**The Role and Reputation of Government Research Organizations
in State Policymaking**

by

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Abstract

This research explores the role and reputation of state-level nonprofit policy research organizations, which are members of the Government Research Association (GRA). The research traces the development of municipal research bureaus, the GRA, and ASPA during the Progressive Era. Modern GRA organizations are examined, focusing on mission, finances, publications, and media exposure. The organizations seek to be seen as objective and nonpartisan rather than advocacy organizations. The research also includes surveys of state policy actors in 16 states to understand their view of GRA organizations. Findings suggest that GRA organizations fare well compared to more partisan research organizations in the same state and are seen as the most trusted state policy organizations in 11 of 13 policy areas.

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List of Abbreviations

AICP   Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor

ASPA   American Society of Public Administration

BMRB   Boston Municipal Research Bureau

BGR   Bureau of Government Research

CF   Civic Federation

CCF   Chicago Civic Federation

CGR   Center for Government Research

CRC   Citizens Research Council of Michigan

EARN   Economic Analysis and Research Network

ELGP   Economy League of Greater Philadelphia

FTW   Florida TaxWatch

GFOA   Government Finance Officers Association of the United States & Canada

GRA   Government/Governmental Research Association

LABI   Louisiana Association of Business and Industry

LRA   Legislative Research Agency

MCFE   Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence

NACAO   National Association of Comptrollers and Accounting Officers

NCF   National Civic Foundation

NTEE-CC   National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities Core Code Classification System

MTF   Minnesota Tax Foundation

NTF   Nevada Tax Federation

NYBMR   New York Bureau of Municipal Research

IIT	Illinois Institute of Technology
ICMA	International City/County Management Association
IFPI	Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute
PAR	Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana
PARCA	Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama
PEL	Pennsylvania Economy League
RIPEC	Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council
SF	The Sycamore Foundation
SPN	State Policy Network
SPP	State Priorities Partnership
SPO	State-level Policy Organization
TACI	Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa
TACIGR	Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
TFI	Tax Federation of Illinois
TGC	The Grantsmanship Center
UF	Utah Foundation
WPF	Wisconsin Policy Forum
WRRB	Worcester Regional Research Bureau
WRC	Washington Research Council

Chapter 1: Introduction

American federalism relies on the states to exercise power and provide public services. However, significant amounts of public services are provided by the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits offer every possible service in arts and culture, environment, education, human services, research, and more. In 2016, there were an estimated 1.54 million nonprofits in the US (Urban Institute 2020). The vast majority of these services are provided on behalf of government agencies, as evidenced by the 31.8% share of nonprofit funding provided by government grants and contracts ("Nonprofit Impact Matters" 2019). As stated by Salmon, "If the nonprofit sector did not exist, we would have to invent it" (Salamon 1995).

Nonprofits provide a significant amount of public services on behalf of governments. They also play a pivotal role in government itself. As providers of public services, nonprofits are indirect policy actors, shaping the policy environments in the fields in which they operate and in policy, generally. Nonprofits function as think tanks, interest groups, advocacy groups, and professional organizations. These types of nonprofit organizations can be broadly referred to as policy research organizations. The number of nonprofit policy research organizations grew exponentially in the second half of the twentieth century. The *2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* (Booth 2021) reported 2,203 think tanks in the United States. Analysis of the IRS Exempt Organizations Business Master File (US Internal Revenue Service n.d.) suggests an estimated 3,905 US nonprofits are classified with the NTEE subcode 05, reflecting organizations with a focus on research or public policy analysis (Urban Institute n.d.). By the late nineties, approximately one hundred think tanks focused on state or local issues (Rich and Weaver 1998). These organizations receive significant attention in the literature. However, one category of

policy research organization is largely absent from both the literature and ongoing conversations between academics and practitioners—government research organizations.

As a descriptive label, government research is a little-used term and may not immediately convey a meaningful distinction. Self-described government research organizations, members of the Governmental Research Association (GRA), understand their identity and work as fundamentally different from that of think tanks, interest groups, advocacy groups, and other forms of nonprofit policy organizations. Less than thirty known organizations routinely describe themselves as government research organizations. With more than 1.6 million nonprofits in the US, government research organizations are insignificant in number. However, their historical and perhaps current role is significant.

The critical role of nonprofits in US policymaking developed in tandem with the development of modern public administration in the Progressive Era. In truth, nonprofit policy action and public administration were not two parallel developments; they were essentially the same. Government research organizations are at the center of these developments (Critchlow 1985) and personify the founding ideals of the discipline.

During the emergence of public administration in the Progressive Era Northern and Midwest cities experienced rapid industrialization, urban migration, and repeated cycles of economic booms and busts. Economic growth, industrial innovation, and mass immigration to these cities quickly outpaced the capacity of municipal governments. Cities were increasingly home to people of great wealth and great poverty and led by corruption or inept governments. As conditions deteriorated in cities across the Midwest and Northeast, demand grew for local governments to assume more responsibility for social conditions (Dahlberg 1966). Reformers, academics, journalists, and philanthropists of the Progressive Era believed a "(1) a corrupt

political system benefited a few rich people at the poor's expense and (2) planned progress toward a better system was possible as well as desirable" (Schachter 1989, 51). A key element of Progressive reform was the reform of municipal government itself. Reform meant ending political machines' grip on municipal power, power maintained by exploiting the spoils system and manipulating an uninformed electorate.

Progressive Reforms

The Good Man

The first tactic of Progressive reform, traced to the mid-nineteenth century, was the election of so-called "good men" (Critchlow 1985), men as there were no women in the voting booth or elected office. An 1893 *Harper's Weekly* article called for "united good men" to remove "combined bad men" from office (Cerillo Jr. 1973, 54). The push to elect good people was rooted in the belief that "municipal ills found their ultimate or root cause in man's misbehavior or immoral conduct….mismanaged and unresponsive government was simply the logical doing of dishonest and bad men" (Cerillo Jr. 1973, 54). Two significant reform organizations of the day, the National Municipal League, founded in 1894, and the Citizen's Union, formed in 1897, sought to encourage and equip citizens to elect good men (Dahlberg 1966). 'Good' was not necessarily well-defined, but implied honesty and integrity. These efforts were not without success. In 1894, the Citizen's Union and others succeeded in electing William Strong as mayor of New York City over the Tammany Hall candidate (Cerillo Jr. 1973). Strong was the last mayor before New York City, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the western portion of Queens County consolidated (Caliendo 2010).

Even if elected, good men did not remain long in power—Strong was defeated in a landslide in 1897—or have the desired impact (Cerillo Jr. 1973). The Goodness Fallacy,

described and perhaps named by William Allen, a principal figure in municipal government reform, was that "Good men will administer well. This is the Goodness Fallacy that hampers civic progress and weakens church, charity, hospital, and school" (Allen 1908, 1). As Louis Brownlow recalled, "Honest men were put in the City Hall only to be used by shrewd persons who knew precisely how much sterling honesty and sheer stupidity can sometimes come wrapped in the same human hide" (Brownlow 1931, 22). Henry Bruére would write, "There was a constant futile search for the great administrator, great by instinct and personality. He wasn't found because he doesn't exist" (Bruére, quoted in (Dahlberg 1966, 4).

The failure of the good man bolstered the belief of some Progressives that democracy by majority rule was "dangerous" (Critchlow 1985, 10) and little more than mob rule (Willoughby, cited in (Critchlow 1985, 35). Consequently, much of the early Progressive emphasis was "transfer[ing] power from the corrupt, the ignorant, and the self-serving to the virtuous, the educated, and the public spirited" (Banfield 1980, 5). Woodrow Wilson expressed these concerns well, arguing that representative government is not meant to reflect and advance the "opinion of the street" but the "best opinion, the opinion generated by the best possible methods of general counsel" (Critchlow 1985, 10).

<div align="center">Research Bureaus</div>

For reformers who did not entirely lose faith in broad democracy (Gill 1944), the goal shifted from changing leadership from one executive or party to another to a "major overhaul of the institution of government itself" (Lee 2008, 16). Conservative-leaning Progressives sought to limit direct democracy, reduce taxes, and introduce business principles. Liberal-leaning Progressives worked to reduce political corruption and enhance government services and citizen engagement (Lee 2008; 2017). These reformers sought to replace "men and measures" (Cerillo

Jr. 1973, 52) with the "tools and techniques" of proper administration (Dahlberg 1966, 4).

Brownlow would describe this transition, writing in 1931:

> It was discovered that the new deal that was really needed at the City Hall was not new men necessarily, but new tools and men trained to use the tools, where the men were old or new. We needed honest men certainly, but it was found out that mere honesty without technical training and developed capacity wouldn't do what needed to be done (Brownlow 1931, 22).

The shift from election to process also sought the "depoliticization of the political process" (Critchlow 1985, 17). Representative government "came to mean the establishment of a bureaucratic state effectively administered by professionals" (Critchlow 1985, 10).

These changes in tactics coincided with the first great era of philanthropy. Among the ideas of Carnegie, Rockefeller, and other Progressive Age philanthropists were addressing the ills of the day via private philanthropy rather than government intervention (Gill 1944, 13). These two ideas—the push for tools and training and the preference (of some) for private rather than public action, coalesced around the creation of "organizations to gather data about municipal services and propose changes to operations that would make them more efficient and less prone to corruption" (Weimer 2018, 10).

There already existed at least three organizations whose foci were research and reform: the Chicago Civic Federation (CCF), established in 1893; the National Civic Foundation (NCF), established in 1900; and the New York–based Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (AICP), founded in 1843. The first two were research organizations with a business focus. Business leaders and merchants founded the latter to provide direct assistance and relief to the poor. The Citizen's Union and the AICP were chaired by R. Fulton Cutting, a prominent banker (Rich 2004). A social worker named William Harvey Allen was secretary of the AICP. All three had succeeded in establishing relationships with local, state, and federal government units and

provided inspiration and a model for a new organization (Dahlberg 1966; Abelson 1996; Rich

2004). The AICP and three of its leaders, William Allen, Henry Bruére, and Frederick

Cleveland, would have the most influence in forming this new entity, and it would begin out of

frustration over another lost election.

The Citizen's Union reform candidate, Seth Low, lost the 1903 New York mayoral

election to the Tammany Hall candidate (Dahlberg 1966). Allen was also a devotee of Taylor

(1911) and the principles outlined in *Shop Management*. Recognizing Cutting's frustration over

Lowe's defeat, Allen urged Cutting to invest in broad government reform rather than focusing

primarily on elections. Cutting would do so by establishing the Bureau of City Betterment.

Henry Bruère, a social work graduate of the University of Chicago and Harvard Law School,

was named the first director (Bruère 1912a; Dahlberg 1966). AICP employee Frederick

Cleveland, an accountant and finance professor at New York University, joined the new bureau

after its formation.

Bureau of City Betterment

In 1906, Cleveland, on behalf of the Bureau of City Betterment, would conduct fact-

finding work for the McClellan Commission on Financial Administration and Accounting.

Among others serving on this commission with Cleveland was Frank Goodnow. Cleveland

would later chair the Taft Commission. Concurrent with his service with the Bureau, Cleveland

developed an outline for an Institute of Municipal Research as a "private-citizen agency"

(Dahlberg 1966, 14) to "investigate the dealings of the [New York] city government" (McDonald

2010, 818). Inspired by the work of the Bureau and the ideas of Cleveland, Allen convinced

Cutting of the need for a "permanent nonpartisan agency, equipped with a professional research

staff attended to the principles of scientific and business efficiency, and able to apply them to the

public business" (Dahlberg 1966, 11). Allen reasoned that the government of New York City wasted more money than the combined spending of all the City's philanthropists (Dahlberg 1966, 11). By the end of 1906, Cutting agreed and asked Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller to join him as funders. On May 3, 1907, the Bureau was reincorporated as the New York Bureau of Municipal Research with Bruére as director and Allen and Cleveland as co-directors (Bertelli and Lynn 2006; Dahlberg 1966; Finegold 1995; Mossberger et al. 2018; Stivers 1995; 1997; Rich 2004).

<center>The New York Bureau of Municipal Research</center>

The NYBMR, like the Bureau of City Betterment before it, was comprised of professionals from business and industry, including accountants, engineers, and social workers (Bertelli and Lynn 2006), those who "had a stake in helping to see that government served society well" (Dahlberg 1966, 35). Allen longed to replace the Goodness Test with the Efficiency Test (Allen 1908, 1). "Goodness tests waste character and energy by asking or allowing goodness to undertake work for which it is not prepared; efficiency tests, by adjusting to capacity, utilize character to its utmost" (Allen 1908, vii). The Bureau did not seek to change who was in office but to aid "those in office who were trying to do their jobs, to do them better" (Dahlberg 1966, 33). Mosher (1982) describes this as "[F]rom government by the good to government by the efficient" (Schachter 1997, 17). As Dwight Waldo observed, the Bureau's understanding of research bore many parallels with scientific management. "Facts, research, and measurement are assumed to answer the questions of not only 'what is the case?' but of 'what should be done?'….the assumption is that measurement 'solves problems'" (Waldo 1948, 57–58). The concept of efficiency was at the forefront of business and administration, primarily due to the work of Taylor (Taylor and Towne 1911). Efficiency was a prominent theme in bureau

literature, but as will be explored, efficiency in this context should not be read as merely reducing spending.

Bureau leaders believed scientific management facilitated executive management of administrative functions and enabled and enhanced citizen oversight and direction. Hence, scientific management was seen as a way to grow, rather than diminish, democracy (Schachter 1995). Cleveland argued that budgets, expense statements, balance sheets, and charts of accounts were means of transparency and citizen control. "The problem," Cleveland reasoned, "is to supply a procedure which will enable the people to obtain information about what is being planned and how plans are being executed—information needed to make the sovereign will an enlightened expression on subjects of welfare" (Bertelli and Lynn 2006, 32–33). The commitment to efficiency and the principles of Taylorism was evident in the title of the Bureau's periodical, *The Efficient Citizen,* and its stated goal to "Promote the Application of Scientific Principles to Government [sic]" (McDonald 2018, 117).

The focus of the NYBMR was administrative problems, not policies, and to "think, dream, consult, stimulate, educate, irritate and somehow change governmental outlook and public conscience of the city" (Gill 1944, 371). Bruère described the Bureau's objective as "applying the test of fact to the analysis of municipal problems and the application of scientific method to governmental procedure" (Dahlberg 1966, 16). Bureau research was data collection on needs, inputs, and outputs—and converting information and data to knowledge. Dahlberg (1966) summarized the Bureau's nine research goals:

- to promote efficient and economical government
- to promote the adoption of scientific methods of accounting and reporting the details of municipal bureaus, with a view to facilitating the work of public officials

- to secure constructive publicity in matters pertaining to municipal problems

- to collect

- to classify

- to analyze

- to correlate

- to interpret

- to publish facts as to the administration of municipal government

The NYBMR founders, however, recognized that research was "not a panacea," but a means "to give men as they are better methods of working for the public and to give the public as it is better methods of watching and judging what their public servants do" (Hopkins 1912, 244). The Bureau sought to define the terms of debate and, through vocabulary, information, and alternatives, supply the content of the debate. This approach allowed the Bureau to pursue, or purport to pursue, an apolitical approach while encouraging citizens to engage and demand a particular course of action (Kahn 1997; Rich 2004). Indeed, the Bureau conceived itself as permanent rather than ad hoc and citizen supported rather than funded by a government agency or political party. The Bureau was to be a permanent agency working with and for the citizens of New York City (Bruère 1912b; Cerillo Jr. 1973; Dahlberg 1966; Gill 1944). Bruère explained, "…the great problem in municipal government is not to stop graft, is not to head off the politician, and not to get good men into office, but rather to keep the public informed of what public officials are doing…" (Bruère 1912a, 127). Bureau findings were presented in terms understandable to a broad, non-specialist audience. In a 1912 speech to the National Education Association, Charles Allen stated, "Any part of the investigation which the public cannot be made to understand is not worth undertaking" (Schachter 1995) [*page needed].

