2008). These large-scale, regional issues interact with one another, and will shape the future of our communities and influence the quality of life for subsequent generations. Finding true regionalism is a foremost challenge facing America's regions today. This concern is a focus of the final section of this report.

5.6: How Do these Findings Fit into the Bigger Picture of Regional Governance?

This study has not attempted to measure outcomes of regional cooperation, but has focused on the organizations that work to facilitate cooperation, and the rules by which they were established and are governed. This is important work, and further study is warranted. In addition, examining outcomes across a variety of contexts will be an important goal of future research. Turner, Wial, & Wolman (2008) outlined the complexity of measuring outcomes—even determining which outcomes are desirable is a subjective matter when considering policy through a metropolitan lens. Olberding (2002, 2009), while acknowledging the complexity of evaluating outcomes rather than simply outputs (such as interlocal agreements), has attempted to move the field of study in that direction, within the context of regional economic development organizations. She used

employment change and income change as the desired outcomes. Turner, Wial, & Wolman (2008) point out that measuring economic development in a metropolitan area might be more appropriately accomplished by examining whether the earnings of an area's existing residents have changed. They point out the differential effects of policies on various demographic groups, and argue that simply measuring changes in the area's tax base, total employment, or average earnings, may mask equity issues in economic development. This highlights the challenges, and subjective nature, of determining the success or effectiveness of regional cooperation efforts. Researchers must be mindful of potential bias in developing research designs to examine the outcomes of policy. Conducting the type of analysis that Olberding has attempted with regional partnerships for economic development with organizations that work in broader contexts will be even more challenging, as the goals extend beyond a single context (such as transportation or economic development). Additionally, desired outcomes might vary from one region to another, along with other localized circumstances, further complicating analysis. Nonetheless, researchers must find ways to make meaningful recommendations for policy formulation and implementation.

This research was not designed to examine outcomes, but to better understand the regional council organizations that attempt to facilitate cooperation between local governments. It sheds some light on the difficulties executive directors face when trying to foster face-to-face interaction intended to generate trust and a sense that communities can be better off for cooperating. This study indicates the current types of state legislation—whether enabling or prescriptive—do not, for the most part, influence whether or not regional councils are able to provide an environment conducive to

regional cooperation. Though the majority of regional councils are actively facilitating interlocal agreements between member jurisdictions, most of those agreements are smaller scale, between just a handful of members rather than the entire region, indicating they are typically addressing smaller scale service delivery issues and not the broader regional issues that affect the metropolitan area as a whole. This highlights what other research has indicated—regional councils lack the authority to make hard decisions and resort to conservative measures instead. The question remains: is there a better way to structure these organizations that would provide them with the ability to truly coordinate regional decision-making?

5.7: How Should Regional Councils such as COGs and MPOs be Structured?

As Oakerson (1999) expressed in regard to local governments themselves, there is "no one correct pattern of organization" (114). The answers instead lie in separating provision from production, giving residents choices in terms of how to constitute and govern their communities, and being sure that an "umbrella jurisdiction," which complements rather than competing with the local governments it overlies, ties together central cities with their suburbs (123). Regional councils could function as the overlying jurisdiction Oakerson describes. However, they do not have "the power of regional government" (Visser 2004, 61).

Even as large-scale, regional issues are a primary policy concern, regional government exists in only a couple of examples in the U.S. While authorities at the national, state, and local levels can set focused policy priorities, make decisions, and carry out actions accordingly (to the extent possible given budgetary constraints at any point in time), no such body exists at the regional level, with the exception of Metro in

the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area, and to a lesser degree in Minneapolis/St. Paul. Regional councils can provide a forum for discussion of region-wide concerns and allow for collaborative planning. However, they do not typically have the authority to make binding decisions. As Visser (2004) noted, "Voluntary regional council collaboration may not be an effective substitute for regional governance, but it is superior to destructive interlocal competition or isolationism in the interdependent metropolis" (61).

However, Wolf and Farquhar (2005) take a less optimistic stance in stating, "Strong regional institutions are critical for effective metropolitan-wide governance to flourish" (1072). Today's regional councils do not, by and large, represent the strong institutions Wolf and Farquhar envision. Regional councils tend toward conservative action (Visser 2004; Grigsby 1996; Leland & Whisman 2012) as they attempt to maintain their voluntary membership by avoiding conflict. As such, their ability to pursue and enact decisive policy related to regional outcomes is muted, if not absent.

Wolf and Bryan (2009) describe regional councils as "relatively weak and ineffective, caused in large part by the institutional intergovernmental context in which they must function. They are often forced to avoid conflicts among the local governments involved and work on relatively noncontroversial issues" (61-62). Visser (2004) refers to the context in which these organizations work as the "idiosyncratic history" of regional councils. The personality and leadership styles of directors and the individuals representing member jurisdictions, along with their past interactions and the trust (or lack of trust) they have developed over time, will differentially affect each regional council.

A COG director from Arizona weighed in on this concept by responding on the survey, "Past experiences play in but turn over [sic] of elected officials and staff

minimize the impact." In this director's opinion, having new members involved in the regional council mitigates the potentially problematic aspects of history.

Directors of organizations from Texas and Ohio shared statements on the survey that reflected comparable experiences. A COG director from Texas wrote, "Overall, our members work very well together, and we generally are able to get past historic rivalries. However, each year there are one to two folks that 'get in the way' of regional projects and progress." Similarly, the director of an Ohio SuperCOG shared, "I think we get a great deal of cooperation amongst member jurisdictions. Although, there are a few people who have trouble working with anyone." The regional council directors and staff find themselves trying to encourage cooperation from sometimes reluctant participants.

Another opinion was shared by a SuperCOG director from Arkansas: "Whether or not there are rivalries between the jurisdictions depends on who is in office. Currently, everyone is very cooperative, which has not always been the case." This suggests that the strength of leadership among the member jurisdictions plays an important role in the ability of a regional council to carry out its work.

