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Policy Design and Regional Cooperation Under the Workforce Investment Act

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A. Abstract

Mazmanian and Sabatier advocate the importance of legislation for successful policy implementation. Scholars such as Perkmann have identified structural factors that affect regional cooperation. Under Workforce Investment Act, legislative and structural factors in obtaining regional cooperation across traditional state and local government boundaries are analyzed in nine U.S. Midwestern metropolitan regions. Results from this study suggest there are policy design and structural factors such as the focus of actors; same year implementation of the act; and the amount of hierarchical integration of administrative entities that can be enhanced to increase the likelihood that regional cooperation will occur under WIA.

A. Policy Design and Regional Cooperation under the Workforce Investment Act

The cooperation of implementing agencies can result in better program outcomes. Cooperation has the potential to reduce redundancy and costs while providing more comprehensive service for clients. Regional cooperation in transportation policy, for example, resulted in effective transportation systems across metropolitan areas and the construction of a coherent interstate highway system. Regional cooperation, however, has been used only sparingly in the implementation of employment and training legislation. The Comprehensive Employment Act of 1973 (CETA) which authorized financial incentives to encourage the formation of consortia is one example. Under CETA in 1973 consortia, which are jurisdictions that voluntarily work together to plan and deliver services across juridical lines, began to spring up. By 1975 one-third of the 402 prime sponsors were consortia (Mirengoff and Rindler 1976).¹ Outcomes under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1982 also provided additional momentum to consider regional cooperation. During the period of JTPA, poor coordination with employers was "leading the government to train people for jobs that were in short supply or unavailable" (Congressional Quarterly 2002, 573). In response, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the most recent employment and training legislation, provided provisions to encourage a regional approach to implementing the policy.² WIA encouraged states and agencies to cooperate when they share a stake in the performance of economic regions that cut across their borders as well as within their borders.³ Specifically, this policy recommends that workforce investment board (WIB) areas that are contained within the same economic region cooperate across their borders.⁴

This study examines regional cooperation under the most recent employment and training legislation, WIA. There have been some instances of cooperation under WIA but not much is

know about their impact. Two conceptual frameworks are used to examine the policy design of WIA in terms of the statute's capacity to achieve regional cooperation. This study specifically examines regional cooperation under WIA and addresses three questions: Is regional cooperation taking place? To what extent does the legislation provide enabling mechanisms for regional cooperation? How do various state and local structures affect regional cooperation? To accomplish this, the study draws from Mazmanian and Sabatier's as well as Perkmann's frameworks to focus on just two forces – the legislative factors identified by Mazmanian and Sabatier and local structural factors as identified by Perkmann. Perkmann's work also provides a useful definition of cooperation specific to identifying economic regional cooperation across state and local boundaries of intergovernmental relations. Data from case studies, other scholarly research, and public documents on WIA implementation were used to generate hypotheses from these well developed theories about factors that contribute to regional cooperation under WIA.

A. Regional Cooperation

Research on regional cooperation is suggestive of why it may be important in employment and training policy but also difficult to achieve. Regional cooperation can be beneficial because cooperation can increase efficiency (as can privatization) but only cooperation also provides the benefits of equity and democratic accountability to citizens as well as efficiency (Warner and Hefetz 2002). Regional cooperation is only likely when there is a perceived need as well as a tradition of cooperation or when norms exist that promote cooperation (Olberding 2002).

Scholarship has explored, in-depth, the types of agencies and officials that are more likely to cooperate. In general a person's position (e.g., management, field worker or professional) is a salient factor in driving their likelihood to engage in collaborative behavior (Thomas 2003;

Bardach 1998). There is also a vast literature on conditions of networks and multiple actors that can foster smooth running operations and successful policy implementation (see O'Toole 2000; Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill 2001; Milward and Provan 1998; Agranoff and McGuire 2003, 1998).