There was an inherent contrast, however. Taking the writing of the Bureau founders at face value, the Bureau sought to inform and engage citizens in a time when suffrage was expanding rather than relying and trusting on a privileged class of political elites. At the same time, the very production of facts and data increasingly required elite expertise (Bertelli and Lynn 2006). Such work required close working relationships with city officials (Gill 1944), and when the Bureau was in harmony with officials—when officials were transparent and responsive—the Bureau was content to shift publicity and credit to the officials themselves (Dahlberg 1966). Furthermore, the Bureau's most prominent citizens were Carnegie and Rockefeller.

The Bureau, and the broader Progressive movement, included leaders of business and industry. According to Schacter, "…Progressives condemned some excesses of the new plutocracy and were in full cry against monopoly, but they were not antibusiness" (1989, 51). Such observation reflects Downs' (1957) view that people engage in the political process when it affects them as producers, not consumers. The Bureau's work was premised on the idea that municipal administrators, and government administrators in general, should act ethically and efficiently and that an informed, engaged citizenry created the conditions where this was possible (Beard 1919). An active citizenry would make "democracy a living, vital thing" ("Reminiscences of William Harvey Allen: Oral History, 1950." 1972, 159).

Early public administration was practical discourse (Bertelli and Lynn 2006, 17) to achieve practical ends (Mosher 1975; Pfiffner and Presthus 1967; Van Riper 1997). William Allen would later note, " It was concrete experience with large-scale relief that led to the founding of the Bureau of Municipal Research" ("Reminiscences of William Harvey Allen: Oral History, 1950." 1972, 65, cited in Dahlberg 1966, 9)

Although good men and good intentions are in the majority, desire for good government is ineffective for want of information as to the actual methods and results of government….Even leaders in philanthropy have failed to see that inefficient municipal government can cause more wretchedness, sickness, and incapacity in one year than beneficence can alleviate in ten years" (Bureau of Municipal Research 1907, 19–20).

The Bureau did not seek to rearrange the parts of the government of New York City but a fundamental reimagining of the relationships between the executive and legislative branches and the elected executive and the administration. Dahlberg argues that the Bureau explicitly and implicitly advocated for a renewal of the Hamiltonian idea of the powerful and responsible executive (Bertelli and Lynn 2006; Dahlberg 1966).

By 1910, the Bureau had an annual budget of $100,000, equivalent to approximately $3 million in 2018 dollars, and employed a staff of 46 (Smith 1993). Much early research focused on functional cost accounting, budgets, and maximizing effectiveness (Schachter 1995; D. W. Williams 2003). The Bureau developed the modern budget for the City's health department, spreading it to other departments and, ultimately, the entire city (Dahlberg 1966). Bureau work was conducted by what was then called the 'survey,' a new tool in public administration not to be confused with the modern understanding of public opinion surveys. This usage of the term *survey* can be traced to Richard Carew's description of the "physical, economic, social, and governmental institutions of Cornwall" (Dahlberg 1966, 71), published as the *Survey of Cornwall* in 1602. In the hands of the Bureau, the surveys explored administration, education, social conditions, and the form of government, providing descriptions of the purpose and functions of various city agencies, alternative administrative configurations and practices, and, in the aggregate, principles of proper organizational structure. (Bertelli and Lynn 2006; Dahlberg 1966; David Stone 1975). Gulick (1928) compared the Bureau's attention to government processes to an engineer analyzing land before potting pipes and streets.

One of the Bureau's early works, *How Manhattan is Governed,* is considered a classic in early public administration research and so incensed some municipal leaders, resulting in a $100,000 libel suit, equivalent to approximately $3 million in 2018 dollars (Dahlberg 1966, 14–16).

Media accounts spread the idea of municipal research and its early successes. It was argued that because the Bureau focused on "methods rather than men…it promises to be just as successful in one place as another" (Hopkins 1912, 235). Indeed, research requests quickly came from civic leaders in other cities. These requests were initially refused, although the Bureau relaxed its strict focus on New York City early in the 1910s. A more common response, however, was the replication of the model. Municipal research bureaus were established in Philadelphia in 1908, Cincinnati and Memphis in 1909, Chicago and Hoboken in 1910, and Milwaukee in 1913.

The Government Research Association

Founding the GRA

By 1916, there were at least 20 municipal research bureaus around the United States. (Dahlberg 1966). These organizations generally shared the same philosophy and methods as the NYBMR. Leaders of these organizations were drawn to one another and adjacent organizations with similar purposes to form the Governmental Research Association (GRA). However, the exact circumstances of its founding are disputed. According to McGrew (1980), the GRA was formed as the Association of Governmental Research Agencies during the National Association of Comptrollers and Accounting Officers' (NACAO) 1914 conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Stone (1975) claims the first meeting of the GRA was held in Dayton, Ohio, in 1914. Lee (2014) states that the organization was founded in 1915 as the Association of Individuals Professionally Engaged in Governmental Research. The GRA itself cites 1914 as its founding. The name was

changed to the Governmental Research Conference in 1917 and the Governmental Research Association in 1928 (McGrew 1980).

At its founding, the GRA was a forum for bureau leaders nationwide (Bertelli and Lynn 2006; Pugh 1985; David Stone 1975). The GRA "was the only game in town" (Lee 2014, 4) for those interested or engaged in public administration in any way. The organization attracted the so-called 'bureau men' of the municipal research bureaus, practitioners, academics, and interested citizens. The GRA was described as "professionally engaged in applying scientific research techniques to governmental problems…[which]… helps private and public research agencies to carry on programs of investigation and important organizational and operating methods looking toward the improvement of public administration" (Hazelrigg 1938, 185). In remarks on the history of the GRA, Richard Ware noted:

> There should be concern with both <u>what</u> government does and with <u>how</u> government works. Concern over <u>what</u> could lead to partisanship, so citizen agencies traditionally avoided those questions that could not be dealt with objectively, in which opinions were substituted for facts or when public emotions did not permit a research approach [emphasis in original]" (Ware 1981).

Meanwhile, the NYBMR recognized municipal research, or more broadly government research, was needed across the county, and in 1921, five years before Leonard White published *Introduction to Public Administration,* the Bureau changed its name to the National Institute of Public Administration (Dahlberg 1966).

The GRA claimed 100 members by 1927 (Forbes 1931) and 400 by 1938 (Hazelrigg 1938). Among the members were two names known to all students of public administration: Louis Brownlow and Luther Gulick. However, as early as 1922, some GRA members, including Gulick, expressed concern about some representative organizations' focus, funding, and research. The GRA was comprised primarily of municipal research bureaus and those affiliated

with them, but the credentials and skills of the various bureaus' staff were inconsistent. Moreover, increasing numbers of chambers of commerce and taxpayers' associations joined the GRA. Critics thought these organizations' research findings to be predetermined and biased, emphasizing reductions in government spending rather than efficiency, performance, or pure research. Those eager to see public administration emerge as a profession and a discipline were troubled by GRA organizations' highly localized and applied focus. These critics felt such efforts conflicted with their interest in the broader principles of public administration.

Thus, Louis Brownlow founded the Public Administration Clearing House (PACH) in 1930 to promote and support professional public administration research and practice (Lee 2019). Eventually, PACH housed numerous local associations of public officials, such as planners and police chiefs, and the American Municipal Association, a precursor to the National League of Cities, International City Managers' Association (ICMA), and the Council of State Governments (Hazelrigg 1938). In 1933, Brownlow offered the GRA offices and secretarial services through PACH. Previously, the GRA had been managed by volunteers mostly connected to the research bureaus (Lee 2014). Ultimately, Brownlow would come to question and finally reject the GRA's ability to help create and spread "generalizable principles of public administration" (Lee 2014, 3). Disputes emerged between the "university and research-oriented egg heads...[and] research bureau professionals and practitioners with affinities for the old bureau model of reform" (Bertelli and Lynn 2006, 53). Over the second half of the 1930s, tensions between traditional 'bureau men,' academics, and federal administrators grew, ultimately resulting in a split within the GRA and the creation of the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) in December 1939. The origins of ASPA are well documented ("ASPA History" n.d.; Pugh 1985; David Stone 1975). Mordecai Lee (2014) offers a self-described

"revisionist" history of the relationship between ASPA and the GRA, emphasizing what he calls Brownlow and Gulick's collusion to establish a professional society while simultaneously crippling the GRA. This collusion included Brownlow's sudden and dramatic decision to remove PACH's financial and administrative support and, within three months, assign those same resources to support the nascent ASPA (Lee 2014).

The split between ASPA and GRA helped launch the lingering dichotomy between public administration practitioners and scholars. ASAP would become "the largest and most prominent broadly based professional association in American public administration" ("ASPA History" n.d.), while the GRA would languish.

In 1945, the Tax Foundation adopted the GRA, providing $20,000 annually and free space at the Foundation's offices in the Rockefeller Center. This arrangement lasted only eight years, with the Tax Foundation voting to end its support in 1953 and provide a final $5,000 in 1954 (McGrew 1980). The GRA's finances and staffing were curtailed, but the organization again found donated office space at the Institute of Public Administration in New York, and in 1972, at NYU. During these years, the GRA was essentially a volunteer-led organization (McGrew 1980). This volunteer-led structure has remained intact through to the present day. Giving credence to some of the criticisms leading to the 1939 split, member organizations continued their work at the local or state level, with little apparent interest in the academic underpinnings of public administration, cultivating the profession, or even applied research at the national level. There is no known accounting of the history of the GRA throughout most of the 20th century. While annual meetings continued, records are erratic and scattered around the country, housed at various member organizations' offices and university libraries.

The Modern GRA

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Membership

Whereas the GRA boasted 400 members[1] in 1938, membership declined to 26 organizations in 19 states by 2022. See table 1.1. GRA membership is "open to anyone who supports the purposes of the Association" ("About GRA" n.d.). The GRA website[2] does not currently define its purpose. However, it does note that members are usually employees of organizations "whose course of business involves the study, analysis, and reporting of state, local, or state and local governmental policies" ("About GRA" n.d.). However, organizations rather than individuals comprise the majority of GRA membership (Whetmore 2021).

Member organizations vary in size, scope, and geographic focus. One is a government agency.[3] The other twenty-five are nonprofits. Twenty-three are 501(c)(3) nonprofits; four are 501(c)(4) nonprofits. All but four define themselves, at least in part, as a citizens' research organization, although substantive differences in mission exist and will be explored. One is a university.[4] Two are subsidiaries of another organization.[5]

Member organizations have developed and maintained institutional support, sometimes over many decades. In 2022, the youngest GRA organization was seven years old, while the oldest organization, Chicago's Civic Federation, was 128, predating the GRA itself. The mean age was 73 years, and the median was 80 years. Based on the most recent IRS Form 990 data, 24 member organizations[6] engaged 907 board members (mean of 39.4 and median of 31) and employed 203 people (mean of 8.5 and median of 6). As reported in the 2018 IRS Form 990

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[1] It is believed these members were individuals. In contrast, most members of the modern GRA are organizations.
[2] https://www.graonline.org
[3] The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations is a governmental commission established by statute in Tennessee. See ("About TACIR" n.d.).
[4] Illinois Institute of Technology (ITT)
[5] The Pennsylvania Economy League is a 501(c)(3) corporation comprised of three limited liability companies, two of which are GRA-member organizations. In recent years, all three subsidiary LLCs have been GRA members.
[6] Data from ITT and TACIR are excluded.

documents, the last year in which data for all members are available, GRA member organizations generated $29,049,469 in revenue (mean of $1,263,020 and median $816,799) ("GuideStar Nonprofit Reports and Forms 990 for Donors, Grantmakers, and Businesses" n.d.).

Research

GRA members seek to maintain the legacy of the early research bureaus—providing information to policymakers and citizens, particularly business, civic, and nonprofit leaders. Some organizations function similarly to legislative research organizations (Hird 2005), seeking to build trust with policymakers and emphasizing data collection and synthesis over complex policy analysis. However, unlike legislative research offices, GRA members' audiences extend beyond state legislators to executive branch agencies and officials, local governments, schools, and nonprofits. More importantly, they are not constrained by legislative requests. They can function as partners, resources, and external critics.

GRA member organizations' research projects tend to be narrow in scope, application, and jurisdiction. Research seeks to draw attention to issues not recognized on the policy agenda, illuminate an issue facing a jurisdiction, provide comparative data from other jurisdictions, and offer policy recommendations for consideration. These are not mutually exclusive; a given research project may include some or all these components. Projects range from short blog posts to extensive reports written over months or years, running into hundreds of pages. Research is usually made available free of charge via member organizations' websites. Most GRA organizations claim not to engage in issue advocacy and appear not to be guided by strong ideological orientations, either in topic selection or in conclusions reached. Success is presumed to be informing the policy process rather than achieving a specific policy outcome.

Organizations host policy meetings, public forums, candidate debates, and similar events. Meetings may be open to organizations' members, invited policymakers, or the public. Some events have a fundraising component; others focus on content delivery or policy discussions. Some organizations display a slight bias toward engaging policymakers, while others prefer to engage the business, civic, and nonprofit leaders, or the public. Broad-based name recognition is rarely a goal.

Research Question

The GRA's 2014 annual conference in Washington, D.C., was celebrated as the organization's one-hundredth birthday. The GRA's continued existence is notable. Many, if not most, reform organizations of the Progressive Era have long since ceased to exist or have changed in ways that would make them unrecognizable to their founders. In size, the GRA is a shadow of its former self. However, in purpose and structure, the GRA and its member organizations would likely be easily recognizable to its founders.

Can organizations, both old and new, which appear to embrace long rejected theories of public administration still be relevant in modern public administration? No doubt, some would say no. Self-described government research organizations are essentially absent from modern public administration literature. What few citations exist, such as Van Landingham (2018), do not appear to understand the GRA or its members. Meanwhile, the criticisms of Brownlow, Gulick, and others—that GRA members' research is parochial in focus, unoriginal, and lacking in theoretical grounding—could be applied to many modern members. GRA organizations focus on issues of importance in their home city or state. Their research rarely breaks new ground, builds theory, or advances the discipline. They are not interested in the study of public

administration in general but in the practice of public administration in a specific context and equipping policymakers, generally non-specialists, and citizens with data and research.

Most government research organizations classify themselves as independent, nonpartisan research organizations. While staffed by professionals, many with terminal degrees, GRA organizations occupy an unusual space. They are not academic organizations or necessarily closely linked to academic or professional public administration, despite the GRA's critical role in the early days of the field. They are not advocates, interest groups, or lobbyists, and the term *think tank* is an uncommon descriptor. They are not guided by an apparent political or social ideology. Indeed, many GRA organizations appear to be anachronisms—state- or city-level policy research organizations, largely lacking ideological underpinnings and generally guided by the belief that providing more information leads to better governance—a seeming embrace of the politics/administration dichotomy. These organizations have chosen to identify and continue to identify with the GRA and its mission and to distinguish themselves, in form and function, from other nonprofit policy organizations.

All the while, think tanks, interest groups, advocacy groups, and social welfare organizations proliferate, each attempting to shape policy in a hyper-partisan environment. These organizations, at least those which are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, describe themselves as nonpartisan organizations—a factually correct statement in that these nonprofits are not permitted to endorse candidates. However, their research is often highly ideological—often a private good for paying customers. In contrast, GRA members are nonpartisan by law but generally non-ideological by choice. Their research seeks to educate and inform policymakers, business leaders, and other elites, and it aspires to be essentially free from ideological presuppositions—a public good in the public interest. In a hyper-partisan environment, where research can be bought, data can be

manipulated, and "alternative facts" are offered without irony, is there a place for GRA organizations? Is there interest in, and an audience for, their work?

More precisely, what is the role and reputation of government research organizations in state policymaking?

While scholars question how non-state actors influence the policy process (Hale 2011), GRA organizations consider this a given. This research seeks to understand the role of GRA members in state-level policymaking: What is the reputation and perceived value of GRA members among state-level policy actors? What do GRA organizations do—do they contribute to the policy process, and if so, under what circumstances? Are GRA organizations out of step with the current academic and political environment, and if so, how have they survived and even thrived?