The work of regional council staff was articulated by the director of a Nevada SuperCOG in these words: "There are inherent tensions between the disparate states and local government jurisdictions represented on our Board. Those tensions need to be constantly managed but generally the mission of the agency…is to find solutions to those intergovernmental rivalries where they arise in order to accomplish statutory goals. Difficult, time consuming, politically complicated, but we get it done." This attitude reflects both a sense of efficacy on the part of the director, and the reality of the challenging and complex nature of getting groups to cooperate.

Orfield (2002) took exception to "consensus-based regionalists" (as contrasted with the harder hitting "progressive" regionalists of the past) and argued that not everyone will be happy with the outcomes of regional decision-making. A North Carolina MPO director spoke along similar lines with this comment: "There are always rivalries in an intergovernmental organization. The trick for staff is to ensure that those rivalries do not derail work. In our case staff works hard to ensure that decisions consider elected official input and needs. Essentially informed consent. I do not believe that consensus is a good option. Sometimes not everyone is happy. That's just a fact." This director's candid words reflect Orfield's sentiments about the manner in which regional cooperation has developed and the expectation some have for consensus-based regionalism.

Grigsby (1996) concluded, "In the final analysis… dedicated leadership resolved to address these difficult… issues will be the factor which makes the difference" (57). Effective leadership is undoubtedly a key factor in building stronger regional cooperation. Scholars and practitioners alike have grappled with the role of leaders in collaborative or network governance scenarios. Wolf & Bryan (2009) assert that successful regional councils are those that develop "effective processes for collaboration and consensus building that allow them to work with diverse interests around common problems" (66). Weber & Khademian (2008) similarly argue that local public managers will need to become, or identify and work closely with, "collaborative capacity builders" in network settings, in order to effectively address wicked or complex problems (334). But how is that best accomplished? O'Toole (1997) noted that public administrators face the challenge of operating in complex networks, without the help of theory to guide their efforts.

Silvia (2011) expresses that the study of collaborative governance still has a long way to grow, recognizes that network leadership is fundamentally different from hierarchical leadership, and argues that local leaders need to develop a different skillset than what was required traditionally. Confirming what other scholars have written about cooperation between entities, Silvia identifies trust as "the glue that holds the network together" (70), while acknowledging that scholars and practitioners need to develop a stronger understanding of how to achieve the desired outcomes within the network environment. As both a practical matter and a topic of study, network governance and collaborative problem solving remain puzzling.

Specifically in regard to regional councils, what measures should be taken to encourage true regional cooperation? While Nunn & Rosentraub (1997) assert that there is "no one best way to encourage cooperation" (205), Downs (1994) sees voluntary cooperation between local governments as the "least satisfactory response" to larger scale regional concerns. Specifically examining the issues related to growth, Downs concedes that some smaller scale policy concerns, such as addressing traffic congestion by timing signals, might be well managed through voluntary cooperation. However, when policies related to regional land use, transportation, and growth "require allocating benefits and costs among jurisdictions, sacrifices on the part of one locality or another, or other controversial decisions, this approach does not work" (170-171).

After observing a decision-making process undertaken by an MPO in the Louisville area, Vogel and Nezelkewicz (2002) concluded, "More attention needs to be focused on how to better structure and manage the intergovernmental system to achieve greater coordination and coherence in metropolitan policies" (127). The process did not

take into consideration the land use component (or sprawl, in the authors words) when selecting the site for a new bridge across the Ohio River. This is not entirely surprising, given the Federal-Aid Policy Guide[54] statement that the plans and programs carried out by MPOs "facilitate the efficient, economic movement of people and goods." This narrow focus does not recognize the interconnected nature of transportation, land use, environmental and economic concerns.

Bollens (1997) refers to the current forms of regional cooperation as "shadow" regionalism. He writes, "Shadow regionalism bears but a faint connection to the true potential of regional governance [which would] integrate environmental, social, and economic policies on a metropolitan wide scale" (119). Evidence suggests, based on the findings of this study and others cited in this chapter, that true regionalism has not yet been realized in most regions of the United States. Regional councils have been successful in generating conversations, and cooperation on some services, however they lack the authority to make the difficult decisions that will be required if regions are to function in a coordinated manner on large-scale issues. Is it possible to take the current structure of voluntary associations of local government and mold these organizations into authorities capable of coordinating regional decision-making?

Scholars have made some suggestions regarding better coordination of regional decision-making. For those who focus on service provision, the evidence seems clear that voluntary interjurisdictional cooperation is not only possible, but fairly common. For those considering truly regional issues, the outcomes of voluntary cooperation through regional governance, as is typically facilitated by regional councils, is far less certain.

---

[54] Retrieved from: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/fapg/Cfr450c.htm

Jimenez and Hendrick (2010) wrap up their article "Is Government Consolidation the Answer?" with more questions, rather than a conclusion. They wonder whether voluntary cooperation will be sufficient in responding to region-wide problems such as "sprawl" (266). Wood (2006), in examining the Kansas City region, observes quite a bit of cooperation on what he refers to as system maintenance service, and expresses optimism that this sort of cooperation will build into a "democratic regional community" (350) capable of addressing regional concerns.

Chakraborty (2010), however, argues that, though transportation is being addressed through regional governance, it is not being comprehensively considered with the interrelated issue of land-use planning. He finds that some local governments are working together through a process known as scenario planning to formulate plans for coordinating land use with transportation. He argues that in the absence of regional government, governance can be effective at addressing regional issues, but only with a process in place that is agreed upon in advance. Even so, limitations remain. For example, the buy-in from individual local governments is not a sure thing. The sort of scenario planning described is still a voluntary process, and therefore not binding. Vogel and Nezelkewicz (2002) argue, "metropolitan governance requires more careful 'structuring' with the region and between the region and the state and federal governments." They believe greater coordination between transportation and land use planning can occur if "states embrace 'smart growth' and delegate this authority to regional agencies," such as COGs and MPOs (129).