Although the potential mechanisms for gaining cooperation appear to be many, research also reveals there are serious impediments to obtaining regional cooperation. One obvious obstacle is our fragmented system of governance with federal, regional, state, and local authorities that have agencies and officials at each level. These multiple layers can complicate obtaining policy cooperation even with the best policy prescriptions. Downs contends true metropolitan level regional cooperation is unlikely even though the long term benefits are many. Downs finds that the local, state, and federal resistance is staunch enough to prevent the regional metropolitan level solidarity needed to achieve objectives (1994). Lowery finds that the dominance of regional or local political structures depends on whether individuals see particular issues such as economic development, access to housing, sanitation and police services as having metropolitan-wide implications (2000). Along these same lines researchers have found local autonomy which supports uniqueness and community identity can thwart regional cooperation and even promote fragmentation in the form of segregation by race and class, for example (Lowery 2000; Warner and Hefetz 2002). When localities seek to maximize the positive attributes and minimize the negatives it is evident that Tiebout's (1956) classic argument is at work. Practically, his theory translates into communities competing for opportunities to increase their revenues while also trying minimize the exposure to elements that might be considered less desirable such as subsidizing housing. This competition may enhance efficiency but does nothing to foster equity or cooperation. In employment and training policy there is a long history of cooperation problems where both business and labor are mobile. Program officials have a

desire to meet both employer and employees needs as well as attain programmatic success in terms of performance indicators. It is easy to imagine how this work climate could give way to competition over cooperation. Clearly individuals, their roles, perspectives, and institutions play a large part in determining whether cooperation occurs. Yet, perhaps there are structural elements that could influence these individuals to create an environment conducive to regional cooperation in employment and training policy.

A. Conceptual Framework

Mazmanian and Sabatier, in their book *Implementation and Public Policy* (1983), specifically assert that the capacity of a statute to structure implementation is vital to the policy process and outcomes. The framework they developed identifies three factors in the implementation process: (1) tractability of the problem, (2) the ability of the statute to structure implementation and (3) non statutory variables that affect implementation. The second factor specifically identifies several key elements that address whether the legislative statute structures effective implementation. This second factor has six elements that are important to examine when evaluating the potential of a policy to generate successful outcomes: (1) clear and consistent policy directives; (2) valid causal theory and jurisdiction provided; (3) legislation structures implementing process; (4) commitment and skill of top implementing officials; (5) continuing support from constituencies and sovereigns and; (6) changing socioeconomic conditions.

To analyze the inherent strengths and weakness in legislation Mazmanian and Sabatier outline variables to examine in their third element: the legislation's structures for the implementing process. Specifically, there are five variables for assessing the strengths and weakness of federal legislation on this element. They are assignment to a sympathetic agency, hierarchical integration of semiautonomous bureaucracies, supportive decision rules, financial

resources, and formal access (1983). There is no variation among the cases on the assignment to a sympathetic agency (in all cases the lead agency is the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)) so this factor is not included in the research model. The variable, supportive decision rules, has also been excluded as the rules are the same in all jurisdictions and therefore would not be a factor that would distinguish the potential for regional cooperation from one area over another area.

The remaining three variables are considered in this analysis. The first variable is whether the legislation enhances the opportunity to obtain hierarchical integration of semiautonomous bureaucracies. In the specific case of WIA, do states actively re-organize administrative entities overseeing WIA implementation? Are sanctions and incentives great enough to achieve cooperation among semiautonomous bureaucracies? Second, the financial resources must be sufficient to achieve the objectives. Does WIA provide adequate funding or at least a minimum threshold of funds for increasing cooperation? And finally, there must be formal access for outsiders to participate to facilitate meeting objectives. Does WIA provide sufficient access by the clients, individuals and business, to ensure they can cooperate?

Mazmanian and Sabatier's criteria provide specific ways to study how well WIA legislation encourages regional cooperation in the employment and training system. This is valuable as Keiser and Meier note that policy design theories are difficult to test and future research would benefit from creating more parsimonious models. They contend that design factors that policy makers can or should change are the most important to examine (1996). Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill also recommend parsimony as well as explaining government outcomes in a way that demonstrates an awareness of multiple levels of interaction in governance regimes (2001). Recognizing both the need for parsimony in research and that states, localities, and regions are implementing the legislation, it is necessary to include their local structures when

examining the legislative outcomes. It is for this reason that Perkmann's framework for understanding cooperation across boundaries is necessary and complements the use of Mazmanian and Sabatier's variables. The two conceptual frameworks together illuminate the inherent strengths and weaknesses of the policy design in terms of the statute's capacity to structure implementation under specific local conditions.