Theory

This research presumes that policy research organizations, including government research organizations, have a role in the policy process. Indeed, government research organizations are not the only policy organizations providing information for policymaking. The NYBMR was founded on the premise of information scarcity—that public policy suffers from the policymakers' want of information. Government research organizations exist in an era of information abundance, with brokers peddling information to meet every taste. The space is crowded with advocacy groups, interest groups, and think tanks. The literature suggests that think tanks are increasingly politicized and focused on advocacy. The distinction between think tanks and interest groups is eroding. There are obstacles in connecting academic research to policymaking and real questions regarding whether policymakers use information in decision-making. Government research organizations—organizations whose primary purpose is to provide

information to policymakers who may not use it and do not pay for it, rather than advocate for policy outcomes—are anomalies. They inhabit a narrow space in a crowded marketplace packed with many options that may look more appealing to policymakers with limited time and expertise. State policymakers, especially those in states with limited executive or legislative research capacity, may find the work of government research organizations valuable. At the same time, while policymakers may prefer information free of recommendation, there is evidence that they are more likely to rely on heuristics provided by ideologically aligned think tanks and interest groups.

However, policymakers are not the only audience for government research organizations. Other civic actors—business, civic, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders—are also customers of government research organizations. Thus, organizations' claims of nonpartisanship, objectivity, and bias-free research, regardless of how the terms are defined or the sincerity of the organizations, are critical branding and marketing concepts for government research organizations. Nonpartisan, unbiased, and objective are marketing concepts as much as research descriptors for governmental research organizations.

Conversely, by supporting government research organizations—as exemplars of nonpartisan, unbiased, and objective research—business and civic leaders, and even policymakers, can signal civic and political responsibility, regardless of their civic and political intentions. Thus, for policymakers and civic actors, support for government research organizations may be a form of moral license (Monin and Miller 2001) to support more ideologically guided organizations. Ironically, an era of hyper-partisanship and increased competition becomes an environment where government research organizations can thrive—but can they be effective?

Organizations must demonstrate value to stakeholders, if not policymakers, to survive, much less thrive, in influencing the policy process. Researchers and practitioners seek to define and quantify the influence and effectiveness of policy organizations. Organizations can tally media citations, social media exposure, and webpage visits as evidence of reach. They can count legislative testimony, policymaker consultations, and the political *bona fides* of staff as evidence of access. Ideologically guided think tanks and advocacy groups can claim credit for legislative or electoral victories. GRA organizations, lacking strong ideological orientations, can rarely make such claims.

Measuring organizational effectiveness may be difficult, if not impossible. In contrast, measuring organizational reputation is both less difficult and more useful. Rather than attempting to measure the effectiveness of government research organizations, it may be helpful to measure a necessary antecedent—organizational reputation. Organizations' reputations are correlated with their ability to influence policy, regardless of how influence is defined. In short, the greater the reputation of an organization, the higher its perceived value, and the greater likelihood it can influence policymaking. Organizations held in high regard are, all else equal, better positioned to influence the policy process. Conversely, organizations with a limited or negative reputation will not likely influence the policy process. Thus, while a given organization's influence may be difficult to quantify, organizations with better reputations are better positioned to exert influence when opportunities arise.

Following Rindova et al. (2005), it is theorized that reputation is composed of the perceived quality of organizations' products and the prominence of organizations in the minds of key stakeholders. By measuring the perception and prominence of government research organizations relative to that of other policy organizations, government research organizations'

relative potential for policy impact can be assessed. By understanding what kinds of policy organizations enjoy a better reputation among policy actors and understanding the products of these organizations, researchers can gain new insights into how policymakers use information. Practitioners can better position their organizations in the policy marketplace.

An organization's reputation is best understood in comparison to other organizations. To that end, GRA can be compared to members of other national membership organizations in the same jurisdiction: the State Policy Network (SPN), the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN), and the State Priorities Partnership (SPP). Members of these three groups are more explicitly ideological in their outlook than are GRA organizations but describe themselves with language very similar to GRA members. SPN, EARN, and SPP offer right- and left-leaning state-level policy organizations to which GRA organizations can be compared. Seventeen states have at least one GRA, SPN, and SPP or EARN member.[7] The states and their respective organizations are listed in table 1.2.

This research will seek to understand the role and reputation of the Government Research Association members relative to SPN, SPP, and EARN members in the same states. A better or more positive reputation should lead to greater influence in policymaking, all else equal.

Hypotheses

State policy organizations with better reputations are better positioned to influence policy. Reputation is operationalized as prominence of mind for key stakeholders and trust in an organization.

H_1: Policy actors state a preference for policy organizations with a strong nonpartisan reputation.

H_2: Policy actors' top of mind policy organizations are those which align with their ideology.

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[7] Many organizations are members of both EARN and SPP.

H_3: Policy actors will not identify a GRA organization as top of mind.

H_4: Policy actors most trust organizations that align with their ideology.

Outline

The following chapters will explore the question beginning with a review of the literature exploring nonprofits in policymaking, the types of nonprofit policy organizations, and policymakers' use of research. Chapter three will describe the research methods employed. Chapter four will provide data and analysis. Chapter five explores lessons learned and opportunities for future research.

This research is the first modern study of GRA organizations—a subset of state and local policy research organizations. As the modern GRA is essentially a professional membership organization, the research is implicitly a study of the GRA itself—an influential, if largely forgotten, organization in the early days of American public administration. In an era of increasing partisanship, these organizations seem out of step with the current policy environment. However, they may be positioned to have influence beyond what their size or broad name recognition suggests. By seeking to generally avoid a reputation as advocates to and pursue research not grounded in ideological commitments, GRA organizations seek to serve as a counterbalance to ideologically guided research. However, it is unclear if these appeals to objectivity and fairness, epistemological questions, aside, matter to current policy actors. The findings may be helpful to state policy organizations seeking to maximize their influence among policymakers.

The research also seeks to understand how the predominant understandings of policy research utilization, generally developed at the national level, correlate to research and utilization

at the state level. Findings contradictory to current theory will offer new lines of inquiry about both the state and national level.

Finally, the research may offer additional ways for policy researchers and academics, generally, to consider ways their work can best enter the policy process.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Information is currency in politics (Rich and Weaver 1998), and policymaking is information management. Policymakers require information in all aspects of the policymaking process. Consequently, modern policymaking has created an information marketplace. In American policymaking, nonprofit organizations play a central role in this marketplace. Salamon describes the American system's reliance on the nonprofit sector to provide essential services, going so far as to state, "if the nonprofit sector didn't exist, we'd have to invent it" (Salamon 1995). Although Salamon's analysis reflects the sector's role in service provision, a similar observation could be made regarding the sector's role in providing information. Nonprofits are essential actors in policy decisions, service delivery, and intergovernmental relationships (Hale 2011). Hale notes, "information relationships between public administrators and nonprofit organizations are a vital dimension of the capacity of government to solve public problems" (Hale 2011, 4).

This research is grounded in literature exploring 1) the use of research in policymaking, 2) the types of research provided to the policymaking enterprise, and 3) the sources of that research. Research is presumed to be foundational to policy making. However, the literature reveals surprising variance in the types of research, the degree of utilization, and the purposes of utilization. Consequently, to the degree that policymakers use research, the types of research sought vary by purpose, timing, intent, role, and ideology. Finally, the sources of policy research vary significantly in quality, availability, utility, and intentionality.

Research is about data, information, and knowledge (Ackoff 1989), or from an explicit policy perspective, data generation, research, and analysis (Lindquist 1988). Social research, of which policy research is a category, is "any systematic process of critical investigation and

evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis, and codification aimed at understanding the social world, as well as the interactions between this world and public policy/public service" (Davies and Nutley 2008). Data are the building blocks of research and are critical to policymaking (Weaver and McGann 2000). Collecting and providing basic data was a fundamental objective of the early research bureaus (Crane, Fairlie, and Merriam 1923, 297–98) and the cause of later criticisms (Bertelli and Lynn 2006; Lee 2014; Pugh 1985). Then, as now, basic data does not always exist, certainly in some developing countries (Weaver and McGann 2000), but also in some states and municipalities. The description of policy analysis as more art than science (Wildavsky 2000) contributes to the diminished value of fact provision. Filling this data gap is essential but often dismissed as valid policy research. In contrast, Nelson rightly notes that simple data is often more powerful with officials than complex analysis, as officials are skeptical of studies they can neither understand nor evaluate (Nelson 1987, 50).

Research is the process by which data are obtained, synthesized, and rendered as findings that must be translated and transferred (Davies and Nutley 2008; Lindquist 1990). Findings can be more precisely described as information. Information "includes the values and ideologies reflected in an area of public concern, how problems are defined, how solutions are crafted, how policy is put into action, and how to decide where particular solutions are worthwhile" (Hale 2011, 1). Policymakers receive information and advice from various sources, including grassroots organizations, constituents, political parties, and think tanks (Gray and Lowery 2000; Lester 1993; Sabatier and Whiteman 1985; Diane Stone 1996; Szanton 1982). These and similar organizations and interests shape the landscape in which policymakers function. They "define public problems, propose solutions, aggregate citizens' policy preferences, mobilize voters, make demands of elected officials, communicate information about government action to their

supporters and the larger public, and make relatively coherent legislative action possible"

(Burstein and Linton 2002, 381–82).

Policy Research

Research to inform policymakers is broadly described as policy research or policy

analysis—a term and discreet occupation that arose in the 1960s. Nathan identifies three types of

research useful to policymakers: "(1) *demonstration research* to test possible new policies and

major programmatic departures; (2) *evaluation research* to assess the effects on ongoing public

programs; and (3) *studies of conditions and trends* [emphasis in the original]" (Nathan 2000, 12).

Policy research is relatively new and seeks to support "systematic, evidence-based,

transparent, efficient, and implementable policymaking" (Geva-May and Howlett 2018, xiv).

Policy analysis has only recently received significant academic attention, most of which has

focused on research at the federal level (Hird 2005; 2018). Hird defines policy research as

"systematic research that assesses the impacts of and alternatives to various public policies"

(2005, 114). Such a definition has much in common with the goals of the original research

bureaus and modern GRA organizations. Meltsner (1976) describes policy analysis as the latest

term of art for information gathering. He did not offer a definition but cites and deconstructs

Williams' definition of policy analysis "as a means of synthesizing information including

research results to produce a format for policy decisions (the laying out of alternative choices

and of determining future needs for policy-relevant information" (W. Williams 1975, xi).

Analysis has been described as focusing on public interests (Friedman 1999), exploring likely

results of various approaches to problems (Hird 2018), "client-oriented advice relevant to public

decisions and informed by social values" (Weimer and Vining 2017), and "professionally

provided advice relevant to public discussions and informed by social values" (Weimer 2018, 9).

The defining characteristics of policy research are its practical application and public focus (J. Coleman 1972). Coleman's six general principles of policy research emphasize this applied focus.

- Partial information when needed is better than full information later (1972, 4).

- Accurate results and redundancy are important (1972, 4).

- Policy variables and situational variables must be treated differently (1972, 5).

- The goal is policy change, not a "'contribution to existing knowledge'"(1972, 6).

- Conflicting interests and time pressures may require multiple concurrent research studies and additional independent reviews (1972, 10).

- Research methods may be guided by the scientific method but research questions arise from the "world of action" (1972, 10).

While policy research is described in scientific terms and suggested to be based on the scientific method (J. Coleman 1972), not all believe the enterprise to be scientific (Hird 2018). Policy research can suffer from a lack of the quality control measures that define other academic research; however, this may be of little concern for policymakers (Haskins 1991; Hird 2005).

Perhaps the most basic and oldest form of policy research, which saw a renaissance thanks to New Public Management (Askim 2009), is program evaluation (de Lancer Juknes 2008; Szanton, 1981, cited in Glover 1994). Program evaluation is "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs, for people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions" (Patton 2008, 39). It consists of

> measuring outputs, outcomes, and throughputs of organizations, people, and programs in government….analyzing performance information by comparing current performance levels to past ones, normative standards (like goals), and the performance of other organizations….communicating performance information to appointed and elected decision makers in government (Askim 2008, 125).

Program evaluation results in performance information, "systematic information describing the outputs and outcomes of public programmes [*sic*] and organizations—whether intended or otherwise" (Pollitt 2006b, 39). It aims to "improve rational decision-making in administrative and political processes" (Johnsen 2005, 9). Projects are evaluated "according to predetermined success indicators…and the evaluation is conducted *impartially* by *independent* evaluators [emphasis in the original] (Rebien 1996, 152).

Performance measures are descriptive (Askim 2007). They must be used to draw inferences and explanations (Dekker and Hansén 2004). Evaluations can have a more significant impact earlier in the policy cycle (Bssmann, 1996; Pollitt and O'Nuel, 1999; Sanderson, 2004 cited in Pollitt 2006b; Kingdon 1984), if the work has an advocate on the 'inside,' and is timely (Pollitt 2006b). de Lancer Junkes (2008) suggests that research prompting discussion and dialogue among policymakers is a positive, rather than a negative, outcome of program evaluation.

Program evaluation is generally conducted for the use and benefit of policymakers, but citizens benefit from increased transparency (Chelimsky 1997; Dooren and Van de Walle 2008; Talbot 2005). When research is accessible and understandable, it can be helpful for citizens in making choices regarding service provision, such as hospitals and schools (Pollitt 2006b). Osborne and Plastrik (2000) suggest that evaluations communicate value to citizens and enable them to assess it.

Availability of performance evaluation, or any policy research, does not mean utilization (Askim 2007; Rich and Cheol, 2000, Siverbo and Johansson, 2006, cited in Askim 2008, 2008; de Lancer Juknes 2008; Melkers and Willoughby 2005; Pollitt 2006b; Talbot 2008). When and in what ways do policymakers seek research, how is it used, and for what purposes (Bardach

1984; Caplan, Morrison, and Stambaugh 1975; Kalmuss 1981)?

Policymakers' Use of Research

Policymakers must make policy decisions. They seek information to enable good decisions and reduce bad ones (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011, 26–32). Hird describes making decisions as "a euphemism for the allocation of resources" (2005). Consequently, decision-making is a fundamental political activity (Lasswell 1950; S. Nagel 1983). As evidenced by the Progressive Era idea of the good man, there is a long tradition of what Demaj and Schedler (2014) call an intuitionist model of policymakers, wherein legislators make decisions based on intuition, relying on extant personal values (Songer et al. 1985). The policymaker, guided by intuition, simply "knows" what to do. Research has little to offer besides supporting decisions already made or mediating apparent ideological contradictions. Such an approach may be true of the legislators Demaj and Schedler study. When an issue researches a legislative vote, the policy narratives are defined, and the contours of political debate are fixed. The opportunity for research to inform a decision is long past. However, the legislative vote is not where policymaking happens. The real work of policymaking occurs long before—not necessarily hidden from public view but largely absent from public attention. This is the space wherein research may shape policy.

Survey data indicate that a large majority of the public wants policymakers to consult expert opinions and utilize objective evidence (Institute for Government Survey cited in Andrews 2017, 2). Personal background, professional role, political ideology, policy characteristics, and sectors influence how policymakers use research (Askim 2008). Askim (2007) finds that less experienced and less educated policymakers are more inclined to seek and use research, specifically program evaluation research.

Weiss (1979) notes that policymakers seek information from "social scientists" but also "administrators, practitioners, politicians, planners, journalists, clients, interest groups, aides, and friends" (Weiss 1979, 428) and others—from essentially everyone. Indeed, policy research is a very crowded field—a challenge for providers and policymakers but also a sign of a maturing, if not mature, field (Radin 2000). However, the relationship between research and policymaking is neither clear nor straightforward. Frequently, utilization is operationalized as *instrumental* utilization—the direct use of specific information, what Hird (2005) calls micro-doses of information, to make specific decisions (Pettigrew 2011). Instrumental use can easily correlate with a rational actor model of decision-making. If a government, or its subsidiaries, function as a rational, unitary actor, evaluating options and making choices to maximize benefit and minimize cost, research utilization is easier to see (Abelson 1996, 103–4; Allison 2010). However, instrumental utilization in a rational actor model is a limited understanding of the policy process and decision-making. Research utilization is a "much more fluid and iterative process than traditional linear and rational models of knowledge transfer…imply" (Davies, Nutley, and Walter 2007, 233). Likewise, researchers are not merely one half of a two-way conversation but talking with and to many audiences, "speaking truths to multiple powers" (Radin 1997, 214).