Grisby (1996) wrote, "In the past, the federal government has been the primary driver behind formulating regional strategies. In the future, it will be states prompted by

the private sector and community-based groups who forge the types of partnerships required for regional organizations to become more effective" (53). Gordon (2007) agrees that states can play a role in incentivizing cooperation (particularly in the area of economic development).

Scholars' suggestions of state intervention are, perhaps intentionally, vague. How exactly such legislation would be crafted, the manner in which regional councils would aggregate the preferences of individual jurisdictions—or override their wishes—and the resulting regional structures have not been fleshed out by scholars or by legislators. Moving from a voluntary system of regional cooperation to one that is mandated seems heavy-handed in some regards, and would represent a major shift in how regional councils operate.

In fact, one survey respondent, a COG director from Wisconsin, wrote, "To achieve successful regional collaboration, commitment to long-term collaboration and cooperation is needed at the highest levels of leadership in the region. This commitment and the related political leadership are absent in our region." This comment seems to acknowledge that greater involvement on the part of the state would be welcomed.

Similarly, a Massachusetts regional council director wrote that, "Massachusetts does not support regional planning to any great extent, at least financially. Its recent support focuses on reducing municipal costs in light of continuing tight state budgets through 'regionalization.' There is no state level planning department. We are a 'home rule' state that impedes regionalization." Like the director from Wisconsin, this respondent seems frustrated with a lack of involvement or support for regional decision-making at the state level.

On the other hand, a director of a New York COG described changes at the state level that affected regional councils in this manner: "This region is very diverse. The counties we serve have strong individual identities as well as issues. The current economic situation has forced the counties to seek out cooperation and many are beginning to think regionally. Unfortunately in NY the Governor has restructured his statewide funding, created new Regional Economic Development Councils and appointed all the members and tied these new districts to the state grant funding process—marginalizing the existing regional councils in the process." The director has observed a greater willingness on the part of local governments to cooperate, however what appears to be a heavy-handed approach by the state, without taking into account what is already happening on the ground, may set back those regional efforts by beginning a new approach that attempts to work outside of the existing regional council structure.

Though arriving at a specific proposal for states to follow in regard to regional cooperation is beyond the scope of this research project, it does seem clear that regional councils will continue to be limited in their ability to coordinate large-scale regional decision-making, even as they may be effective in facilitating interlocal agreements on smaller scale service delivery. Given the lack of federal policy focused on cities since the 1980s, it seems unlikely for the federal government to get involved in regional planning beyond its current legislation regarding MPOs. If state governments are to grant decision-making authority to regional councils, the councils may be capable of formulating and executing plans that would coordinate large-scale issues in a regional manner. As the comments above suggest, however, this should be done with consideration of the existing structure of regional governance in each state, rather than attempting to implement a

purely top-down approach that disregards or supersedes conversations, cooperation, or coordination already underway.

Regional councils, and interjurisdictional cooperation in general, will continue to provide both challenges and opportunities for practitioners seeking to improve regional outcomes. This area of study will also continue to provide fertile ground for scholars rising to Elinor Ostrom's (1990, 216) challenge to understand why some groups overcome the challenges of collective action while others do not.

REFERENCES

Andrews, F.M. (1984). Construct validity and error components of survey measures: A structural modeling approach. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 48*(2), 409-442.

Agranoff, R., & McGuire, M. (1998). Multinetwork management: Collaboration and the hollow state in local economic policy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 8*(1), 67-91.

Agranoff, R., & McGuire, M. (2004). Another look at bargaining and negotiating in intergovernmental management. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 14*(4), 513-533.

Axelrod, R. (1981). The emergence of cooperation among egoists. *The American Political Science Review, 75*(2), 306-318.

Bish, R. (2000). Local government amalgamations: 19th century ideas for the 21st century. Toronto, ON: Howe Institute.

Bollens, S.A. (1997). Fragments of regionalism: The limits of Southern California governance. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 19*(1), 105-122.

Bowman, A.O'M., & Franke, J.L. (1984). The decline of substate regionalism. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 6*(4), 51-63.

Boyne, G. (1992). Is there a relationship between fragmentation and local government costs? *Urban Affairs Review, 28*(4), 317-322.

Boyne, G. (1995). Population size and economies of scale in local government. *Policy & Politics, 23*(3), 213-222.

Bryman, A., & Cramer, D. (2009). *Quantitative data analysis with SPSS 14, 15, & 16: A guide for social scientists,* 173-174. New York, NY: Routledge.

Chakraborty, A. (2010). Scenario planning for effective regional governance: Promises and limitations. *State and Local Government Review, 42*(2), 156-167.

Cigler, B.A. (1999). Pre-conditions for the emergence of multicommunity collaborative organizations. *Policy Studies Review, 16*(1), 86-102.

Coase, R.H. (1960). The problem of social cost. *Journal of Law and Economics, 3* (Oct., 1960), 1-44.

Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning, Quantitative Methods in Social Sciences (2002). "One-Sample T-Test."

Deller, S.C., & Rudnicki, E. (1992). Managerial efficiency in local government: Implications on jurisdictional consolidation. *Public Choice, 74,* 221-231.

Dollery, B., & Crase, L. (2005). Optimial alternative approaches to structural reform in regional and rural Australian local government. University of New England, School of Economics. Working Paper Series in Economics. No. 2005-3.

Dollery, B., & Johnson, A. (2005). Enhancing efficiency in Australian local government: An evaluation of alternative models of municipal governance. *Urban Policy and Research, 23*(1), 73-85.