Perkmann's study, *Cross-Border Regions in Europe: Significance and Drivers of Regional Crossborder Co-operation*, identifies two specific factors that are salient in this study. The factors are the type of region and level of actors involved in obtaining cooperation across traditional boundaries. Perkmann classifies the geographical areas as small or large but all are cross-border because they are contiguous. Small territories include less than five jurisdictions. Large areas have five or more jurisdictions. The level of actor refers to whether regional or local officials are the driving force behind the cooperation. In this study, regional bodies are formed for the purpose of fostering the implementation of workforce development. The regional bodies are not tied to federal, state or local bodies per se, but individual members may have ties to any one of these units of government or the non-profit or private sectors. They may be mandated by a state plan or state level official or a voluntary association. Regional bodies have the interest of the region in mind as opposed to a particular jurisdiction.

The dependent variable, intensity of cooperation, is drawn from Markus Perkmann's (2003) categorizations for measuring regional cooperation in economic markets in other nations and is adapted for use in this model. Perkmann's definition is particularly appropriate for use in this study as both studies are measuring cooperation in economic regions that cross traditional political boundaries. Perkmann defines cross border cooperation (CBC) as being necessarily in the realm of *public* agencies. It is a collaboration between *sub national* authorities whereby

these actors are normally not legally bound to one another by international law. They are therefore not allowed to conclude international treaties with foreign authorities and consequently are considered as engaging in a lower-level of politics. Subsequently, CBC tends to be informal or quasi-jurisdictional between the authorities. The foremost concerns of CBC involve practical problem solving on any broad range of areas in every day administrative issues. Finally, CBC also includes a “stabilization of cross–border contacts, i.e., institution–building, over time” (Perkmann, 156).

Perkmann indicates that cooperation takes different forms ranging from legal and binding public law to non binding arrangements (2003, 159). It is necessary to adapt Perkmann’s definition somewhat to fit a national system with independent states as compared to the nation-state arena. Perkmann used the presence of legal or binding authority as one variable to help make the determination of the intensity of cooperation. The determination of intensity was modified in this study slightly. The modification stems from the fact that WIA permits legal arrangements to be made through Memorandums of Understanding but it does not, in and of itself, grant legal authority to create institutions. As such the level of cooperation intensity in this study takes into consideration the formality of the governing body but not necessarily its legal authority. That is to say there may be formal and even in some cases informal associations or institutions recognized as representing the interests of the region on workforce development. However, under WIA this group has no binding authority with the participating entities but rather functions under tacit agreements or understandings with its members.

Perkmann’s definition points to two key elements to determine the intensity of cooperation: intensity of the act; and formality of the institutional arrangement. In the long run the formality of the organization may breed even more cooperation through institution building

over time. However, the definition presented here is about gauging the amount cooperation regionally at that time. The type and intensity of the arrangement for cooperation are both used to measure the level of cooperation as an outcome. The varying degrees of cooperation are depicted in a two by two table as seen in Figure 1.

[Insert Figure 1 about Here]

The levels of cooperation are derived from a combination of factors. If a region has both a low level of intensity of cooperative actions and lacks formal organizing mechanisms, then low cooperation may be detected. Yet, if the region has demonstrated a high degree of formal organization but few acts of intense cooperation the outcome may be moderate. For example a region may have a formal body to address regional implementation of WIA but may not have cooperated by sharing data. This would suggest only a moderate level of cooperation. On the other hand, if the intensity of cooperative acts is high but no formal mechanism exists to maintain cooperation into the future or on other initiatives then only moderate cooperation would be reported. Finally, if both a formal arrangement and high intensity of cooperation exist then the outcome would be high in terms of the intensity of cooperation. The figure below is a very rudimentary illustration of the potential combinations and outcomes depending on both the intensity and formality of the arrangements. The concept of cooperation runs more along a continuum than discrete categories. However, cooperation has been categorized from no or low to high intensity cooperation for the purposes of analysis.

The relevance of the categories will be illustrated with the findings. The potential to categorize the outcomes and then examine the patterns among the independent variables for patterns that contribute to the outcomes will provide valuable insights for policy design and its interaction with local conditions. One example in employment and training policy is that states

may have implemented the WIA in either 1999 or 2000 as the legislation allowed. This may have decreased the opportunity to establish a formal entity to coordinate regional policy across state borders because the policy was implemented in different years. As a result some regions may have more formal organizing arrangements for achieving cooperation regionally than other regions. If both formality and intensity of acts define the intensity of cooperation then particular combinations of factors may lend themselves to specific categories of cooperation as depicted in Figure 1.