How policymakers use research is well-explored in the literature. Weiss (1979) identifies seven ways policymakers use research. The knowledge-driven model views basic and applied research as a means to identify opportunities to advance public policy, similar to the exploratory role of basic research in the natural sciences, following a predictable pattern of basic research, applied research, developmental research, and implementation. The model implies pure research without a necessary or direct relationship to a current problem or policy debate. Laswell was optimistic that such research would "be directed towards providing the knowledge needed to

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improve democracy" (Lasswell 1951).

Like the instrumentalist utilization model, the problem-solving model applies research to a discreet decision or problem. This approach is likely what most people envision when thinking about research utilization or the "impact" of a research organization on the policy process— "direct application of the results of a specific social science study to a pending decision" (Weiss 1979, 427). In a problem-solving model, specific findings fill a specific information gap to answer a discreet question toward an agreed-upon goal. It assumes policymakers and researchers agree on what the desired end state shall be. The main contribution of social science research is to "help identify and select appropriate means to reach the goal" (Weiss 1979, 427).

The interactive utilization model sees policy research as but one source of information among aids, journalists, interest groups, administrators, and others. The continuous exchange of ideas creates a "disorderly set of interconnections and back-and-frothiness (*sic*) that defies neat diagrams….[but] that progressively move closer to potential policy responses" (Weiss 1979, 428). "Good analysis does not necessarily lead to better policy. Information is only one ingredient" (Weiss 1992a).

In the political model of research utilization, policy issues have crystallized, and decision-makers' views are set—perhaps because of previous research. At this point, research, sometimes selectively and sometimes out of context, is used to bolster one's position and critique the opposition. Research is a weapon in the debate of values and ideas (Lindblom 1986; Weiss and Bucuvalas 1980). Weiss argues that such uses, so long as findings are not misrepresented, are "neither an unimportant nor improper use" (Weiss 1979, 429). Brunson and Olsen (1993) and Jones and Louis (2018) describe this approach as the symbolic or rhetorical use of research,

privileging research from known and trusted sources whose work supports policymakers' *a priori* convictions.

The tactical model uses research to avoid or delay a decision. Conducting research is valued or purported to be valued for its own sake rather than for the findings it might generate. "For example, government agencies confronted with demands for action may respond by saying, 'Yes, we know that's an important need. We're doing research on it right now….We are waiting until the research is completed'" (Weiss 1979, 429). Research is a justification not to act.

The final two models are similar and more elusive. The enlightenment model does not lead to a decision or contribute to an ideological framework. Instead, it is the "the concepts and theoretical perspectives that social science research has engendered that permeate the policymaking process" (Weiss 1979, 429). Similarly, research as intellectual activity understands that policy research as one form of public intellectual inquiry. These two models are not discreet uses per se but ways that the basic concepts and theories of research and the value of research itself come to "permeate the policy process" (Weiss 1979, 429). In these approaches, research is a dependent variable responding "to the currents of thought, the fads, and fancies, of the period. Social science and policy interact, influencing each other and being influenced by the larger fashions of social thought" (Weiss 1979, 430). Weiss' enlightenment model parallels the more information hypothesis, assuming that more information for policymakers and citizens reduces controversy and builds consensus (Demaj and Schedler 2014, 1–2). Such a process occurs through a slow, often imperceptible accumulation of evidence, described by Bulmer (1986) as the limestone model.

Haynes et al. (2011) found that Weiss' models still dominate. Which utilization method is dominant in any given situation results from interactions of specific policymakers, policies, and

research producers (Jones and Louis 2018).

Askim (2007) identifies five similar ways policymakers use program evaluation research. Four are relevant to this research and mimic the findings of Weiss (1979). Opportunistic utilization is when research supports a pre-existing conclusion and ignores research that contradicts those same conclusions (Moynihan 2005; Pollitt 2006a). A disguised utilization is one in which policymakers hide their reliance on research, preferring to present themselves as generating their ideas and insights. In contrast, unknowing use is when policymakers' research use is unrecognized by the policymakers themselves. Such is the likely result of Weiss' (1979) enlightenment and research as part of society models. Today's tentative new findings become tomorrow's accepted understanding of reality. Research shapes the context in which policymakers function—similar to Kuhn's paradigms (Kuhn 1996). Bogenschneider and Corbett (2011) compare these traditional understandings of utilization with more recent models. Traditional understandings emphasize:

- direct use of research to make a discrete decision

- alter or transform the way selected issues are perceived or to modify the character of a dialogue

- demand of evidence-based policies

- the use of research alters decisions, based on just doing research

In contrast, newer understandings:

- focus on design, implementation, and execution of policy choices

- clarify the choices to achieve consensus outcomes

- reframe issues and choices

- agenda setting and prioritizing

Dissecting research utilization is necessary for academic analysis and to inform the work of those who produce policy research. However, in practice, utilization is rarely discreet. Decisions result from using research in multiple ways at various stages of the policy process and in varying ways based on the issue, the institution, and the political climate. Policymakers, faced with many challenges and an "avalanche of information" (McGann and Sabatini 2011) of varying quality, replace maximizing goals with satisficing (Simon 1953). They simply choose the first solution "that is 'good enough,' that is to say, one that will satisfy their immediate goals and objectives" (Abelson 1996, 105). To that end, simplicity is often preferred. Weiss, citing Nelson (1987), notes, "For many problems in the analytic world, it turns out that sophisticated methodology is overkill. Analysts make much of their contribution through reliance on a few basic principles, intelligence, logic, systematic reasoning, and a willingness to think in unorthodox ways" (Nelson 1987; Weiss 1992c, viii).

Ness and Gándara (2014) classify studies focusing on the gaps between researchers and policymakers as too focused on the supply side of research to policymaking, whereas demand-side research seeks to understand the sources and types of information policymakers seek. Regardless of how policymakers use research, commonalities emerge in what makes research useful. Policymakers seek current, concise research with clear implications (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001). Accessibility, convenience, and comprehensibility are the most important factors that lead to utilization (Sabatier and Whiteman 1985). Boyle (2010) offers five assumptions about using research. " Assumption 1 Evidence is produced in an accessible and timely manner. Assumption 2 Evidence is disseminated to critical interests/advocates and the media, where it is simplified and translated. Assumption 3 Evidence is brought to the attention of politicians for consideration, with background analysis done by support staff. Assumption 4

Politicians view the evidence as being of significance. Assumption 5 Politicians use the evidence in discussions and debates surrounding decisions" (Boyle 2010, 162)

Policy Research Organizations

Policymakers use research in various ways for various purposes. Providing information to policymakers is a critical component of the policymaking process. Understanding the source of policy research provides important insight as well. Beginning with the research bureaus, institutions designed to provide policymakers with information have exploded in number. Rich and Weaver (1998) suggest that "information rivals money" in modern politics and policymaking, and thus, "the ranks of information suppliers have grown as well" (1998, 235). Policymakers turn to research when an issue coalesces as a problem and "become[s] fully politicized and debated, and the parameters of potential action [are] agreed upon" (Weiss 1979, 427) or there is a shock to the political system (Haas 1992; Diane Stone 1996). Think tanks are the first and perhaps the best-known source of policy research.

Think Tanks

Think tanks are a significant provider of policy research and other resources to policymakers. Think tanks blend "ideas, politics, and policy *outside* formal political arenas" [emphasis in the original] (Diane Stone 1996, 2). The term 'think tank' emerged in the US after World War II to describe Project RAND, later the RAND Corporation, formed "to connect military planning with research and development decisions.…" ("A Brief History of RAND" n.d.). The term may be new, but the think tank concept is not. Dickson (1971) argues that the Franklin Institute, formed in Philadelphia in 1832, was the first think tank. The NYBMR and the Russell Sage Foundation, established in 1907, are the first modern think tanks (Booth 2021). The same political, economic, social, and intellectual ideas that gave rise to the bureau movement

also led to the emergence of modern think tanks (Diane Stone 1996). By the 1960s, the term described organizations providing policy recommendations in international relations, and by the 1970s, the term applied to policy recommendations and analysis in any field (Smith 1993; Weaver and McGann 2000). Think tanks are the third of Lindquist's three communities (1990), with policymakers and academics being the first two, and a critical part of the policy community and policy network (W. D. Coleman and Skogstad 1990; Hale 2011; Wilks and Wright 1987).

Defining Think Tanks

There is no single definition of a think tank, but a consensus emerges from the literature. Think tanks are described as "a special class of R[esearch] and D[evelopment] institutions [designed] to act as synthesizers bringing together scholarship and scientific and technological tools for the use of policymakers combining the 'know-how' and the 'know-what'" (Boorstin 1975, 726). Weaver and McGann offer a basic definition of think tanks: "policy research organizations that have significant autonomy from government and social interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties" (2000, 5). They conclude that think tanks hold in common "that they are nonprofit, independent of the state, and dedicated to transforming policy problems into appropriate public policies" (2000, 3). James (1993, 492) describes think tanks as "independent organization[s] engaged in multi-disciplinary research intended to influence public policy."

The Orlans and Carnegie Commission on Higher Education offers a more comprehensive definition, describing think tanks as "…independent, nonprofit research institutes administratively independent, often separately incorporated, non-degree granting organizations that devote most of their annual expenditure to the development of new technology and to research in the natural and social sciences, engineering, humanities, and professions" (1972, 3).

Rich (2004) defines think tanks as "independent, non-interest–based, nonprofit organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policymaking process."

Operationally, think tanks are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that conduct and disseminate research and ideas on public policy issues. Politically, think tanks are aggressive institutions that actively seek to maximize public credibility and political access to make their expertise and ideas influential in policymaking (Rich 2004, 11). Weiss describes think tanks as ongoing concerns employing specialized staff with a policy orientation. Their "primary purpose is to improve the process and content of public policies….Their main output is analysis and advice….[with] a heavy emphasis on communicating the results of their work to those engaged in policy making…."(1992c, viii–ix).

McGann's *Think Tank Index* references his publications with Routledge (2007) and Brookings (2016) to offer an extensive definition of think tanks.

> Think tanks are public policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy. Think tanks may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not ad-hoc commissions. These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public interest as an independent voice that translates applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable and accessible for policymakers and the public (Booth 2021, 13).

More critically, some see think tanks as a tool of corporate liberalism (Eakins 1972) designed to shape and maintain public opinion (Critchlow 1985; Lustig 1982).

Contributions of Think Tanks

Knowledge can be ignored until external events make the information essential—often too late (Edelman 1973; Glover 1994). Think tanks inject information into the policy process, but they also work to ensure their work is utilized. Sometimes this is through connecting work to issues most important to policymakers. Other times, it is through working to direct policymakers' attention to the issues important to think tanks. Their self-understanding may guide the approach a given think tank chooses: organizations designed to solve problems (Stokey and Zeckhauser 1978) or to enrich the policy environment (Shulock 1999).

The work of think tanks is data, research, and analysis pursued through a range of "memos, briefs, reports, articles, papers, monographs, books…[and]…workshops, seminars, symposia, conferences, briefings, speeches" (Lindquist 1990, 34). The list of services provided by think tanks is extensive and varies by the nature of the organization and the researcher's understanding of policymaking.

Think tanks provide advice about policy mandates, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy legitimation, policy reflections, and power transitions (Bakvis 1997). Their work includes

> (1) playing a mediating function between the government and the public; (2) identifying, articulating, and evaluating current or emerging issues, problems or proposals; (3) transforming ideas and problems into policy issues (4) serving as an informed and independent voice in policy debates; and (5) providing a constructive forum for the exchange of ideas and information between key stakeholders in the policy formation process (Weaver and McGann 2000, 3).

They also develop issue networks, provide personnel to government agencies, evaluate services, and offer substance for policy platforms (Bakvis 1997; Booth 2007; Hale 2011; McGann and Sabatini 2011).

Perhaps most importantly, think tanks provide or purport to provide an independent voice. The claim of independence, along with appeals to the scientific method, expertise,

neutrality, and rationality, are think tanks' claim to legitimacy (Booth 2007; Rich 2004; Diane Stone 1996). These claims may also promote a false distinction between knowledge and ideas, which are both power and a source of power (Diane Stone 1996), especially when organizations are part of an elite landscape. The relationship between independence and ideology is complex.

Think tanks do not act alone in such intellectual action but usually in coalition with like-minded thinkers in journalism, universities, and other sectors. Through their networks and policy communities, think tanks have 'boundary transcending' qualities (Rich and Weaver 1998; Diane Stone 1996)\ that allow them to act as mediators. In such roles, they both produce original research and translate the work of others, making it more accessible to policymakers and practitioners (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011; Ness and Gándara 2014).

Think tanks exert the most influence through this mediating or brokering work (Hale 2011; Diane Stone 1996). "Research brokerage is a process of conveying social scientific knowledge from universities and research organizations to the world of politics and decision-making. In this process, think tanks-tanks are often conceived as a bridge between academia and decision-makers" (Diane Stone 1996, 122).

Growth of Think Tanks

Think tanks have exploded in number in recent decades, although precise numbers are impossible to ascertain. The 2020 *Think Tank Index* estimates there are more than 5,000 think tanks worldwide, with an estimated 2,923 in the US (Booth 2021). Rich, using a more strict definition of think tanks, estimated their US number at fewer than 70 in 1970 (2004) and more than 320 in 2012 (2018). What explains the growth of think tanks? Rich argues that the cause is a "more accommodating political environment" (2004, 32) and increased engagement from elites (Rich 2004; Smith 1993). At the same time, the growth of think tanks has reshaped the political

environment, with policymakers promoting preferred organizations' research to legitimate their choices. "The knowledge and expertise housed in think-tanks [sic] has become essential for political leaders, interest groups, and business leaders to advance their cause (Diane Stone 1996, 121). The growth of think tanks has created a climate of competition between think tanks, interest groups, and advocacy groups (Newsom 1995).

In response, some have adopted more ideologically aligned and market-driven approaches. Other think tanks were created with such a focus from the outset. In such an environment, survival is more a function of effective marketing than quality research or actual influence (Abelson 2009). Rich (2004) argues that these may be effective strategies for organizational survival but have come at the cost of credibility for think tanks, individually and collectively. Think tanks, created to address information scarcity and policymakers' satisficing, now compete for policymakers' attention, thereby exacerbating the problem they purport to solve (March 1994; Simon 1953; 1994). However, the growth is not limited to think tanks but reflects the overall maturation of policy networks (Ball and Exley 2010; Hale 2011). Some institutions and individuals may fund think tanks not because they hope or believe they will influence policy but because "it is good for a democratic society to have people thinking about public issues and offering alternative perspectives" (Diane Stone 1996, 111)

Explaining Think Tanks

As think tanks became more prolific throughout the twentieth century, they became objects of academic study. Scholars have offered a variety of theories to explain the existence and role of think tanks in the United States, including free market theories (Stanfield 1990), intellectual market theories (Easterbrook 1986), gaps theories (Polsby 1983; Smith 1989; Weaver 1989), pluralist theories (Bentley 2017; Truman 1971), and institutionalist theories (Abelson

2009). Most explanatory of GRA organizations are elite theories (Eakins 1972; Mills 1959), club theories (Lindquist 1989), and public choice theories (Diane Stone 1996).

Policy analysis outside of government and party processes is an elitist exercise (Fischer 1993; Diane Stone 1996). Elite theories suggest that "think tanks represent the interests of capital and form part of the policy network of 'corporate liberalism'" (Eakins 1972) or "the values and preferences of the governing elite" (Diane Stone 1996, 30). Stone summarizes elite theorists' "focus on the narrow social backgrounds, shared elite values and social insulation of personnel running the state apparatus to infer a causal relationship between social and economic status and political power" (1996, 30). Weaver and McGann (2000) note that think tanks' claim of expertise is inherently elitist. As early as the 1970s, Domhoff, suggested that elites shape legislation through private institutions "initiated, directed, and/or financed by members of the upper class" (1971, 157).