Downs, A. (1994). *New visions for metropolitan America.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Feiock, R.C. (2005). Institutional collective action and local governance. *Working Group on Interlocal Services Cooperation.* Paper 5.

Feiock, R.C., Lee, I.W., Park, H.J., & Lee, K.-H. (2010). Collaboration networks among local elected officials: Information, commitment and risk aversion. *Urban Affairs Review, 46*(2), 241-262.

Frederickson, H.G. (1999). The repositioning of American public administration. John Gaus Lecture presented at the American Political Science Association meeting, September 3, Atlanta, Georgia.

Frug, G. (2000). Against centralization. *Buffalo Law Review, 48*(1), 31-38.

Fulton, W., & Newman, M. (1992). When COGs collide. *Planning, 58*(6), 9-13.

Gordon, V. (2007). Partners or competitors? Perceptions of regional economic development cooperation in Illinois. *Economic Development Quarterly, 21*(1), 60-78.

Grigsby III, J.E. (1996). Regional governance and regional councils. *National Civic Review, 85*(2), 53-58.

Guetschow, G.G. (2007). Coordination, collaboration, and culture: Local economic development in a time of network. Dissertation, Western Michigan University, School of Public Affairs and Administration.

Giuliano, G. (2004). Where is the "region" in regional transportation planning? In *Up against the sprawl: Public policy and the making of southern California.* Wolch, J., Pastor, Jr., M., & Dreier, P. (Eds.) Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science, 162,* 1243-1248.

Hawkins, C.V., Andrew, S.A. (2010). Linking cooperative arrangements and economic development strategies: An institutional collective action framework. *International Review of Public Administration, 15*(1), 1-16.

Hefetz, A., Warner, M.E., & Vigoda-Gadot, E. (2012). Privatization and intermunicipal contracting: the US local government experience 1992-2007. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 30*(4), 675-692.

Jiminez, B.S., & Hendrick, R. (2010). Is government consolidation the answer? *State & Local Government Review, 42*(3), 258-270.

Kraus, N. (2012). The challenges and possibilities for regional collaboration among small jurisdictions. *State and Local Government Review, 44*(1), 45-54.

Krueger, S. (2006). Counting competitors: Relative gains and cooperation in metropolitan America. *Working Group on Interlocal Services Cooperation.* Paper 20.

Kwon, Sung-Wook, & Feiock, Richard C. (2010). Overcoming the barriers to cooperation: Intergovernmental service agreements. *Public Administration Review, 70*(6), 876-884.

Lee, Y. (2011). Collaboration among governmental organization: Economic development policy networks among local governments. Dissertation, Florida State University, Askew School of Public Administration and Policy.

Leland, S., & Thurmaier, K. (2004). (Eds.) *Reshaping the local government landscape: Case studies of local government consolidation*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Leland, S., & Thurmaier, K. (2005). When efficiency is unbelievable: Normative lessons from 30 years of city-county consolidations. *Public Administration Review65*(4),475-489.

Leland, S., & Thurmaier, K. (2010). (Eds.) *City-county consolidation: Promises made, promises kept?* Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Leland, S., & Whisman, H. (2012). *The anatomy of regional governance.* A paper prepared for the Urban Affairs Association Annual Meetings. April 2012. Pittsburgh, PA.

LeRoux, K. (2008). Nonprofit community conferences: The role of alternative regional institutions in interlocal service delivery. *State & Local Government Review, 40*(3), 160-172.

LeRoux, Kelly, & Carr, J.B. (2007). Explaining local government cooperation on public works: Evidence from Michigan. *Public Works Management Policy, 12*(1), 344-358.

LeRoux, K., Brandenburger, P.W., Pandey, S.K. (2010). Interlocal service cooperation in U.S. cities: A social network explanation. *Public Administration Review, 70*(2), 268-278.

Long, J.S., & Freese, J. (2006). *Regression models for categorical dependent variables using Stata: Second edition.* College Station, TX: A Stata Press Publication.

Lowery, D. (1998). Consumer sovereignty and quasi-market failure. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 8*(2), 137-172.

Morgan, D.R., Hirlinger, M.W. (1991). Intergovernmental service contracts: A multivariate explanation. *Urban Affairs Quarterly, 27*(1), 128-144.

North, D.C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance.* New York, NY: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

Nunn, S., &Rosentraub, M.S. (1997). Dimensions of interjurisdictional cooperation. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 63*(2), 205-219.

Oakerson, R.J. (1999). *Governing local public economies: Creating the civic metropolis.* Oakland, CA: ICS Press.

Olberding, J.C. (2002). Does regionalism beget regionalism? The relationship between norms and regional partnership for economic development. *Public Administration Review, 62*(4), 480-491.

Olberding, J.C. (2009). Toward evaluating the effectiveness of regional partnerships for economic development in U.S. metropolitan areas. *International Journal of Public Administration, 32*, 393-414.

Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups.* Harvard University Press.

Orfield, M. (1997). *Metropolitics: A regional agenda for community and stability.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Orfield, M. (2002). Politics and regionalism. In *Urban sprawl: Causes, consequences & policy responses.* Squires, G.D. (Ed.). Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Ostrom, E. (1997). A behavioral approach to the rational choice theory of collective action: Presidential address, American Political Science Association. *The American Political Science Review, 92*(1), 1-22.

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Ostrom, V., Tiebout, C.M., & Warren, R. (1961). The organization of government in metropolitan areas: A theoretical inquiry. *The American Political Science Review, 55*(4), 831-842.

O'Toole, L.J., Jr. (1997). Treating networks seriously: Practical and research-based agendas in public administration. *Public Administration Review, 57*(1), 45-52.

O'Toole, L.J., Jr., & Meier, K.J. (2004). Public management in intergovernmental networks: Matching structural networks and managerial networking. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 14*(4), 469-494.