A. Methods

It should be noted that this study is not testing a particular hypothesis but rather is inductive. This study uses developed theories to generate hypotheses about what combination of conditions are most likely to obtain various levels of cooperation. This is achieved by examining, holistically, several case studies in conjunction with legislative and structural factors.

To answer these research questions and uncover if there are effects and interactions between the legislation and structural factors a matrix of factors drawn from a series of intra- and interstate case studies, other scholarly research, and public documents in employment and training policy is presented. The five interstate regions are Chicago (IL-IN), Cincinnati (OH-KY-IN), Kansas City (MO-KS), Louisville (KY-IN), and St. Louis (MO-IL). The four intra-state regions are Cleveland (OH), Indianapolis (IN), Peoria (IL) and Springfield (MO). The region itself is defined as the U.S. Bureau of Census 1990 definition of the metropolitan region. These study sites were selected by first identifying interstate regions with a population of one million or more in the Midwest region of the United States. The Midwest was chosen because it has a large number of geographically discrete metropolitan regions when compared to other regions such as the West or South. Additionally, by containing the study to sites in the Midwest

the study controls for region effects. The intra-state regions were selected from the same states as the interstate regions to control for state effects. This ultimately limits the generalizability of the findings but also provides a means to begin to unravel some of the many potential factors that influence regional cooperation. This method allows for the exploration of whether some phenomena from well developed theories are common to a set of cases.

Evidence was gathered to create the case studies from 84 interviews with state and local policy experts who provided in-depth knowledge about specific factors affecting cooperation and coordination within and among workforce investment areas in the nine metropolitan regions. The interviews took place between August of 2002 and July of 2003.⁵ Information gathered from public documents on the states' implementation strategies such as the states' five-year strategic plans and annual reports were also examined for each of the factors listed in the tables and reflect the conditions at that time. Findings corroborated information from case studies conducted by other scholars at or around the time this study. Information from websites and additional informal phone calls to supplement information learned in the interviews were also used. The triangulation of this information provides the evidence for the major points in the study.⁶

The dependent variable can be seen in Table 1 which provides a brief overview of the degree and type of cooperation identified in each of the nine regions. The measure of the intensity of cooperation in this study is a product of both the level of cooperative activities as well as the presence and formality of a governing body even if it is not a legal authority that can enforce cooperative behavior. The intensity of cooperation is defined as high if there is a permanent body and/or documented development strategy (e.g., regional plan) and broad scope of cooperation identified by data from the interviews, case studies, and public documents. Low

cooperation is evident when there is little cooperation and no, or only an informal, organization overseeing the activity, development plans, and strategies. When the interviews and public documents do not indicate cooperation is occurring this is noted as “no cooperation detected”.

[Insert Table 1 about Here]

The independent variables derived from Mazmanian and Sabatier’s as well as Pekmann’s frameworks are classified based on information gathered from interviews, other scholarly research, and public documents for each of the regions. Each structural factor and the degree as well as presence of each legislative factor identified by the Mazmanian and Sabatier framework were examined. In order to make the appropriate classification of the level of hierarchal integration evidence was drawn from agencies that were working together to achieve needed outcomes in employment and training policy. Did unified plans and/or administrative re-organizations have an impact or merely outcomes on paper? To make the determination with regard to the financial resources being sufficient or that there is at least a minimum threshold of funds for increasing cooperation evidence about funding sources and opportunities for additional funds was considered. Specifically, if interviewees and evidence corroborated the idea that funding structures were hampering any hopes of cooperation, then resources were rated as low. If resources were being tapped for cooperative endeavors, including grants, then this was consider stronger evidence that there was at least a moderate level of resources available. Finally, to determine if there was adequate access from outsiders data was examined to determine if there was meaningful engagement by “outsiders” to contribute to the process. In other words, were “outsiders” insights’ given consideration and allowed to influence the systems?