Market-based economies create an atmosphere for elite shaping of the policy environment. Lindblom argues that businesses enjoy greater influence in market economies because governments must offer rewards that incentivize desired behaviors. Policy decisions are then, essentially, made by business leaders (Lindblom 1995). Think tanks can execute such power indirectly (Ball and Exley 2010).

Club theory suggests people or organizations support or join other organizations because of perceived benefits, not the relative successes or impact of the organizations. Following club theory, Stone theorizes that product volume positively correlates with revenue (Diane Stone 1996). Public choice theory suggests that think tanks are merely vehicles for private interest (Diane Stone 1996).

Ideology in Think Tanks

Many think tanks argue their work is apolitical—a tool to be used by others (Diane Stone 1996), perhaps as an alternative to political parties (Critchlow 1985). Likewise, most emphasize their nonpartisan identity. However, such claims can be misleading. Nonpartisanship is a legal requirement, not a self-selected distinctive. All 501(c)(3) nonprofits are nonpartisan—they cannot endorse candidates. Nonpartisan does not inherently mean non-ideological. Organizations frequently tout their nonpartisanship while at the same time explicitly declaring their ideological bona fides, rather left or right. While think tanks can self-describe as objective, neutral, or otherwise non-partisan, their language can indicate otherwise. Rich (2004) employs this fact to create an ideological typology for his study of think tanks. Conservative organizations use terms such as "free market system, limited government, individual liberty, religious expression, and traditional family values, or to eliminating racial or ethnic preferences in government" (Rich 2004, 19). In contrast, liberal organizations are interested in "government policies and programs to overcome economic, social, or gender inequalities, poverty, or wage stagnation" (Rich 2004, 19).

Conservative organizations are interested in the motivations behind policy proposals rather than research findings. Disinterested research is impossible. Objective truths must guide politics. Liberal organizations presume that research is essential to policy creation and that ideas are value-free. (Rich 2018; Smith 1989). Liberal think tanks see themselves as pure research organizations—conservative think tanks seem to be advocates of an agenda (Rich 2018).

Such approaches reflect the idea that policymaking is inherently irrational, "that values, judgments, and ideology are as important, and often more important, to decision making than the search for better policy outcomes" (Newman, Cherney, and Head 2016, 25) and that ideology shapes the way think tanks conceive of their role in the entire enterprise (Rich 2018). "Social

Policy 101 says that it rarely happens that research trumps values" (Haskins 2002, cited in Hird 2005, 41).

Rich (2018), Smith (1989), and Stone (1996) are incredulous at the claims of non-ideological research and alarmed at the increase in partisanship. In contrast, McGann (1995) is less so, instead seeing increasing partisanship among think tanks as a sign of maturation. At the same time, some argue that claims of nonpartisan research are unnecessary. To the extent that it exists, the public interest is sorted out through politics, not analysis. Thus, policy analysts should not be afraid to engage in partisan work (Hird 2005; Lindblom 1986). Some have argued that ideology is as valid as research in policymaking and prefer terms such as 'evidence-informed' over evidenced-based policy (Head 2013, 397; Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2003, 126, cited in Newman, Cherney, and Head 2016, 25). The appearance of objectivity, independence, and authority may be more important than its reality (Diane Stone 1996). "Ideological argument through a dramaturgy of objective description may be the most common gambit in political language usage" (Edelman 1985, 16). Weiss (1992b) contends that claims of objectivity are claims to be fair and impartial, as opposed to lobbyists and advocates, rather than claims of epistemology.

The conceit of impartiality may be traced to the focus on facts, divorced from political ideas, emerging from the Progressive Era generally and the research bureaus specifically. Smith suggests that faith in the possibilities of research declined in the 1960s and 1970s and that since the 1980s, the enterprise has been challenged by a values-driven approach from the political right (Smith 1989). Some organizations, including some GRA organizations, cultivate a reputation of objectivity by following Nathan's maxim to "emphasize *how* to do things rather than *what* should be done" (Nathan 2000, 13). Accordingly, organizations can echo the

politics/administration dichotomy of the discipline's early days. While scholars dismiss the validity of the dichotomy, the idea is appealing to many—not the least of whom are elected officials. In his study of legislative research organizations, Hird notes, "[l]egislators generally agree that politics can be distinguished from the substance of public policy decisions…." (Hird 2005, 143).

Effectiveness of Think Tanks

In their purest and most idealistic form, think tanks engage policy communities to educate, elevate, temper, and moderate the political debate in the public interest (Abelson 2009; Rivlin, Shalala, and Brookings Institution 2015; Smith 1989; 1993; Diane Stone 2000). Ricci suggests they are a new branch of government (1993). They "…act as a bridge between knowledge and power….They are closer to being agents of new knowledge and discovery than creators of new knowledge" (Dickson 1971, 28). They have different audiences and resources (Diane Stone 1996) and function in different political cultures (Elazar 1972). They are influenced by internal issues such as labor supply, technology, general competency, and funding, political, and cultural contexts (Weaver and McGann 2000).

The influence of think tanks is assumed but hard to quantify. There may be occasional evidence but few sustained examples of influence or causality. (Langford and Brownsey 1991; Diane Stone 1996). Policymakers do not admit the degree to which any one organization influences them if they are even aware of the fact (Abelson 2009). Gaffney (1991) asserts it would benefit neither independent think tanks nor democratic governments to claim they are the architects or beneficiaries, respectfully, of policy. Effectiveness is complicated by the perception of influence versus the reality of influence. Think tanks depend on donors' financial support, who expect their support to produce results. In popular understanding, influence decision-

oriented, measured by votes won and lost or legislation signed or vetoed (Cronbach and Suppes 1969, cited in J. Coleman 1972). Rich (2004) prefers the term *prodding research.*

However, much policy influence is exerted long before issues come to such public decision points "when problems are defined and issues are germinating" (Rich 2004, 206). Hence, when existent, influence is often invisible to most of the public—and more so when influence restrains action or removes an issue from the policy agenda, figuratively or literally. Accordingly, think tanks are often "hidden participants" in policymaking (Kingdon 1984, 209; Diane Stone 1996). Invisible successes are difficult to share with funders. Thus, some think tanks focus not on policy research but on commentary and impending policy actions. Such work can generate attention and support, but perhaps at the risk of squandering real influence (Rich 2004).

Kingdon's policy cycles (1984) define the theoretical framework for much research on think tanks. Think tank leaders are synonymous with Kingdon's policy entrepreneurs, working to promote ideas, prepare the groundwork, and link problems, policies, and politics when the policy window opens (Kingdon 1984; Levine 1985; Diane Stone 1996). McGann notes that think tanks can be most successful in problem definition and agenda-setting phases of the cycle (Booth 2007). They can shape the policy agenda by promoting issues, softening the environment, and coupling problems, policy, and policy windows (Kingdon 1984; Levine 1985; Diane Stone 1996).

Part of the agenda setting is the "shaping [of] public opinion and the intellectual climate" in which policy is created (Bakvis 1997, 98). Rich describes priming research—research late in the agenda-setting phase to explore how policymakers may choose to act (Rich 2004). However, others have argued that, even in agenda setting, think tanks' influence is over-estimated (Ball and Exley 2010; Diane Stone 2000). Likewise, agenda setting may not be the preferred role of think

tanks but may result from their lack of a "clear, consistent, or legally designated route to policy influence" (Diane Stone 1996, 219).

Such nuance is important to researchers and for the work of think tanks, but it does little to satisfy the demands of donors upon whom think tanks depend. Thus, organizations seek proxies for influence, chiefly among them earned media citations. Media citations show ideas are being discussed, but discussion does not imply influence (Jérôme-Forget 2000). Likewise, media exposure and legislative testimony indicate activity, not influence (Abelson 2009).

Abelson believes the quest for impact is futile. He presumes that think tanks can play a role in policymaking. However, the roles differ at various stages of the policy cycle, and not every organization can or wishes to engage in every stage of the cycle (Abelson 2009). Instead of seeking examples, indicators, or proxies of influence, Abelson suggests exploring the conditions wherein think tanks "can and have contributed to specific public policy discussions and the broader policymaking environment" (2009, 171).

Providing research is fundamentally about influence. A common understanding of influence is to incent or prevent a specific action. However, influence can extend to any component of the policy cycle. In its purest form, researchers aspire for policymakers to consider research and analysis. Paraphrasing Nagel (1975), Dahl and Stinebricker offer this definition of influence, "…a relation among human actors such that the wants, desires, preferences, or intentions of one or more actors affect the actions, of predispositions to act, of one or more actors in a direction consistent with—and not contrary to—the wants, preferences, or intentions of the influence-wielders(s)" (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003, 17). Influencing policymakers and the public are related but not synonymous. Abelson offers public and private strategies of influence. Public strategies include forums and conferences, scholarly lectures and addresses, legislative

testimony, publishing, email and web posting, public fundraising, and enhanced media exposure (Abelson 2009, 78). Private strategies include think tank staff accepting government positions or advisory roles, cultivating legislative relationships, featuring policymakers at events, employing current and former administrators and public officials, and producing studies (Abelson 2009, 82).

Rich (2004) offers four behaviors to increase influence: perceived credibility of work, access to policymakers, timeliness of work, and marketing. Notably, expertise is not cited as the most critical predictor of policymaker influence (Davidson 1976; Mooney 1991a; Whiteman 1985). If not expertise, then what is most important?

Influence is about relationships, and "[T]he most important type of influence is never documented" (Jérôme-Forget 2000, 99). Policy analysis studies often focus on written analyses, ignoring the personal relationships and networking—formal and informal—that constitute policymaking and thus underestimate the effects of policy analysts (Hird 2005). Indeed, traditional data, research, and analysis are but one of the three areas of activity, including publications of accessible memos, briefs, workshops, briefings, speeches, and seminars (Lindquist 1990). Building trust is essential to move research from analysis to application (Andrews 2017).

Specific research and general expertise are often shared through relationships rather than through, or in addition to, formal work (Bimber 1996). More precisely, information and influence are transmitted not through written reports but through conversations (Dooren and Van de Walle 2008; Mintzberg 1973; Pollitt 2006b). Indeed, written reports "are neither read nor valued" (Pollitt, 2006b; ter Bogt, 2004)" and "will be ignored" (General Accounting Office, 2005; Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 1996, cited in Pollitt 2006b, 50). Consequently, the utility of the research depends on who has and who communicates the information (Abelson

2009; Hird 2005; Jones and Louis 2018). Policy decisions may not emerge from competing research claims but from conversations with and between policymakers and researchers (Abelson 2009, 57). "[P]roximity and trust are essential in effective communication of information" (Hird 2005, 191). Consequently, organizations that can contribute to policymaking are those already connected to policymakers (Jones and Louis 2018, 394).

The more information hypothesis seems to conflict with the ideas matter hypothesis. If ideas genuinely matter in this way, are think tanks and similar organizations necessary? Stone (1996) claims, "Ideas need organizations to propel them within the hearing range of decision-makers."

State-Based Think Tanks

For most of the twentieth century, American think tanks were national or international in focus. This has changed in recent decades. State-based think tanks have become important actors in policymaking, particularly among political conservatives. By the late nineties, an estimated one hundred think tanks focused on state or local issues (Rich and Weaver 1998). By the early twenty-first century, ideological think tanks outnumbered non-ideological think tanks, and conservative institutions outnumbered liberal institutions (Rich 2004). Rich (2004) notes that 65% of state-focused organizations were founded after 1980. Hird, writing in 2005, noted that data "on the political strength of think tanks in states do not exist" (Hird 2005, 118). The Roe Foundation suggested that "there is greater scope to influence policy at the state level, as state legislators do not have the large staffs of their Washington counterparts and are, it's assumed, more open to policy analysis from independent sources" (The Roe Foundation, 1990, cited in Diane Stone 1996, 158). Indeed, research suggests that state policymakers are more inclined to rely upon information produced locally, specifically research with actionable recommendations

and cost-benefit analyses (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001; VanLandingham 2018; White and VanLandingham 2015).

However, like all think tanks, state-based organizations operate in an increasingly crowded and competitive field (VanLandingham 2018) and without the resources of larger national organizations (Abelson and Lindquist 2000). More recent literature has explored both the growth of state-based think tanks and the increase of think tanks with a more explicit ideological orientation, including the report of the Roe Foundation (1990), which explored both trends. Policymakers prefer local-sourced research (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001). The limited, and in some cases, total lack of, legislative research capacity creates an opportunity for think tanks and a more receptive audience for their work (The Roe Foundation 1990; Diane Stone 1996).

<div align="center">Other Policy Research Organizations</div>

Advocacy Organizations

Think tanks may be the most common of the organizations designed to provide policy information, but they are far from alone. McGann describes traditional think tanks, which focus on research, 'think-and-do tanks,' offering research, analysis, and outreach, and 'do-tanks,' which repackage and popularize the work of others (Booth 2007). Weaver (1989) describes the latter as advocacy tanks—organizations with a robust partisan orientation and extensive marketing.

> These think tanks have contributed to a transformation in the role of experts in American policy making. Many experts now behave like advocates. They are not just visible but highly contentious as well. They more actively market their work than conventional views of experts would suggest; their work, in turn, often represents pre-formed points of view rather than even attempts at neutral, rational analysis (Rich 2004, 5).

Weaver notes that these organizations lack scholarship but cultivate access to policymakers. He cites the Heritage Foundation as a prime example. Such organizations may have an easier path to measuring their influence—tracking public opinion and policymaker choices on specific issues which these advocacy tanks have engaged (Abelson 2009). The Goodman Institute offers this insightful warning:

> In recent years, there has been a proliferation of groups that openly advocate public policy changes (usually on a single issue). These groups are not incubators of new ideas; rather, they serve as lobbyists for established ideas. Often, they are financed by special interest groups. They can be helpful in promoting public policy changes, but they are not staffed or led by intellectuals. They are typically anti-intellectual—resisting ways of thinking that are different from the narrow goals of their financial backers ("What Is a Think Tank?" n.d.).

The description is even more intriguing coming, as it does, from a think tank with a right-of-center orientation, which many would find exemplary of the description. At the same time, the Goodman Institute offers a helpful comment on ideology and think tanks, noting that respected think tanks of all persuasions should be in general agreement on facts but have very different ideas of what problems and responses to explore ("What Is a Think Tank?" n.d.).

Such organizations are also described as secondhand dealers of ideas. Edwin Feulner, then-president of the Heritage Foundation, uses the term, noting "it takes an institution to help popularize and propagandize an idea—to market an idea" (Smith 1989, 188) and make complex ideas appealing to non-experts, which may include many policymakers (Diane Stone 1996). However, such organizations "blur the line between research and advocacy, resulting in disputes over facts and conclusions as well as contributing to ideological polarization" (VanLandingham 2018, 125 citing Radin, 1997). Such efforts, more commentary than research, have "damaged the collective reputation of

think tanks and policy experts generally among some policymaking audiences" (Rich 2004, 216). These developments reflect a change since the 1960s, when expertise was valued and funders "accommodated, even encouraged their [think tanks'] combined pursuit of credibility and low-profile influence with decision makers" (Rich 2004, 30). A decline in the reputation of think tanks may be relatively recent but suggests the garbage can model of policymaking of Cohen, March, and Olson (1972).

These advocacy tanks carry out a traditional think tank function: popularizing and normalizing ideas (Lindblom and Cohen 1979; Rich 2004; Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Diane Stone 1996; Weiss 1979). At the same time, these organizations focus more on producing commentary about prescient decisions, which is "ammunition for policy makers who need public justification for their preferred policy choices" (Rich 2018, 291). These organizations tend to popularize academic research rather than create new work—perhaps an observation true of most think tanks (Bakvis 1997). Weaver notes that classic think tanks flourished in a period of "weak and relatively non-ideological parties…and weak partisanship" but questions if "the image of think tank research in the US as objective can survive the growth of openly partisan and ideological advocacy thanks" (1989, 570). The question must be asked, to what extent did the rise of advocacy tanks encourage, or merely reflect, the rise of a hyper-partisan political environment?