Parks, Roger B., & Oakerson, Ronald J. (2000). Regionalism, localism, and metropolitan governance: Suggestions from the research program on local public economies. *State & Local Government Review, 32*(3), 169-179.

Patten, M.L. (1998). *Questionnaire research: A practical guide.* Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Provan, K.G., & Milward, H.B. (2001). Do networks really work? A framework for evaluating public-sector organizational networks. *Public Administration Review, 61*(4), 414-423.

Rosentraub, M.S., & al-Habil, W. (2009). Why metropolitan governance is growing, as is the need for elastic governments. In *Governing Metropolitan Regions in the 21st Century*. Edited by Don Phares. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Rosentraub, M.S., & Leland, S. (2009). Consolidated and fragmented governments and regional cooperation: Surprising lessons from Charlotte, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas. In *Governing Metropolitan Regions in the 21st Century*. Edited by Don Phares. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Samuelson, Paul. A. (1954). The pure theory of public expenditure. *The Review of Economics and Statistics, 36*(4), 387-389.

Savitch, H.V., & Vogel, Ronald K. (2000). Paths to new regionalism. *State & Local Government Review, 32*(3), 158-168.

Silvia, C. (2011). Collaborative governance concepts for successful network leadership. *State and Local Government Review, 43*(1), 66-71.

Sorensen, L. (2006). *SPSS manual for Moore and McCabe's Introduction to the Practice of Statistics, Fifth Edition,* 113-114. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman and Company.

Stephens, G. Ross, & Wilkstrom, Nelson. (2000). *Metropolitan government and governance: Theoretical perspectives, empirical analysis, and the future.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Thurmaier, Kurt, & Wood, Curtis. (2002). Interlocal agreements as overlapping social networks: Picket-fence regionalism in metropolitan Kansas City. *Public Administration Review, 62*(5), 585-598.

Thurmaier, Kurt, & Wood, Curtis. (2004). Interlocal agreements as an alternative to consolidation, in *City County Consolidation and Its Alternatives: Reshaping the Local Government Landscape.* Carr, Jered B., &Feiock, Richard C. (Editors.) Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Tiebout, C.M. (1956). A pure theory of local expenditures. *The Journal of Political Economy, 64*(5), 416-424.

Visser, James A. (2004). Voluntary regional councils and the new regionalism: Effective governance in the smaller metropolis. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 25,* 51-63.

Vogel, Ronald K., & Nezelkewicz, Norman. (2002). Metropolitan planning organizations and the New Regionalism: The case of Louisville. *Publius, 32*(1), 107-129.

Warm, D. (2011). Local government collaboration for a new decade: Risk, trust, and effectiveness. *State and Local Government Review, 43*(1), 60-65.

Warner, M., & Hefetz, A. (2002). Applying market solutions to public services: An assessment of efficiency, equity, and voice. *Urban Affairs Review, 38*(1), 70-89.

Weber, E.P., & Khademian, A.M. (2008). Wicked problems, knowledge challenges, and collaborative capacity builders in network settings. *Public Administration Review, 68*(2), 334-349.

Weber, E.P. (2009). Explaining institutional change in tough cases of collaboration: "Ideas" in the Blackfoot watershed. *Public Administration Review, 69*(2), 314-327.

Wilkes, S.E., Jr. (1975). *Practitioner's Guide to Interlocal Cooperation (with Contract Forms).* Arlington, TX: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Texas at Arlington.

Wolf, J.F., & Bryan, T.K. (2009). Identifying the capacities of regional councils of government. *State and Local Government Review, 41,* 61-68.

Wolf, J.F., & Farquhar, M.B. (2005). Assessing progress: The state of metropolitan planning organizations under ISTEA and TEA-21. *International Journal of Public Administration, 28*(13-14), 1057-1079.

Wood, Curtis (2006). Scope and patterns of metropolitan governance in urban America: Probing the complexities in the Kansas City region. *The American Review of Public Administration, 36*(3), 337-353.

Zodrow, G.R., & Mieszkowski, P. (1986). Pigou, Tiebout, property taxation, and the underprovision of local public goods. *Journal of Urban Economics, 19*(3), 356-370.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1) In what state(s) does your organization operate?

(If your organization works with jurisdictions in multiple states, please list those states.)

2) What year was your organization established?

3) Which best describes your organization?

_1___Council of Governments (COG)
_2___Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
_3___Both COG and MPO
_____Interstate Council

Other:

4) Is your organization housed within a public agency, such as a City or County Planning Department?

__2__ Yes
__1__ No

If yes, please explain:

5) Do the members of your organization include: (please check all that apply)

_1___Representatives from the public sector
_2___Representatives from the private sector

Other:

6) Are your organization's members: (please check all that apply)

_1___Local government elected officials (such as mayors and council members)
_2___Local government appointed officials (such as city managers, town managers, etc.)
_3___Tribal leaders
_4___State government officials
_5___Federal officials
_6___Non-profit organization leaders
_7___Business leaders (such as representatives of Chambers of Commerce)

Other:

7) Please indicate the number of members in your organization by the type of local government:

_____Counties, Parishes or Burroughs
_____Cities, Towns and/or Villages
_____Tribal Councils
_____Unincorporated Territories
_____States
_____Nations

Other:

8) Approximately how many square miles does your organization serve?

_1___Less than 100 square miles
_2___100-499 square miles
_3___500-999 square miles
_4___1,000-4,999 square miles
_5___5,000-9,999 square miles
_6___10,000-19,999 square miles
_7___20,000 square miles or larger

9) What is the approximate population of the area you serve?

_1___Less than 50,000
_2___50,000 - 99,999
_3___100,000 - 499,999
_4___500,000 - 999,999
_5___1 million - 4,999,999
_6___5 million to 9,999,999
_7___10 million or more

10) Over the past ten years, has the population in the area you serve:

_1___Increased
_2___Decreased
_3___Stayed about the same

11) Does your organization assist member jurisdictions with forming, implementing and/or maintaining interlocal agreements?