Using the triangulated information a truth table as prescribed by Ragin's Qualitative Comparative Analysis method (1987) was created.⁷ Thereafter, the table was systematically examined for interactions among the legislation's policy design and state and local structural factors related to the intensity of cooperation across intergovernmental jurisdictions within five interstate and four intra-state metropolitan regions. The variation in the explanatory variables illuminates some of the differences in the regions' intensity of cooperation. However, this variation alone cannot account for the vast differences in achieving regional cooperation under WIA. The study of the interaction of factors is much more revealing. Furthermore, looking at both intra and interstate regions it is possible to determine if there are combinations of legislative and structural factors that create meaningful patterns for fostering cooperative outcomes in the different types of regions. This broadens our understanding of the applicable concepts from a theory to other subsets of regions (Ragin 2004) and potentially expands the number of combinations of factors that may present a meaningful pattern. A single in-depth study of a regional economic policy is limited in terms of its ability to advance theory. However, one or additional studies placed in context with others' research provide a mechanism to advance theory and make valid inferences about other cases (King, Keohane, and Verba 2004). In short, using this methodology provides a defensible and replicable means to discover patterns and interactions in intergovernmental relations policy that would otherwise remain hidden.

A. Analysis

B. Perkmann's Structural Drivers of Cooperation

Despite obstacles, WIA has enhanced cooperation across state lines in some areas. Combined Perkmann's and Mazmanian and Sabatier's frameworks provide seven variables to analyze for patterns that lead to cooperation. Table 2 identifies different levels of intra- and interstate

cooperation by region and combination of factors. The impact and patterns of the three factors from Perkmann's framework on both interstate and intra-state cooperation is described first.

Intra-state Cooperation

In the intra-state regions studied, high intensity cooperation is found in regions with a small number of WIBs in two of four cases. Additionally, high intensity cooperation only occurred when the regional actors are the drivers of the cooperative initiatives in the intra-state cases.

Interviews revealed no cooperation among the nine WIBS or even between the city of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County (however the change of leadership with a new Mayor of Cleveland sparked hope for collaboration in the future).

[Insert Table 2 about Here]

C. Interstate Cooperation

The interstate regions demonstrate the reverse. High intensity of regional cooperation in interstate areas is associated with a large number of WIBs. In all three interstate cases with a high intensity of cooperation there was a potentially a large number of WIBS (five or more) that could cooperate. The Kansas City region was somewhat different from the other two regions in this aspect. In the case of Kansas City case there was a potential for six WIBs to cooperate, however, the most intense cooperation within the region was driven by the local public administrators of two WIBs on the states' borders that have a history of working together. In the remaining two cases of high intensity cross state border cooperation at least 80 percent of the WIBs were participating.

C. Patterns across Region Type

It is clear in the nine cases studied that regional actors help achieve a high level of cooperation more often than local level actors. This is the case in four of the five high intensity cases of

cooperation. This is also the case regardless of whether the region is located entirely within one state or not. There is no relationship between the number of jurisdictions in the region and intensity of cooperation when considering both the intra- and interstate scenarios. High cooperation is just as likely in small as large scale regions. However, in both instances (Chicago and St. Louis) where there are a large number of WIBs actually participating, as well as achievement of a high intensity of cooperation, it turns out that regional actors are the drivers of that cooperation. As such, when looking at the patterns the matrix reveals that more often regional level actors are more likely to obtain high levels of cooperation in both intra-state and interstate areas.

B. Mazmanian and Sabatier's Legislative Variables

Mazmanian and Sabatier's legislative variables are also analyzed for patterns that lead to cooperation. Table 2 identifies the way year of implementation, hierarchal integration, resources, and access by outsiders across both intra- and interstate may affect cooperation in combination with other factors. The impact and patterns of the four variables drawn from Mazmanian and Sabatier's framework is described here.

C. Same Implementation Year

The findings show that interstate regions where states implemented WIA in the same year (either early or later) are somewhat more likely to experience higher levels of cooperation.⁸ This was the outcome in four out of the five cases that achieved high intensity cooperation. One example of the way this has played out is illustrated by comparing the case of Cincinnati to St. Louis. In Cincinnati the metropolitan area includes communities in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. The states of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio are at different stages of implementing WIA; Indiana and Kentucky are early implementing states but Ohio chose to implement WIA when the previous

employment and training legislation expired. The fact that Ohio is facing different constraints and opportunities than Kentucky and Indiana is affecting these states' ability to cooperate because they are not working on the same type of issues at the same time. One interviewee noted that: "Kentucky was an early implementer of WIA, one of six to eight states. Ohio was not, so it was hard to participate because we were in different places on the learning curve. It has hindered quality regional work." Informal interstate cooperation is apparent in Cincinnati but not to the degree reported in St. Louis where both Illinois and Missouri implemented WIA at the same time and are experiencing more interstate cooperation. However, seven of the nine cases did implement WIA in the same year, either early or later. The data reveal that the effect of same year implementation does not create a pattern in the intra-state case where all locations in a state implement the program in the same year. This suggests other factors may need to be present to realize the gains from this variable, at least in the interstate case.