Distinguishing between analysis and advocacy organizations can be difficult as more and more think tanks appear to engage in explicit advocacy. In contrast, advocacy groups may aspire to be seen as think tanks. Weiss offers three ways to distinguish analysis organizations, here presumed to include think tanks, from advocacy

organizations: the use of a wide array of evidence, systematic use of evidence, and the

"capacity to surprise…." (1992a, xiii–xiv).

Advocacy groups have many similarities with interest groups. Interest groups embrace the maxim, "Policy making is driven by interests, not ideas" (Diane Stone 1996, 106). The purpose of interest groups is not to research but to "ensure that elected leaders pursue policies compatible to their interests" (Abelson 2009, 11). Interest groups can only influence policy when they provide resources that can help with re-election (Polsby 1984; Burstein and Linton 2002). While "…some think tank leaders are actually reluctant to have their organizations categorized as think tanks…[but] some interest groups [are] eager to win the label 'think tank'" (Rich 2004, 13).

Legislative Research Agencies

A very different type of policy research organization, perhaps more similar to GRA organizations, is the legislative research agency (LRAs). LRAs are nonpartisan research units operating within and for state legislatures, constituted and funded by the legislators. Hird (2005) offers a comprehensive study of these organizations, which, he believes, "represent one of the last sources of potentially disinterested, if not unbiased, policy analysis and research for state legislatures" (Hird 2005, 198). These organizations are designed to provide unbiased, relevant, and timely information. However, they generally only respond to legislative requests rather than generate original research questions or "promoting new perspectives or generating analysis that challenges the preexisting ideas or power relationships" (Hird 2005, xv).

Hird identifies three broad categories: information gathering, descriptive-analytical research, and policy analysis (2005, 82).The former is most typical, and the latter most rare. Issue reports and memos, produced quickly, are the primary output of NPROs. Legislators most

value these organizations' collecting and synthesizing information and least value critical policy analysis and new ideas (Hird 2005, 131–32). Hird argues that what matters most to legislators is not the sophistication of this research but that they can trust the information, "a trust that has developed in large part due to the institutional linkage between legislators and NPROs [nonpartisan research organizations, Hird's term for LRAs]" (2005, 200). Likewise, nonpartisanship is critical, with legislators preferring "unbiased facts from a dependable source to more sophisticated analysis from an undependable source" (Hird 2005, 109). Hird believes that providing basic information to legislators is overlooked in studies of legislative decision-making and even by legislators themselves.

Academic Research

All policy research organizations rely on academic research. Academics train the researchers who will staff organizations. Academics partner with, contract with, and sometimes staff these organizations. Organizations are guided by the questions, methods, and findings of academic researchers—sometimes to the point of making the popularization of existing academic research their primary product. If academic research is central to policy research, what is the value of these intermediaries? Should academics not be able to engage in the policy process directly? Indeed, this is the aim of some scholars and at least some disciplines—thus, the coining of the term *pracademics* and the inclusion of regular articles or sections on connecting research to practice in some journals. Organizations like the Scholars Strategy Network ("Connect with America's Top Researchers" n.d.) seek to connect academic researchers directly with policymakers. This relatively newfound interest among public administration and public policy scholars in connecting with policymakers is ironic, given that ASPA was formed in 1939 in reaction to the practical and parochial focus of the GRA.

Fundamentally, policymakers turn to think tanks and other policy research organizations over universities because think tanks are more responsive, relevant, and timely (Abelson 2000). Intermediaries such as think tanks exist because academic researchers struggle to connect and engage policymakers effectively. "Policy makers report frustration with researchers' unwillingness to articulate clearly the policy implications of their research—to 'go out on a limb' and make policy recommendations based on their findings" (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001, 314).

Academic researchers and policymakers are described as living in two communities (Caplan 1979; Millikan 1959; Diane Stone 1996), two cultures (Hird 2005; Snow 2012), and two islands or worlds (Solesbury 2007). The values, motivations, rewards, language, and measures of success are different. Academic research can be slow, critical, and equivocating (Glover 1994). Bogenschneider and Corbett (2011) expand the two communities imagery to community dissonance theory. According to the theory, academic researchers, policymakers, think tanks, and other organizations form distinct groupings

> around a core technology that defines the tasks professionals perform as well as the institution's purpose, culture, and structure. Each of these communities…is shaped by professional and institutional cultures in ways that differently affect how their inhabitants think, act, and behave (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011, 77).

Academic research is rarely of direct and immediate use to policymakers. Academic research is usually conducted to discover, build, and test theories. In contrast, policymakers seek to develop and execute programs to address specific problems (Booth, 1988; Lindquist, 1990; McCall, 1996)" (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011, 77). One source of this tension is researchers' hesitancy to provide policymakers with the policy recommendations and clear implications they desire (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001). Gibbons summarizes the differing

environments of researchers and policymakers. According to Gibbons, researchers are motivated by policy activities that generate information they can publish, generate long-term research activities, have a teaching spin-off, raise their profile, have a demonstrable impact on public policy, and seek objective knowledge rather than support for an existing position. In contrast, policymakers are motivated by policy research that is relevant to a contemporary issue that is acceptable to the current government, identifies practical solutions, can be used to identify policy options, is demonstrated to work, does not attract controversy, and is effectively communicated (Gibbons et al. 2008, 183).

Governments are risk averse, guided by ideology. Academic researchers pursue projects disconnected from the debates and challenges of the current day. Crossing the divide requires a desire to do so and a willingness to change. It is not evident that any of the varying communities are willing or able to make such sacrifices (Lavis, Ross, and Hurley 2002, 145). Academics may be more successful working with and through organizations skilled at navigating media. (Davies, Nutley, and Walter 2007). Thus, effective collaborations with those with the ear of policymakers through advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1987) or epistemic communities (Diane Stone 1996). Consequently, think tanks can serve as intermediaries between academics and policymakers (James 1993), bridging the "knowledge-producing and knowledge-consuming worlds" (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011).

Academics generally ask different questions, pursue different methods, and produce different deliverables—translating these into actionable research "provides small payoffs and few short-term benefits in academic circles" (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011, 78). Pollitt (2006b, 259–61) summarizes eight types of research that academics provide to policymakers:

- agenda setting and reframing

- expert moderation of inter-party or inter-institutional discussion

- conceptual clarification

- questioning false assumptions

- guidance on how to structure decisions

- advising on how to collect data

- substantive advice based on middle-range, contextually based generalizations

- technical tips based on previous experience in other, similar contexts

Some suggest academics have a responsibility to contribute to policy debates by virtue of taxpayer support (Jackson 2007) and the obligation to equip citizens with information (Lindblom and Woodhouse 1993). Thomas Chamberlin, president of the University of Wisconsin, wrote in 1890, "Scholarship for the sake of scholars is refined selfishness. Scholarship for the sake of the state and the people is refined patriotism" (Chamberlin, 1890, p. 9 cited in Bogenschneider and Corbett 2011, 54).

Chapter Three: Research Design

This research seeks to understand the role and reputation of government research organizations in state policymaking. Reputation is operationalized as the perceived quality of an organization's outputs and prominence of mind for key stakeholders and their stated trust in an organization.

H_1: Policy actors state a preference for policy organizations with a solid nonpartisan reputation.

H_2: Policy actors' top-of-mind policy organizations are those that align with their ideology.

H_3: Policy actors will not identify a GRA organization as top of mind.

H_4: Policy actors most trust organizations that align with their ideology.

Dependent Variables

Measuring organizational effectiveness may be difficult, if not impossible. In contrast, measuring organizational reputation is less difficult and more useful. Organizations' reputations are correlated with their ability to influence policy, regardless of how influence is defined. In short, the greater the reputation of an organization, the higher its perceived value, and the greater likelihood it can influence policymaking. Rather than attempting to measure the effectiveness of government research organizations, it may be helpful to measure a necessary antecedent—organizational reputation. Organizations held in high regard are, all else equal, better positioned to influence the policy process. Conversely, organizations with a limited or negative reputation will not likely influence the policy process. Thus, while a given organization's influence may be difficult to quantify, organizations with better reputations are better positioned to exert influence when opportunities arise.

Following Rindova et al. (2005), it is theorized that reputation is composed of the perceived quality of organizations' products and the prominence of organizations in the minds of key stakeholders.

Prominence. Prominence will be measured by the number of respondents identifying an organization as a source of policy information.

Quality. Quality will be measured via a seven-point Likert scale ranking of ten quality indicators.

Independent Variables

Age. The age of the organization in 2022 is based on its date of legal incorporation.

Budget. Total annual budget size as reported on the most recent IRS Form 990.

Board size. Total number of board members as reported on the most recent IRS Form 990.

Size of staff. Total number of employees as reported on the most recent IRS Form 990.

Size of research staff. The total number of research employees as self-reported in policy organization surveys.

Media citations. Total number of media citations in the previous three calendar years as reported by Metro Monitor.

Research outputs. The number and type of research reports as self-reported in policy organization surveys and augmented with website analysis.

To explore the research question, original and secondary data were collected. Original data include surveys and interviews. Secondary data include GRA organizations' financial data, website content, published research, and earned media.

Primary Data

Two surveys were administered to two different populations in 16 states. Both surveys were created and distributed using Qualtrics XM, provided by Auburn University. Invited

participants received an email invitation via the researcher's university email account. The invitations contained a brief description of the project, the survey, and a summary of participant protections. Participants were invited to follow an anonymous hyperlink to the Qualtrics instrument. Links were not customized for each respondent. The surveys began with the complete project summary and informed consent, as approved by the Auburn University Institutional Review Board. Participants were then asked to opt in or out of the survey. Those who opted in began the survey. Those who opted out received a screen thanking them for considering the project. The instruments were in the field in April and May 2022. After the initial invitation, three follow-up reminders were sent, each two weeks apart. Both instruments are included in Appendix B.

Survey of State Policy Organizations

The first survey was administered to leaders of state policy organizations. There are likely hundreds, if not thousands, of such organizations nationwide. This research focuses on organizations that are GRA members. The role and reputation of GRA-member organizations are best understood in the context of similar organizations. Three different membership organizations were chosen for comparison: the State Policy Network (SPN), the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN), and the State Priorities Partnership (SPP). Each of the three organizations is a national membership organization with state organizations as members or affiliates. SPN is a conservative-oriented organization. State member organizations are presumed to be conservative in their orientation. EARN and SPP are moderate to liberal organizations. Likewise, their members are presumed to be moderate to liberal in their orientation. Two moderate to liberal groups were chosen because each has a smaller membership and organizations tend to be members of one or the other, though some are members of both.

Member organizations were identified by GRA, SPN, and EARN website searches. Each of the 16 states is home to at least one organizational member of the GRA, SPN, and EARN/SPP, for a total of 72 organizations. The organizations in Alabama are excluded from this research due to the researcher's affiliation with the PARCA, the Alabama-based GRA member, and relationships with the Alabama affiliates of SPN and EARN/SPP. See the Conflict of Interest Statement in Appendix A.

The survey identifies the organizations' missions, goals, products, and processes, including structure, staffing, target audience, and measures of success. The survey avoids any questions that can be accurately answered by review of IRS Form 990s or organization websites. The survey instrument is based on a survey of directors of state legislatures' research office conducted by Hird (2005) and McGann's (2021) surveys of national and state-level think tanks.

Email addresses for the chief executive officer, executive director, or other similarly titled professionals were collected from GRA, SPN, EARN, and SPP websites or member organizations' websites. In most cases, individual email addresses were available. Sometimes, only generic addresses such as info@ or director@ were available. These generic addresses were used as a last resort. Of specific interest were leaders' self-understandings of their organizations and their opinions of other organizations in their state. Each respondent was required to indicate their state of residence. Based on their selection, the respondent was asked about policy organizations in their state.

While 72 respondents were invited to participate, only 23 responses were recorded, generating a 31.9% response rate. The final version of the instrument was longer than desired or ideal. The Qualtrics system does not time out and will allow a respondent to stop and resume a survey. Thus, reported response times can be misleading. Three of the 23 responses were

recorded with abnormally lengthy response times: 105, 152, and 195 minutes. When these times are removed, the mean and median response times were 26 and 23 minutes, respectively.

Survey of Civic Actors

The second instrument surveyed state policy actors in the 16 states. Policy actors are operationalized as state legislators, state cabinet members, executives of community foundations, journalists, and leaders of interest and advocacy groups. The original research design included business leaders. However, the researcher was not satisfied with ways to identify a suitable universe of businesses in the 16 states.

The survey asked respondents to assess GRA, EARN, SPN, and SPP members, as well as other well-known providers of policy information, on three measures of quality: partisanship, trustworthiness, and perception among peers. Surveys were state-specific, reflecting the GRA, EARN, SPN, and SPP organizations headquartered in each recipient's state.

Multiple steps were required to collect email addresses. The researcher was not able to identify any comprehensive list of state lawmakers. Consequently, a search of each state legislature website was required. Frequently, this meant a separate search for each legislative chamber. Some states provided an easy-to-access list of all lawmakers and their email addresses. Other states' sites required a labor-intensive visit to each lawmaker's webpage. Some were not available.

Collecting cabinet officials' names and addresses proved much more difficult. While the governors of all 16 states maintain some form of cabinet, few provide a discreet listing of cabinet officials. Likewise, the size and composition of the cabinets vary considerably. To achieve consistency in the sample, the researcher compiled a list of state agencies most commonly represented in governors' cabinets and most relevant to research conducted by GRA

organizations. Once cabinet-level agencies were identified, locating agency heads and email addresses proved challenging. Most, but not all, agency sites identified the agency's senior leader. Few sites provided the leader's email. Separate web searches were necessary. As a last resort, names were searched through RocketReach ("RocketReach" n.d.), a private company that mines websites and social media pages for email addresses.

Community foundations in the states were identified via a search of The Grantsmanship Center (TGC). TGC is a public-benefit corporation that provides "…training and publications that help organizations plan solid programs, write logical, compelling grant proposals, secure and manage grants, and create earned income opportunities" ("The Grantsmanship Center" n.d.). TGC provides lists of community foundations by state. The listings may not be exhaustive but are believed to be the most comprehensive. Email addresses were collected from the TCG listings or the foundations' web pages. As with the other categories of respondents, every effort was made to locate individual emails. Generic emails such as info@ were used as a last resort.

Interest and advocacy group leaders were an important group of respondents, also. While such organizations may produce policy research, they also rely on the work of other policy organizations. Identifying interest groups also proved to be challenging. Interest groups were identified via VoteSmart ("VoteSmart" n.d.). VoteSmart is an Iowa-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that provides comprehensive data on lawmakers, candidates, political contributions, and special interest groups. Data are collected by volunteers and provided free of charge. VoteSmart also maintains a list of state and national groups. VoteSmart seeks to provide information on all interest groups that provide candidate ratings. As with the other types of respondents, email addresses were collected from either the VoteSmart website or the interest groups' website access via a link on the VoteSmart page.

Conceptually, journalists' email addresses should be the easiest to obtain. However, identifying media outlets in multiple states while not limiting the panel to traditional print and broadcast outlets would prove difficult. Consequently, media contacts were identified through Cision ("Cision.Com" n.d.), a PR company that provides a reporter database, press release and email distribution tools, and media monitoring services. The service was queried for journalists, including social media journalists and bloggers, working in government, politics, education, business, and the economy, in each of the 16 states.

Together, these steps yielded a total of 6,690 email addresses. Of that number, 6,023 invitations were successfully delivered. The number of respondents was 157, including two who reviewed the informed consent information and opted not to participate. The number of respondents who completed the instrument was 109, with a final response rate of 1.8%. The survey response rate is disappointing but could be explained by several factors, summarized by Holtom et al. (2022).

Survey length is a prime component of survey response rates (Cycyota and Harrison 2002; Holtom et al. 2022), with shorter surveys producing higher completion rates (Kost and Rosa 2018). Qualtrics' internal survey review technology estimated the survey length at 13.6 minutes. The survey design, explored below, means that each respondent's length could vary substantially. The length of the instrument could help explain the 48 respondents who initiated but did not complete the survey. It does not explain why so few began the survey.