_2___Yes
_1___No (If no, please skip to question 13.)
Note: Recoded to ILA Dummy. 0=no; 1=yes

If yes, please provide any details about your work related to interlocal agreements.

12) The typical interlocal agreement among your organization's members involves roughly how many jurisdictions?

_1___1 - 3
_2___4 - 6
_3___7 - 10
_4___10 - 14
_5___15 - 19
_6___20 - 24
_7___25 - 29
_8___30 or more

Please add any details regarding the size or scale of interlocal agreements among your organization's members.

13) With which of the following types of regional activities is your organization involved? (please check all that apply)

For all: 1=yes; 2=no

____Cooperative Purchasing (please specify below)
____Transportation Planning
____Public Transit Services
____Solid Waste
____Emergency Management
____Hazardous Materials response
____IT or GIS services
____Education
____Workforce Training/Development
____Area Agency on Aging

Other:

Please provide any relevant details below.

14) What do you consider to be the most important service your organization offers to its members?

15) How often does your organization hold meetings at which members meet in person?

_0___Never
_1___Annually

_2___Quarterly
_3___Recoded: to add bimonthly between monthly and quarterly
_4___Monthly
_5___Weekly

Other:

Are members required to attend these meetings?

16) Do you offer any type of incentives to encourage members to attend meetings or regional council events?

_2___Yes
_1___No

Please explain.

17) Do members face any sort of consequence if they do not attend meetings or regional council events?

_2___Yes
_1___No

Please explain.

18) To your knowledge, do members of your organization also meet independently of your organization's formal meetings?

_1___Yes
_2___No

Please explain.

19) To the best of your knowledge, please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning that you strongly agree with the statement.

a) This organization is able to effectively facilitate face-to-face interactions between leaders in member jurisdictions.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

b) Members in this organization believe that working together can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

c) Members are more likely to work together with other members who share a jurisdictional boundary, than those who are geographically located farther away.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

d) This organization effectively addresses interlocal issues involving many jurisdictions.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

e) Members in this organization participate in order to receive incentives such as funding for their jurisdictions.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

f) Members in this organization have competitive attitudes or rivalries that get in the way of working together.

Scale of 1 (Do not agree) to 10 (Strongly agree)

Would you like to add any comments about these items?

20) Over the last three years, which of the following best describes the overall economic condition of the geographic area your organization serves?

_1___Rapid decline
_2___Moderate decline
_3___Slow decline
_4___Economic base is stable—no real growth or decline
_5___Slow growth
_6___Moderate growth
_7___Rapid growth

21) Over the next three years, which of the following best describes your expectations for the economic condition of the geographic area your organization serves?

_1___Rapid decline
_2___Moderate decline
_3___Slow decline
_4___Economic base is stable—no real growth or decline
_5___Slow growth
_6___Moderate growth
_7___Rapid growth

22) To the best of your knowledge, which of these are reasons your members join your organization:

a) Membership allows their jurisdiction to receive specific Federal grants.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

b) Allows their jurisdiction to receive specific State grants.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

c) Allows their jurisdiction to receive services your organization offers.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

d) Guarantees inclusion in a regional planning process.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

e) Saves their jurisdiction money through joint purchasing of goods or service.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

f) Facilitates interlocal government agreements.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

g) They are required to join by state law.

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___I don't know

23) What is the number one reason jurisdictions join your organization?

24) Indicate the extent to which you believe each of the following hinder your organization's work on regional initiatives.

a) Important people in the region oppose cooperating.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

b) Rivalry exists between the communities represented.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

c) Local government leaders fear their community will be taken advantage of by other communities.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

d) Local government leaders fear their community will lose control.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

e) Leaders fear participating in a regional agreement will be too complicated.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

f) Local government leaders feel they lack the resources to participate.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

g) Membership is cost prohibitive to some potential members.

Scale of 1 (Not an issue) to 10 (Causes Serious Trouble)

25) This organization's members:

_1___join voluntarily.
_2___join because a state law requires them to belong to a regional council.

26) If a state law regarding regional councils was passed after your organization was established, did it reorganize in order to comply with state law?

_1___Yes
_2___No
_3___Does not apply

Please elaborate.

27) Do the members of your organization pay dues?

_2___Yes
_1___No

If yes, please briefly describe how dues are structured.

28) Including yourself, how many full-time employees work for your organization?

29) Are you

_1___Female
_2___Male

30) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_1___High School or less
_2___Associate's degree/Some college
_3___Bachelor's degree
_4___Graduate or professional degree, such as MPA or JD
_5___Post-Graduate degree

Please specify:

31) Which of the following most accurately describes your race or ethnicity?

_1___Caucasian/white
_2___African-American/black
_3___Latino or Hispanic
_4___Asian/Pacific Islander
_5___Native American
_6___Multiracial

32) Which of the following best describes your age range?

_1___Under 24
_2___25-34
_3___35-44
_4___45-54
_5___55-64
_6___65 or older

33) Which of the following best describes your political ideology?

_1___Conservative
_2___Liberal
_3___Moderate

34) Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?

_1___Democrat
_2___Libertarian
_3___Republican
_4___Unaffiliated or Independent

Other:

35) Approximately how many years have you worked in your current position?

Prior to your current position, do you have additional experience with regional councils?

36) If you would be willing to answer additional questions, please include the name of your organization and your preferred contact information (phone number or email address) here:

37) Please provide the researchers with any additional information you would like to share about your work.

APPENDIX B: DATA DICTIONARY

This appendix contains the frequencies of responses gathered in the survey questions, which provide the data for the statistical analysis of this study.

In what state(s) does your organization operate?