C. Hierarchical Integration

States made use of several methods to achieve more hierarchical integration which allows for the re-organization of administrative entities that oversee WIA implementation. These methods ranged from unified plans, to restructuring the oversight of agencies and programs participating in the legislative, and even the creation of interagency teams. In Indiana, the participating programs have been housed in one of two agencies since the early 1990s. However, Indiana made use of a unified plan and was the only state in this study to do so.⁹ Although Indiana does not require a unified plan among all of the required one stop partners, it does try to include as many as possible (Ganzglass, Jensen, Ridley, Simon, and Thompson 2001). Kentucky took a different approach. In Kentucky the state's Secretary for workforce development established a state level Cabinet for Workforce Development that houses the majority of the top administrative

leaders of the state agencies that work together in the one stop (Kentucky's Cabinet for Workforce Development, Department for Training and ReEmployment 2001, 4).¹⁰ Missouri consolidated a few departments to create the Division of Workforce Development. Missouri's Division of Workforce Development came about with the consolidation of the functions related to WIA from of the Division of Job Development and Training and the Employment Services housed within the Division of Employment Security (Missouri Department of Economic Development 2001). Kansas instituted an Interagency Alliance for Planning and Policy Development to ensure workforce development policy was compatible with the policies of economic development, education reform, and welfare reform statewide. Similarly to Missouri, Illinois WIA administration was transferred to a different agency to consolidate the administration of workforce development programs under one agency (Illinois Workforce Investment Board 2001, 2-4).¹¹ Additionally, interviews revealed the use of interagency teams and the consolidation of programs and close working relationships between several agencies and the Governor's office in Illinois. Ohio merged the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services and the Ohio Department of Human Services to consolidated state administration and coordinate workforce development programs by creating one agency called the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) (Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services 2001, 1-5). Interviews revealed that this change, which meant two agencies must now learn to work as one, was in and of itself hampering cooperation.

As Table 2 reveals some states have had more hierarchically integration success than others, but success has only been moderate at best. Grubb, Badway, Bell, Chi, King, Herr, Prince, Kazis, Hicks, and Taylor specifically found in their study as well that, "States are sometimes unwilling or unable to impose a uniform policy on different programs with federal

funding” (1998, 57). Evidence from this study provides support for the importance of hierarchical integration for achieving desired policy outcomes. The findings reveal that regions in states that have moderate hierarchal integration are more likely to experience higher levels of cooperation in both intra and interstate cases such as Missouri. Six of the nine regions shared moderate levels of hierarchical integration. All five of the regions that demonstrated a high intensity of cooperation had achieved a moderate level of hierarchical integration.

C. Resources

Mazmanian and Sabatier identify resources as a key aspect for successful implementation processes. Some regions reported adequate access to funds or new funds such as in the case of Indianapolis which received additional resources as an incentive to work regionally. Other regions reported success in obtaining grants. In the cases with aforementioned outcomes resources were ranked as moderate. If there was considerable consternation reported about funding, resources were noted as low in Table 2. In four of the five high intensity cases resources were rated as moderate. Yet one case, Indianapolis, with moderate funding did not achieve high intensity cooperation. One explanation for this stems from the fact that program funding for WIA was intended to come through block grants.¹² Interviews revealed that in reality funding remained separate even though it was channeled through three areas: Adult; Dislocated Workers; and Youth. The term “siloeed funding streams” is often used by interviewees and refers to the aforementioned discrete funding sources for separate, earmarked programs, instead of the funds being combined into block grants as the legislation originally intended. Some interviewees noted that the motivation for the continuation of siloeed funding stems from reported concerns over the potential dissolution of programs if funding was actually consolidated. This outcome frustrated the ability of administrators to foster cooperation.

Program administrators still retained their own source of funds to act unilaterally when delivering services and meeting their own particular program objectives even when co-locating in one stops.