Hierarchical position is thought to also correlate with survey response rates, with surveys of the general public and lower-level employees seeing better response rates (Cycyota and Harrison 2002; 2006; Eisenhardt 1989; Holtom et al. 2022; Solarino and Aguinis 2021). The instrument was designed primarily for respondents in positions of significant authority and

responsibility. Two hundred seventy invited participants were cabinet-level officials, and just over a third (37.2%) were state legislators. Many state legislatures were in, or preparing to be in, session when the survey was administered. Moreover, 12 of the 15 state legislatures surveyed are part-time legislatures. Lawmakers have significant demands on their time ("Full- and Part-Time Legislatures" 2021). Lawmakers may also be less motivated to respond to requests originating outside their home state. Finally, surveys were sent to legislators' official email addresses. Some official email addresses were personalized, whereas others were generic, with a district number used instead of the member's name. It is unknown how many lawmakers use their official email and how much content is blocked by servers or deleted by staff. Thus, while invitations were sent to more than 2,000 legislators, it is highly probable that few were seen and considered by the actual lawmakers. Even with those caveats, 39.6% of respondents to a question on professional role indicated a position in state government. See table 3.1.

The survey title, "Survey of State Policy Actors," proved problematic for some invited participants. Numerous invitees questioned their inclusion in an instrument for state policy actors. At least 40 invited participants contacted the researcher directly, confirming they were the intended recipients. Each such inquiry received a response with further explanation and encouragement to participate, and some indicated they would. Given the anonymous design of the instrument, it is unknown if any did so. Other invitees indicated they did not participate in surveys. Communications staff from one cabinet official responded that participation would require approval of the agency's Institutional Review Board.

Secondary Data

The research, finances, and media exposure are important variables in understanding the role and reputation of GRA organizations. Governance and staffing also provide important

insight into organizations' capacities. Fortunately, most relevant data are readily available. Descriptive data were analyzed using the sampling, utilizing, reducing, and inferencing model outlined by Krippendorff (2004). This secondary data analysis provides the most comprehensive known understanding of government research organizations.

As all GRA organizations are nonprofit corporations, a significant volume of data are provided by the organizations' IRS Form 990s, including data on nonprofits' board, staffing, and funding. Form 990s are required for every nonprofit in the United States with annual revenues of $200,000 or more or assets of $500,000 or more ("Annual Form 990 Filing Requirements for Tax-Exempt Organizations," n.d.). All but one GRA organization meets these criteria. Form 990s were downloaded from GuideStar ("GuideStar" n.d.), and relevant data were transposed into a database for analysis. Forms are required on an annual basis. However, GRA organizations' fiscal years vary, and there is a significant delay between filing, IRS review, and public posting. Thus, even the most recent Form 990 data is frequently two or more years old.

GRA organizations engage in various activities, including hosting events, issue forums, community roundtables, candidate conversations, leadership development programs, consulting, and podcast production. However, at the heart of GRA organizations is research. Publications may be organized by subject, jurisdiction, type (such as analysis or commentary), date, or some combination thereof. Classification varies in consistency and specificity both within and between organizations. Most organizations make most of their research freely available to the public via their websites. The 23 organizations' websites were examined using ParseHub ("ParseHub" n.d.), a web-scrapping tool, and manual searches to generate a database of publicly available research projects.

As noted in the literature, media exposure is a frequent proxy for effectiveness among policy organizations. Consequently, capturing media exposure is important. GRA organizations generate significant media exposure, although the modern media landscape makes accurate quantification. Across the country, many traditional newspapers have shifted from print to primarily or exclusively online formats. Likewise, newer media outlets may only exist virtually. Capturing new or very recent media content has never been easier.

Conversely, locating older content is surprisingly difficult. Additionally, many of these news sites rely heavily on wire stories. Consequently, a story about a local or state issue may appear nationwide in dozens or hundreds of media outlets. These confounds make it increasingly difficult for researchers to develop an accurate assessment of media coverage. Despite those caveats, it is possible to gain some insight into the media exposure of GRA organizations.

Some, but not all, GRA organizations track earned media coverage. However, consistency and comprehensiveness vary widely. Thus, other sources were sought. Metro Monitor ("Metro Monitor" n.d.), a news monitoring service, was consulted to estimate the media exposure of GRA organizations. Broadcast media archives for January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2022, were searched. The years 2015 through 2019 match the other years of focus in the research. Internet archives, including print, digital, and hybrid publications, were searched from July 1, 2020, through December 31, 2022. Internet-based media, including most newspapers, are only available for approximately two-and-a-half years. However, these stories and the events they address should be more top of mind for surveyed respondents. Searches were conducted of each organization's name in both title and content in broadcast and internet media across all US media markets.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

This research relies on both original and secondary data analysis. Secondary data is discussed first to provide context for primary data discussed second.

Secondary Data Analysis

A review of GRA members' IRS Form 990s provides significant descriptive data to explain GRA organizations.

As of 2022, 26 organizations ("GRA Organizations" n.d.) and 10 individuals were members of the GRA. Individual members and two organizations are excluded from this secondary analysis. The Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) is a public institution of higher education located in Chicago. The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) is a unit of the Tennessee state government, created by and accountable to the Tennessee State Legislature. Both organizations are outliers whose missions and data are incomparable to the other GRA member organizations. A third organization, the Pennsylvania Economy League, is excluded from the financial analysis but included in other analyses.

Age

The Chicago-based Civic Federation is the oldest of the organizations. Founded in 1893, the Civic Federation predates the GRA and was a precursor to the NYBMR. In contrast, The Sycamore Institute, located in Nashville, Tennessee, is only seven years old. Across all organizations, the mean age is 72, and the median is 80. See table 4.1.

The 24 organizations are found in 19 states, comprising 46.5% of the United States 2020 population. Five organizations focus on a single municipal government or metropolitan area. One

organization, the Center for Governmental Research, conducts research via consulting contracts nationwide. The remaining 20 organizations operate at a statewide level. See table 4.2.

Organizational Structure

IRS Section 501 Subsection

All but one GRA organization is a nonprofit corporation. Twenty organizations are 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporations. Accordingly, they can engage in educational, advocacy, and limited lobbying efforts. Many member organizations have self-imposed restrictions on advocacy and lobbying that are more stringent than those of the IRS. Such restrictions are established to emphasize the organizations' nonpartisan or objective reputation. As discussed below, a reputation for objectivity is critical for many GRA organizations. Such emphasis seeks to distinguish a given GRA organization from other research organizations with more partisan leanings. However, *nonpartisan* does not signify a material difference from other research organizations. By law, every 501(c)(3) nonprofit is nonpartisan—they are prohibited from endorsing candidates. A more precise term is *non-ideological*, signifying that discreet ideological presuppositions do not guide these organizations. However, no GRA organization appears to make routine use of this language.

The remaining four GRA organizations (the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence, the Nevada Taxpayers Association, the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois, and the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa) are 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporations. As 501(c)(4) nonprofits, these organizations can be much more engaged in political advocacy and lobbying efforts. These organizations may solicit and receive contributions, but the contributions are not tax-deductible. Donated revenue accounts for approximately 68.5% of the revenue of all GRA organizations. The Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence, the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois, and the

Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa report 0.0% of revenue from contributions. The Nevada Taxpayers Association lists 70% of its revenue from contributions, although these contributions may be membership fees.

National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities

In addition to the various IRS subsection codes ((c)(3), (c)(4), and others), nonprofit organizations are further classified by the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities Core Code Classification System (NTEE-CC). The system was developed by the IRS in the 1990s, based on the original NTEE developed by the National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute in the 1980s (Urban Institute n.d.). The classification provides a way to organize and classify nonprofit organizations further. Twenty of the organizations are classified as Public, Society Benefit organizations, as indicated by the NTEE Major Group Code W. See table 4.3.

Three of those organizations, the PARCA, the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Economy League, are future classified as Community Improvement, Capacity Building, signified by the NTEE Major Group Code S. The Colorado Futures Center is an entity with Colorado State University and is classified as Education organizations. PARCA is housed at a university, and when founded, its staff were employed by the university and leased to the organization. Thus, PARCA is also classified as an Education organization. Perhaps the most interesting of all the 25 GRA members with NTEE codes is the Civic Federation, defined as a multipurpose Human Services organization.

<div align="center">Institutional Focus</div>

All four 501(c)(4) organizations and four 501(c)(3) organizations, one-third of all GRA member organizations, are taxpayer associations, listed below.

- Florida TaxWatch

- Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute

- Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

- Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence

- Nevada Taxpayers Association

- Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council

- Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa

- Taxpayers Federation of Illinois

These organizations' names, self-descriptions, or research products identify their primary, if not

singular, focus as tax policy and government spending. Such taxpayer associations became

prominent in the 1930s; at one point, more than 200 were members of the GRA. The increase in

such organizations was cited as one reason critics wished to reform or restructure the GRA in the

late 1930s (Lee 2014). These advocates argued that taxpayers' associations pursued a narrow

research agenda with often partisan and pre-established outcomes. While all eight taxpayer-

focused groups are dues-paying GRA members, based on the researcher's observation, only

two—Florida TaxWatch and the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council—are actively

involved in the GRA.

<div align="center">Mission</div>

Creating a nonprofit requires, among other actions, stating the proposed organization's

purpose or reason for existing. This justification, at least in general terms, is required to file

incorporation papers at the state level and to seek recognition by the IRS. Organizations

generally draft mission statements based on their stated purpose. These mission statements are

short summaries of the organization, which serve as a "strategic tool that emphasises [*sic*] an

organisation's [*sic*] uniqueness and identity" (Alegre et al. 2018, 456). Each of the 24

organizations in this study provides a mission statement. In most cases, mission statements were explicitly stated on the organizations' web pages under an appropriate heading or language such as, "the mission of…is to…." In some cases, mission language was inferred from a more comprehensive text on the organization's web page. In the case of the Colorado Futures Center, the mission statement was extracted from the 2016 IRS Form 990. EdNC listed no identifiable mission language on its website or recent IRS Form 990s. Instead, the mission language was extracted from the organization's GuideStar profile ("EducationNC GuideStar Profile" n.d.).

Content analysis of the mission statements provides insight into the GRA while highlighting meaningful variances among the member organizations. The mission statements of the 24 organizations were coded with the assistance of Quirkos, a basic computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package. Forty-eight keywords were identified in the mission statements. Each word was coded and then compared to frequency across all the mission statements. The most frequent terms utilized were *research* or *analysis,* appearing in (75%) mission statements. The second most frequent was *educate/inform* and *objective/unbiased,* appearing in 54.2% of the statements. See table 4.4.

The prevalence of the terms *research, analysis,* or *research and analysis* suggest that GRA organizations identify as research organizations rather than advocacy organizations. While research and education are sometimes seen as the most basic form of advocacy, GRA organizations generally seek to distinguish between the tasks. The second most common concept is that of objectivity. The words' *objective*, *impartial*, *independent*, *unbiased*, or *nonpartisan* have meaningful differences, but GRA mission statements tend to use them as synonyms. The exact nuances of the terms are less important than their use as signifiers to distinguish themselves from more ideologically driven organizations.

Considering 501(c)(3) organizations alone does not yield meaningful insights. The same terms appear most frequently and in the same order, but the frequencies and percentages of statements containing the terms decrease somewhat. Research and analysis appear in 70.8% of 501(c)(3) mission statements. Objective or unbiased appear in 50.0% of 501(c)(3) mission statements. See table 4.5.

In contrast, there is a significant difference when considering only 501(c)(4) organizations. Whereas the most frequent terms, *research* or *analysis,* appear 18 times in all statements and 17 times in 501(c)(3) mission statements, the most common terms in 501(c)(4) mission statements are *efficient*, *tax,* and *tax policy*, each appearing three times. See table 4.6.

Instead of IRS classification, a more insightful comparison may be seen between GRA organizations that are taxpayer organizations and those that are not. The missions of organizations that are not taxpayer organizations look broadly similar to all GRA organizations and 501(c)(3) organizations—*research, analysis*, or *research and analysis* appear in 58.3% of those mission statements. See table 4.7. Likewise, the most frequent terms are the same among all GRA organizations, 501(c)(3) organizations, and non-taxpayer organizations, although in slightly different orders.

In contrast, those GRA organizations identifying as taxpayer-focused see a greater variance in terminology. The most frequent term only occurs in 25% of organizations. Likewise, whereas non-taxpayer organizations emphasize organizational identity through such terms as *research*, *advance*, and *educate*, taxpayer-focused groups emphasize the objects of their focus, with terms such as *cost*, *expenditure*, *finance/fiscal*, *tax*, *tax policy*, and *efficiency*. See table 4.8.

Governance

As nonprofit organizations, regardless of the IRS subsection, GRA members are governed by boards of directors. GRA boards tend to be larger than the average nonprofit board. Based on the most recent IRS Form 990 filings, 1,037 individuals served on the board of a GRA member organization. The mean board size is 43 members (45.7 when only 501(c)(3) members are considered) and the median size is 33. In contrast, across all sectors nationwide, the mean nonprofit board is 15 people, and the median is 13 ("A Nonprofit Board's Dynamics and Processes—FAQs" n.d.). While the Colorado Futures Center board comprises three members, the minimum size under Colorado law, the Worcester Regional Research Bureau board is 117. There is no correlation between age and board size. The 129-year-old Civic Federation has 116 board members. In contrast, the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, the sixth youngest member, has the largest board at 117. Surprisingly, a statistically significant correlation exists between board size and total revenue in three of the last five years. The fitted regression model was y=16144.4*Board+44681. See the summary output reported in figure 4.1.

Like all nonprofit boards, boards of GRA member organizations are tasked with fiduciary oversight, setting the organization's mission and strategy, and selecting and supervising the organization's chief executive officer or executive director. The precise nature of board authority and responsibility varies by state. Beyond that, GRA member boards vary in their structure and responsibilities. Some boards are comprised of individuals selected based on their interest in the organization and their skills, knowledge, relationships, or other criteria. Other boards are comprised of people assigned by their employers, who are entitled to appoint a board member or board members based on financial support or other metrics. Some boards choose which research projects their staff will conduct or vote on positions to take regarding public policy issues. Other boards are entirely removed from setting the research agenda.

Employment

The most recent data show that the 24 organizations employ 198 people (mean 8.25, median 6). See figure 4.2. Employment data suggests that GRA members are within the norms of the broader nonprofit sector. Based on 2017 data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 39% of nonprofit organizations employ five or fewer, and 56.4% employ fewer than nine ("Research Data on the Nonprofit Sector" n.d.). In contrast, GRA members tend to be governed by unusually large boards.

Financial Data

Revenue

In 2019, GRA organizations generated $22.6 million in revenue (mean, $1,06 million, median, $956,407). Revenue by source begins to reveal the varying business models. A more helpful analysis is provided by examining the percentage of revenue by source. Table 4.9 displays the major sources of revenue as a percentage of total revenue.

Contributed Income

At 68.5%, charitable contributions, which include federated campaigns, membership dues, fundraising events, government grants, and noncash contributions, comprise most of the revenue generated by the 24 GRA organizations. Contributions accounted for 100% of revenue for the Washington Research Council and 99.5% of the Sycamore Foundation. Three organizations report contributions totaling more than 100% of revenue because these organizations lost money on special events, resulting in an anomaly in reporting.

Three organizations, the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence, Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa, and Taxpayers Federation of Illinois, reported no contributions. These organizations are 501(c)(4) nonprofits. As discussed above, contributions to such organizations

are not tax deductible. Interestingly, the Nevada Taxpayers Association is also a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, but it reports 70% of its revenue in contributions. Upon closer inspection of the organization's 2019 IRS Form 990, the organization reports membership dues in Section VIII.1.b rather than Section VIII.2.a. The former is where deductible membership fees are recorded. An example is National Public Radio (NPR) or Public Broadcasting Stations (PBS) memberships. Here, membership is symbolic. So-called members may receive gifts or benefits, but they have no rights or responsibilities regarding the governance or leadership of the organization.