	Frequency	Percent
Alabama	7	3.6
Arizona	6	3.1
Arkansas	6	3.1
California	4	2.1
Colorado	4	2.1
Connecticut	4	2.1
Delaware	1	0.5
Florida	8	4.1
Georgia	8	4.1
Illinois	7	3.6
Indiana	2	1
Iowa	7	3.6
Kansas	1	0.5
Kansas, Missouri	1	0.5
Kentucky	3	1.5
Maine	4	2.1
Maryland	1	0.5
Massachusetts	4	2.1
Michigan	1	0.5
Minnesota	4	2.1
Mississippi	2	1
Missouri	5	2.6
Nebraska	1	0.5
Nevada	2	1
New Hampshire	3	1.5
New Jersey	1	0.5
New Mexico	4	2.1
New York	6	3.1

In what state(s) does your organization operate (continued)?

	Frequency	Percent
North Carolina	8	4.1
North Dakota	1	0.5
Ohio	7	3.6
Oklahoma	4	2.1
Oregon	1	0.5
Pennsylvania	5	2.6
Rhode Island	1	0.5
South Carolina	5	2.6
South Dakota	2	1
Tennessee	5	2.6
Texas	7	3.6
Utah	4	2.1
Vermont	4	2.1
Virginia	13	6.7
Washington	7	3.6
West Virginia	5	2.6
Wisconsin	8	4.1
Total	194	100

What year was your organization established?

	Frequency	Percent
missing	3	1.5
1945	1	0.5
1946	1	0.5
1948	1	0.5
1949, reaffirmed in 1971	1	0.5
1955	2	1
1956	1	0.5
1958	1	0.5
1959	2	1
1960	2	1
1961	3	1.5
1962	3	1.5

What year was your organization established (continued)?

	Frequency	Percent
1963	3	1.5
1964	8	4.1
1965	4	2.1
1966	15	7.7
1967	21	10.8
1968	12	6.2
1969	18	9.3
1970	7	3.6
1971	5	2.6
1972	11	5.7
1973	11	5.7
1974	9	4.6
1975	4	2.1
1976	1	0.5
1977	6	3.1
1979	1	0.5
1980	1	0.5
1981	2	1
1982	1	0.5
1983	1	0.5
1985	1	0.5
1989	2	1
1992	5	2.6
1993	2	1
1995	1	0.5
1996	2	1
1997	1	0.5
2001	1	0.5
2002	4	2.1
2003	7	3.6
2005	1	0.5
2006	1	0.5
2007	1	0.5
Total	194	100

Which best describes your organization?

	Frequency	Percent
Council of Governments (COG)	84	43.3
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	38	19.6
Both COG and MPO	36	18.6
Other	28	14.4
Total	186	95.9
Missing	8	4.1
	194	100.0

Please indicate the number of members in your organization.

	Frequency	Percent
10 or fewer	37	19.4%
11 to 20	40	20.9%
21 to 30	33	17.3%
31 to 40	29	15.2%
41 to 50	15	7.9%
51 to 75	22	11.5%
76 to 100	6	3.1%
101 to 200	5	2.6%
201 to 295	4	2.1%
Total	191	100.0%

Approximately how many square miles does your organization serve?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 100 square miles	6	3.1
100-499 square miles	42	21.6
500-999 square miles	21	10.8
1,000-4,999 square miles	67	34.5
5,000-9,999 square miles	31	16.0
10,000-19,999 square miles	13	6.7
20,000 square miles or larger	7	3.6
Total	187	96.4
Missing	7	3.6
	194	100.0

What is the approximate population of the area you serve?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 50,000	7	3.6
50,000 - 99,999	36	18.6
100,000 - 499,999	104	53.6
500,000 - 999,999	21	10.8
1 million - 4,999,999	21	10.8
5 million to 9,999,999	2	1.0
10 million or more	0	
Total	191	98.5
Missing	3	1.5
	194	100.0

Over the past ten years, has the population in the area you serve:

	Frequency	Percent
Increased	143	73.7
Decreased	28	14.4
Stayed about the same	22	11.3
Total	193	99.5
Missing	1	.5
	194	100.0

Does your organization assist member jurisdictions with forming, implementing and/or maintaining interlocal agreements?

	Frequency	Percent
no	75	38.7
yes	119	61.3
Total	194	100.0

The typical interlocal agreement among your organization's members involves roughly how many jurisdictions?

	Frequency	Percent
1 to 3	52	26.8
4 to 6	31	16.0
7 to 10	13	6.7
10 to 14	3	1.5
15 to 19	8	4.1
20 to 24	1	.5
25 to 29	1	.5
30 or more	7	3.6
Total	116	59.8
Missing	78	40.2
	194	100.0

How often does your organization hold meetings at which members meet in person?

	Frequency	Percent
Never	2	1.1%
Annually	4	2.2%
Quarterly	30	16.1%
Bi-Monthly*	31	16.7%
Monthly	118	63.4%
Weekly	1	0.5%
Total	186	100.0%

This organization is able to effectively facilitate face-to-face interactions between leaders in member jurisdictions.

	Frequency	Percent
1	1	.5
3	2	1.0
4	3	1.5
5	7	3.6
6	7	3.6
7	23	11.9
8	41	21.1
9	30	15.5
10	79	40.7
Total	193	99.5
Missing	1	.5
	194	100.0

Members in this organization believe that working together can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

	Frequency	Percent
1	1	.5
2	1	.5
3	1	.5
5	4	2.1
6	9	4.6
7	26	13.4
8	35	18.0
9	31	16.0
10	85	43.8
Total	193	99.5
Missing	1	.5
	194	100.0

Members in this organization have competitive attitudes or rivalries that get in the way of working together.