Other researchers have found funding issues to be problematic for WIA implementation. Mueser and Sharpe noted that, “We heard repeatedly that separate funding silos caused operational problems” and that “State cutbacks have reduced workforce staff and leave each agency focused on finding ways to meet its own narrow mission” (2004, 128). Mueser and Sharpe also found in their study that restructuring the funding alone cannot solve the problem. Issues such as “culture, needs and scope of service provision of these programs” are other serious concerns for achieving effective implementation of employment and training policy (2004, 128-129). Findings in Table 2 reveal that when resources are moderate as opposed to low they are more often associated with the regions demonstrating a high intensity of cooperation such as in Chicago. However, this is not always the case as illustrated by the St. Louis region which suggests that the interaction of regional actors, moderate administrative structures and access may help overcome drawbacks of having low levels of resources for attaining regional cooperation. Additionally, the case of Indianapolis suggests that resources alone are not a silver bullet for achieving cooperation either. Factors beyond funding such as those found by Mueser and Sharpe give credence to the importance of legislative design that can foster hierarchical integration and supportive decision rules for overcoming obstacles to cooperation.

C. Access

Access is a factor that is present in some of the cases but is not consistently associated with a high level of cooperation. In fact only three cases reported moderate levels of access and only of one those cases, St. Louis, achieved a high intensity cooperation. Under WIA, attempts at

broadening access to outsiders did not ensure cooperation because that access was sometimes not substantive. Board members themselves cited complications between staff and boards with regard to information and ideas. A state policy expert from one state noted that at a board meeting:

Business speaks up and asks, 'what about this?' or 'have we tried this____?' You can fill in the blank with anything. The experts who are the state bureaucrats say it won't work, or we tried that or the regulations won't permit it. The business leaders come up with an idea and the experts drive it back, the ones that actually have to implement the program. I've tried to find out why business isn't involved more and two people have told me that they don't want to look stupid. No one wants to appear stupid. Business should be driving the system.

The Social Policy Research Associates also found that “several states encountered difficulty keeping many of [the strong business representatives] actively engaged” (2004, x2-x3). Similar outcomes were noted in another study of Indiana (Billen and Nathan, 2004, p. 87). The Indiana study reported that, “Despite efforts to engage employers in Indiana’s workforce development system, the general perception is that the business community is minimally involved, and at the local level, service providers continue to drive policy and program decisions” (Billen and Nathan, 78).

Ultimately, the access by outsiders to influence WIA implementation varied across WIBs. The states and regions in this study exhibit either low access or moderate access that was gained through less traditional vehicles such as consortiums and policy groups to expand their networks and access to the influence of outsiders. Subsequently, even though WIA designations and other policies were intended to foster access where needed, the decision to institute these mechanisms were typically made at the state level. This left local areas reacting to that decision rather than having the latitude to implement a new policy or not as the local area needed.

Additionally, the exclusive actions of boards and their staffs actually detracted from meaningful access to WIA in some cases.

A. Conclusions

Undeniably WIA has helped facilitate both intra- and interstate cooperation across state and local government boundaries in some regions. Peoria and Springfield realized intra-state regional cooperation. Of the interstate cases, St. Louis and Kansas City demonstrated the most cooperation. Even though Kansas City had not developed a formal institution to coordinate cooperation, the region demonstrated more interstate cooperation than Cincinnati which had an informal institution to coordinate cooperation and Chicago that participated in more ad hoc interstate cooperation with Indiana. But what were the policy design and structural factors that contributed to those outcomes? While the results are mixed as to which factors have an impact under which circumstances they do suggest there are some policy design and structural factors that can be enhanced to increase the likelihood that regional cooperation will occur under WIA. Among these factors are: number of WIBS in the region and focus of actors; same year implementation of the act; the amount of hierarchical integration of administrative entities; resources; and access from outsiders.

The number of WIBs made a difference where in intra-state regions cooperation was more likely with fewer WIBs while in the interstate region more regions with more WIBs were likely to exhibit cooperative behavior. Additionally if the actors involved had a regional focus for implementing the policy this seemed to drive outcomes in terms of cooperation occurring at the regional level. In other words, actors that looked and worked for cooperation beyond their boundaries were much more likely to achieve it than those that did not. That may seem obvious, but regional cooperation did not seem to occur unless those involved saw a need to look beyond