	Frequency	Percent
1	22	11.3
2	36	18.6
3	37	19.1
4	11	5.7
5	31	16.0
6	12	6.2
7	14	7.2
8	13	6.7
9	10	5.2
10	7	3.6
Total	193	99.5
Missing	1	.5
	194	100.0

Over the last three years, which of the following best describes the overall economic condition of the geographic area your organization serves?

	Frequency	Percent
Rapid decline	6	3.1
Moderate decline	34	17.5
Slow decline	24	12.4
Economic base is stable—no real growth or decline	52	26.8
Slow growth	44	22.7
Moderate growth	26	13.4
Rapid growth	8	4.1
Total	194	100.0

APPENDIX C: LEGISLATION BY STATE

State	Statute	Date	Type of Legislation
Northeast Region			
Connecticut	Connecticut General Statutes Section Sec. 8-31a. Formation of regional planning agencies. Representation.	1959	2
Maine	Maine Revised Statute Title 30-A, Chapter 119: REGIONAL COOPERATION. Subchapter 1: Regional Councils	1987	1
Massachusetts	Massachusetts General Law, Part 1, Title 7, Chapter 40B: Regional Planning	1968?	1
New Hampshire	TITLE III TOWNS, CITIES, VILLAGE DISTRICTS, AND UNINCORPORATED PLACES,CHAPTER 36 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS, Section 36:1 Definitions; RSA 36:45-53.	1970	2
Rhode Island			0
Vermont	Title 24: Municipal and County Government, Chapter 117: MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, 24 V.S.A. § 4321. Creation of planning commissions	1968	1
New Jersey	New Jersey Code, TITLE 40 - MUNICIPALITIES AND COUNTIES, Section 40:55D, 40:55D-84 - Regional planning board; powers	1975	1
New York	New York Code - Laws: General Municipal : Article 12-B - COUNTY PLANNING BOARDS AND REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCILS; Article 5-G of the New York State General Municipal Law		1
Pennsylvania	Intergovernmental Cooperation Law, Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 53, Municipalities Generally, Sub-chapter A “Intergovernmental Cooperation.” (Also known as Act 180 of 1972, Act 177 of 1996, and Act 13 of 2001	1943, 1972	1

State	Statute	Date	Type of Legislation
Midwest Region			
Illinois	Illinois Compiled Statutes, Chapter 55, Division 5-14. Regional Planning	1929	2
Indiana	Indiana Code, 36-7-7: Chapter 7. Regional Planning Commissions	1981	1
Michigan	Regional Planning Act 281 of 1945: 125.11 - 125.25	1945	1
Ohio	Ohio Revised Code: Chapter 167: REGIONAL COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS	1967	1
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Code: Chapter 66. General municipality law. 66.0309 Creation, organization, powers and duties of regional planning commissions.	1959	1
Iowa	Iowa Code Chapter 28H: Councils of Government	1972	2
Kansas	Kansas Statutes Annotated Chapter 12, Article 7	1992	1
Minnesota	Minnesota Regional Development Act: Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 462	1969	2
Missouri	Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 251	1965	2
Nebraska	Nebraska Revised Statute 13-1902	1992	2
North Dakota	NDCC CHAPTER 54-40.1: REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCILS	1978?	2
South Dakota	Executive Order of Governor Frank Farrar	1970	2

State	Statute	Date	Type of Legislation
South Region			
Delaware	Delaware Code, Title 9 - Counties, CHAPTER 48. REGIONAL PLANNING	1953	2
Florida	Florida Statutes 186.504, and 186.505	1972?	2
Georgia	The Georgia Planning Act 1989: 50-8-34.	1989	2
Maryland	Maryland Code: 11 Subtitles, for each RC in the state, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TITLE 13 - REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES	1956	2
North Carolina	GS § 160A-470: Creation of Regional Councils	1971	2
South Carolina	SECTION 6-7-110. Authorization and geographic groupings for regional councils of government; participation by municipalities.	1962	2
Virginia	Regional Cooperation Act. Title 15.2, Chapter 42	1968	2
West Virginia	WEST VIRGINIA CODE, CHAPTER 8. MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS. ARTICLE 25. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS -- REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT.	1971	2
Alabama	Code of Alabama, Sections 11-85-1 though -7	1935; 1969	2
Kentucky	KY Rev Stat § 147A.050	1972	2
Mississippi	SEC. 57-10-513. General powers and duties of planning and development districts and qualified entities.	1972?	2
Tennessee	Development District Act of 1965; Tennessee Code Title 13, Chapter 14	1965	2
Arkansas	Title 14 Local Government, Subtitle 2. County Government, Chapter 17 County Planning, Subchapter 3 -- Metropolitan or Regional Planning Commissions	1955	1
Louisiana	TITLE 33 — Municipalities and parishes, RS 33:131 — Creation of regional planning areas	1956?	2
Oklahoma	Executive Order	1971	2
Texas	Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 391. Regional Planning Commissions.	1987?	2

State	Statute	Date	Type of Legislation
West Region			
Arizona	Executive Order 70-2	1970	2
Colorado	Colorado Revised Statutes: 29-1-201. Legislative declaration.	1970	1
Idaho	Idaho Statutes: 67-6505. Joint planning and zoning commission -- Formation -- Duties.	1967?	1
Montana			0
Nevada			0
New Mexico	New Mexico Statutes, Chapter 4: Counties, Article 58: Planning Districts, 4-58-1 through 4-58-6, Section 4-58-4: Recognized regional councils.	1978	2
Utah	executive order on May 17, 1970	1970	2
Wyoming			0
Alaska			0
California	joint powers authority law, California Government Code Section 6500		1
Hawaii	Honolulu City Council Policy Resolution 01-37		0
Oregon	Oregon Code 190.010	1953	1
Washington	Revised Code of Washington (RCW) chapter 36.64.080	1965	1

Note: Type of State Legislation is coded as follows
0=None
1=Enabling
2=Prescriptive