their borders for success. Having states implement the act in same year seemed important as well. If the agencies were implementing their programs in the same year they could develop their implementation policies and frameworks to cooperate with other agencies and across jurisdictions. When states' administrative agencies were more hierarchically integrated cooperation was more likely. More closely aligning the mission of the agencies to be under the same umbrella appeared to reinforce the need or desirability of cooperating among agencies. Agencies that were less hierarchically aligned have been more likely to eschew cooperation as their goals were not be interpreted as broader outcomes among agencies tackling the same issue from different perspectives. Regions that had at least a moderate level of resources tended to achieve greater levels of cooperation. Although this was not always the case or even the most important factor, having sufficient resources to cooperate and think beyond ones on narrow mission and immediate funding needs did seem to contribute to the likelihood of having more cooperation. Finally, access by outsiders seemed only to matter if the access was meaningful. The mechanisms to ensure meaningful access did not seem to be in place so it hard to determine the value of access in terms of contributing to increased regional cooperation under WIA. Evidence suggests that access can play role to fostering cooperation but access alone may not be sufficient to ensure cooperation is achieved. Although none of these factors by themselves are the absolute key to cooperation, these structural and legislative factors do seem to have impact on increasing the likelihood of regional cooperation under WIA. It is evident that cooperation is beneficial, although difficult to develop and perhaps sustain. More research that would provide an even greater understanding about the factors that can promote cooperation under WIA would be an asset.

A. Notes

1 Prime sponsors were state and local governments with a population 100,000 or more that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) contracted out with to help administer the program.

2 This study is concerned with WIA as a legislative policy that generates regional cooperation to improve outcomes for employers and employees. Subsequently WIA is referred to throughout the study as a policy. However, it should be noted the implementation of this policy resulted in the federal program of the same name.

3 The act states that: The State may require Local Boards within a designated region.... To: (1) Participate in a regional planning process that results in regional performance measures for workforce investment activities under title I of WIA. Regions that meet or exceed the regional performance measures may receive regional incentive grants; 2) Share where feasible employment and other types of information that will assist in improving the performance of all local areas in the designated region on local performance measures (3) Coordinate the provision of WIA title I services, including supportive services such as transportation across the boundaries of local areas within the designated regions ... (b) Two or more States may designate a labor market, economic development region, or other appropriate contiguous subarea of the states as an interstate region... (d) Unless agreed to by all affected chief elected officials and the Governor, these regional planning activities may not substitute for or replace the requirement applicable to each local area under other provisions of the WIA (U.S. Department of Labor 1999, p. 18697).

4 Workforce Investment Board area is a designated area for implementing WIA policy.

5 Survey instrument is available from the author.

6 I interviewed experts across the sectors of business, labor, education, economic development, community based organizations, state and local one-stop partners, staff to the workforce boards, and public officials in each of the five states and across the regions. Initial interviewees were identified from staff to the participating workforce boards and the snowball technique was used to increase the variety and number of interviewee perspectives thereafter. I used elite interview techniques as described by Dexter (1970). Interviewees were assured confidentiality and therefore are not referenced individually. This method provided a wealth of inductive qualitative evidence derived from the participants' perspectives as opposed to the researcher. The explicit method used is closest to what has been termed the prestructured case. This method is used when the researcher has expert knowledge from working in the field and when it is important that the research uses multiple case studies for comparability across cases for drawing conclusion (Miles and Huberman 1994, 83-84). To guard against bias or drawing erroneous conclusions when using this method, it is necessary to triangulate information from other sources such as public documents as was performed here. Additionally other scholarly research corroborated the findings validity (Miles and Huberman 1994, 266-267).

7 Because Mazmanian and Sabatier's framework prescribes ordinal classification as opposed to nominal classification of the presence or absence of a factor I have forgone the use of upper case versus lower case letters to describe the outcomes in the table. Descriptive labels are used instead.

8 That is some states implemented the Act for the Program Year starting July 1, 1999 or "early" while other states did not implement WIA until the mandated Program Year July 1, 2000.

9 A unified plan provides a formal means to strategically align programs and systems to meet workforce development goals.

10 One stops are physical locations that operate as career centers. They provide information about and access to job training, education, and employment services for employers and employees alike at a single neighborhood office.

11 It should be noted that this did not dissolve previously existing agencies or their functions such as the Illinois Bureau of Employment Services.

12 WIA consolidates over sixty programs into three targeted block grants in its attempt to create a comprehensive employment and training system (Congressional Record 1998, p. H6865).

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