In contrast, in legal membership organizations, as specified in the organizations' bylaws, members have legal rights and responsibilities, often including voting on board members or approving other actions. In organizations such as these, membership fees are not tax deductible. Fees are considered program revenue rather than donations and are reported in Section VIII.2.a of Form 990. The other three 501(c)(4) members of the GRA book their membership fees accordingly. When all four 501(c)(4) organizations are excluded, the contributions as a share of total revenue increase from 68.5% to 71.2%. The Nevada Taxpayers Association's membership reporting is unusual and slightly misleading but is not a material or substantive error. It does allude to more significant issues with nonprofit accounting. While nonprofits are subject to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) developed by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), there is still much in nonprofit accounting subject to interpretation, often leading to misinterpretations of nonprofit financials.

While contributions composed most of GRA member organizations' revenue in 2019, such has not been typical in recent years. Between 2015 and 2019, contributed revenue averaged 44.9% of total revenue.

Earned Income

Program services accounted for the second largest source of revenue, accounting for 24.5% of all GRA organizations' revenues between 2015 and 2019. See table 4.9. Over those five years, seven organizations reported no program revenue or sales. One organization, the Nevada Taxpayers Association, reported no program services revenue and only 0.2% of revenue from sales. As discussed above, the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence and the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois report 99.9% and 98% of all revenues from program services, respectively. When these nine organizations are removed, the seven reporting no program services and two reporting almost 100% of revenue from program services, the program service revenue accounts for 28.7% of revenue for the remaining organizations.

Most GRA organizations generate program revenue primarily from contract research. Program revenue ranges from a high of 92.4% at the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) to 2.9% at the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa (TACI). CGR is primarily a consulting firm providing research services to governments throughout the county. Unlike every other GRA member, they are not geographically constrained, and many well engage in projects in localities served by another GRA organization.

Expenses

Between 2015 and 2019, the GRA organizations expensed a total of $107,465,705, or $21.5 million per year, translating to an annual mean of $936,318 and a median of $812,382 per organization. Revenues for the five years range from $18.9 million at the Pennsylvania Economy League to $645,206 at the Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute. See table 4.10.

Nonprofit organizations must allocate expenses across administration, fundraising, and program services. These allocations are reported in each organization's IRS Form 990, allowing

researchers and the public to assess organizations' program expense ratio—the share program expenses compared to fundraising and administration. A frequent recommendation suggests that organizations should spend no more than 15 to 20% on administration and fundraising. Such ideas are increasingly under criticism from nonprofit practitioners and scholars, but the rule of thumb is well entrenched. Consequently, to meet those benchmarks, there can be implicit pressure on nonprofit organizations to underinvest in operations, misrepresent the true nature of expenses, or both. Likewise, organizations' fidelity to GAAP regulations and nonprofit accounting best practices varies widely. Thus, expense allocations and program ratios should be viewed with caution.

When considering such metrics among the GRA member organizations, between 2015 and 2019, the mean for program services was 73.8%, with a high of 95.1% and a low of 27.3%. Only five organizations reported average program service ratios at or above 80%: CGR, EdNC, Florida TaxWatch, the Utah Foundation, and the Worcester Regional Research Bureau. As noted, CGR operates on a fee-for-service business model and thus spends almost nothing on fundraising.

Net Revenue

For the five years 2015–2019, these organizations generated a net revenue of $10,831,405 with a mean annual net revenue of $94,145 per organization. A better assessment of the fiscal health of an organization is its profit margin (gross revenue less expenses divided by gross revenue). Profit margin is less common in nonprofit organizations but is still a legitimate financial metric. All GRA organizations combined for a 10.1% margin between 2015 and 2019, with a mean of 10.1% and a median of 3.7%. The large spread between the median and mean

indicates significant outliers. Indeed, the range of margins runs from 67.7% (CGR) to -9.3% (Washington Research Council). See table 4.11.

Research

GRA organizations engage in various activities, including hosting events, issue forums, community roundtables, candidate conversations, leadership development programs, consulting, and podcast production. However, at the heart of GRA organizations is research. Between 2015 and 2022, the organizations produced more than 8,000 projects. A precise count remains elusive. Some, but not all, organizations publish every project and product. As previously discussed, several organizations are membership-based organizations. The Nevada Taxpayers Association produces a running list of bills pre-filed in the legislature. These are freely available to the public. More detailed analyses of tax-related legislation, newsletters, and other publications are available only to members.

Similarly, the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa (TACI) produces between two and six white papers per year on tax-related issues relevant to a three-county area in central Iowa. These publications are only available to members. The Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) and the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) make some research and synopses available to the public. However, most of these organizations' work is contracted program evaluation or technical assistance for nonprofits or government agencies. PEL does not publicly release such work. CGR releases some. These organizations' published works are included in the research counts but certainly underreport their total output.

Conversely, not all publications listed meet the definition of research. Most organizations have one publication channel, and all content is published via that channel. Thus, mixed among research briefs and reports are opinion pieces, event announcements, notices of awards given or

received, staff and board changes, and similar content. Likewise, organizations publish annual reports, periodic research recaps, and repost related work from other outlets. Such activity is vital for organizations' brands but does not qualify as original research. The database of collected research was scrubbed to eliminate such content, resulting in a count of 7,804 publications.

Of the 7,804 publications, 51.1% (3,991) were published by North Carolina's EdNC. EdNC is an outlier amount GRA members. Since its founding in 2015, EdNC has evolved into a media outlet singularly focused on education in North Carolina, as evidenced by its staff structure, publications, and recognition by the North Carolina Press Association (Team EdNC Wins Journalism Awards 2021). EdNC's current 16 staff include six employees whose titles include 'reporter' or 'storyteller.' Publications tend to be between 500 and 1,000 words and mimic modern journalism in content, form, and style. EdNC's output of 3,991 publications over seven years translates into an average of 2.3 publications per working day. Because of the differences in organizational structure and output and the sheer volume of publications, EdNC publications are excluded from further analysis of research output.

The exclusion of EdNC research in results leaves 3,813 publications—a mean of 173.3 per organization, or 24.8 per year. As indicated above, the mean is skewed lower by the presence of membership and consulting organizations that publish little, if any, of their work. Table 4.12 provides research output by organization.

Research by Category

The distribution of research topics varies considerably among the GRA and covers an extensive range of topics. Common themes include previews and reviews of legislative sessions, analyses of state budgets, revenues, expenditures, economic forecasts, school performance data, and evaluations of government services. There are outliers, too. One organization in an

agriculture-dependent state published research on threats to the state's bee population and possible responses. Another organization published a summary of flag etiquette. The publications were coded into 75 different categories and then recoded into 20 categories in four major groups: public finance, public services, government, and the economy. The organizations published:

- 1,644 projects on public finance, 43.1% of all publications

- 1,178 projects on public services, 30.9% of all publications

- 546 projects on the government, 14.3% of all publications

- 444 projects on the economy, 11.6% of all publications

Public finance saw the greatest concentration of efforts. All 22 organizations produced public finance research, compared to 21 (95.5%) organizations publishing government research and 20 (90.1%) organizations publishing in both public services and the economy. See table 4.13. That only 14.3% of the research conducted by members of the GRA are classified as government research may seem surprising. All research could be reasonably be classified as government research. However, research was classified into discrete categories to facilitate analysis. The classification also reflects Laswell's classic definition of politics—who gets what, when, and how (1950).

Public Finance

A plurality of the research (43.1%) can be classified as public finance and includes research on general state and local finances (590 projects), taxes (573 projects), and state and local budgets (481 projects). Such is not surprising, given the history of the GRA and its oldest organizations and the membership of six organizations with an explicit focus on taxes or public finance. All 22 organizations produced research public finance research, ranging from one

(Colorado Futures Center) to 342 (The Civic Federation). More than half of all public finance research was published by four organizations. Similarly, public finance represented at least half of the publications for eight of the 22 organizations, including 88.4% of the work of the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois. While only one report from the Colorado Futures Center was classified as public finance, their small output of 15 projects means that public finance still accounted for 6.7% of effort. See table 4.14. Despite numerous organizations with an explicit focus on taxes, research on taxes was not as prolific as might be expected. Tax research accounted for 573 projects, 34.9% of public finance research, and only 15% of total research across all areas and topics. Budget research accounted for 35.9% (590 projects) and 29% (481) of the remaining public finance categories.

Public Services

The second most prolific area of research is public services—1,178 projects (30.9%) are classified as such. Public service research is much more diffuse across organizations than public finance. However, two organizations did not produce any work in the category: the Nevada Taxpayers Association and the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa. The Citizens Research Council of Michigan is responsible for 17.4% of all public services research. See table 4.16. Public service research is also diffuse in content. The category is composed of 10 topics.

As indicated in table 4.17, education is the most common public services subtopic. Frequent educational research includes funding, staffing, and student performance. Health/healthcare is the second most frequent topic and includes research on staffing shortages, costs, and Medicaid. It is plausible that the COVID-19 pandemic could inflate the volume of health and healthcare research. Indeed, the pandemic did affect the overall research of GRA organizations, as will be explored. However, the pandemic effect does not appear to be

predominately reflected in increased health and healthcare research. The highest number of health and healthcare projects were not produced during the pandemic years but in 2017. See figure 4.4. That year, research on Medicaid expansion was the most frequent single topic, perhaps related to the drop in the federal match rate for Medicaid expansion from 100% to 95% of the cost in 2017. Since the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010, Medicaid has been a significant state policy issue. From 2015–2022, Medicaid research accounted for 21.7% of all health and healthcare research and 4.4% of all public service research..

Government

The third major area of research is government, with 546 projects, 14.3% of all research between 2015 and 2022.. For this analysis, government research is operationalized as research exploring work in the executive branch or general administration, legislative action, elections, and public opinion, with the former accounting for 41% of government research. See table 4.18. Government research is not evenly distributed across the GRA organizations. As table 4.19 demonstrates, 75% of government research was completed by just eight organizations. However, the area accounted for half of the research of the Nevada Taxpayers Federation, 43% of the Pennsylvania Economy League, and a third of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

The Economy

The final area of research is economic research, with 444 projects, or 11.6% of all research between 2015 and 2022. Economic research is operationalized as research concerning the economy and economic development, employment and workforce development, and population and demographics. As might be expected by their names, the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia and the Florida TaxWatch produced the most economic research between 2015 and 2022 at 106 and 77 projects, respectively. Economic research accounted for 60% of the

total output of the Economy League but only 23% of the output of the Florida TaxWatch. See table 4.20.

Media Coverage

Searches were conducted of each organization's name in both title and content in broadcast and internet media across all US media markets. The searches yielded more than 19,500 results. These results were culled to eliminate coverage of staff and board transitions, fundraisers, press releases, unrelated stories that mentioned someone's affiliation the organization, and other extraneous data. One significant challenge was dealing with wire stories from the AP and other related wire services. Local AP reporters generated significant amounts of local content regarding or consulting GRA organizations' research. Many of these stories appeared on media sites around the country. These reprints, totaling at least 2,900, were also culled from the search results. However, non-wire reports and those appearing in multiple local media outlets were not culled.

The data scrubbing resulted in 10,959. Of these, 95.4% were stories in the local market. The balance were in national outlets. The Wisconsin Policy Forum led all organizations with 3,771 stories—34.4% of the total stories. S Additionally, other search results that appeared to be erroneous, such as results from international and non-news sites, were also removed.ee table 4.21. Data were further scrubbed to consider coverage in media markets severing the organizations' home states and national coverage, reducing the count by 85 stories. See table 4.22. This additional analysis did not affect the overall share of media coverage per organization or their ranking.

Media coverage can be unpredictable and vary widely based on the interests and relationships of reporters and editors, the overall volume of events to be covered in a given

period, and the media market size. State and local politics in Wisconsin and Illinois have been unusually volatile recently, creating significant press attention in both states and nationwide. Most wire stories originated in these two states. This fact suggests both an interest in the state of affairs in Wisconsin and Illinois and strong relationships between AP reporters and the local GRA organizations.

Survey of State Policy Actors

The second instrument surveyed state policy actors in the 16 states. Policy actors were operationalized as state cabinet secretaries, legislators, heads of the largest charitable foundations based on annual giving, and local print and broadcast media journalists covering relevant issues. The New York and Pennsylvania legislatures were excluded because of the nature of the work of the GRA organizations in those states. Foundations were restricted to those with a state or local focus and those with a broad focus. For example, in Michigan, both the Ford Foundation and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund were excluded.

Survey Responses

As discussed in chapter three, 6,023 policy actors received survey invitations. One hundred fifty-seven began the instrument, and 109 completed it, for a response rate of 1.8%. The data below reflects respondents who completed the entire instrument. Survey invitations were sent to people in 18 states, with responses collected from 16. Four responses were collected from jurisdictions outside the research focus—one each from California, Maryland, New Mexico, and Washington, D.C. Each respondent indicated they had lived in their respective state for 10 or more years. It is unclear how these recipients received the survey. Errors in the database sources of contacts are a possibility. Invitations could have been forwarded by another recipient, although this is unlikely. The respondents in Maryland and New Mexico indicated they were

journalists. They may live in those states but have reporting responsibilities in one of the 18 focus states. Regardless, these responses are included in the analysis.

The mean response among the states surveyed was five. Among the 16 states with survey responses, Illinois led with 11, representing 10.4% of respondents. Among the focus states, Nevada trailed with one respondent, 0.9% of responses. See table 4.23. Respondents were longtime residents of their respective states. Almost 90% of respondents reported residencies of 10 or more years, and 93.4% reported residencies of six or more years in their state. No respondents reported residencies of less than one year. See figure 4.5. As indicated in table 3.1, the most reported professional roles were state legislator, journalist, and nonprofit leader.

Almost 88% of respondents identified as White or Caucasian. These demographics compare to 65.3% of the population in the 19 states and Washington, D.C. (US Census Bureau 2020) from which surveys were collected.. Only 3.8% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino/a ethnicity. See Figure 4.6. Respondents also skew older. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were over 51, with 10.5% over 71. See figure 4.7. Again, the age distribution likely reflects the age distribution of the overall universe. According to the latest data from the US Census, 37.9% of the population have at least a bachelor's degree (US Census Bureau 2022). In contrast, 97.2% of survey respondents have at least a bachelor's degree, with 62.2% having attained a graduate or professional degree. See figure 4.8. More than two-thirds of respondents reported household incomes of more than $100,000, with 43.4% reporting more than $150,000. See figure 4.9.

In sum, respondents are more White, educated, older, and wealthier than the general population. This gap likely reflects the racial demographics of the survey universe of policy

actors. However, other than state legislators, it would not be possible to collect data on the

demographic profile of the survey population for an accurate comparison.

Political Leanings

All participants were asked to indicate their political leanings. While respondents report a

high degree of demographic homogeneity, there is more diversity in political affiliation.

Democrats account for 38.7% of respondents, with independents and Republicans comprising

26.4% and 21.7%, respectively. See figure 4.10. The survey asked respondents about party

identification rather than party registration. It is presumed that party identification matches party

registration in the states where registration is required. Whereas 38.7% of respondents identify as

Democrats, 56.7% identify as very or somewhat liberal on social issues, compared to 13.3% who

identify as somewhat or very conservative. Almost 24% declined to respond. See figure 4.11.

There is a broader distribution on economic issues, with 31.1% identifying as very or somewhat

liberal and 33.9% as somewhat or very conservative. See figure 4.12. At least for this population,

party identification is a more accurate predictor of economic ideology than social ideology. It is

also worth noting the inter-state variances of party identity and culture. Likewise, the survey

instrument was designed for and distributed to elites rather than the public—a distinction made

explicit in the respondent demographics. Thus, the respondents' political and ideological identity

likely does not reflect the public opinion in the nation or respondents' respective states.

Source of Information, News, and Policy Research

In addition to demographic information and political affiliation, respondents were asked

to provide data on their news sources, information, and policy research. Relevant questions were

customized to specify respondents' states. For example, the first question in this section read,

"When seeking data, information, or policy research about issues in [your state]," where your

state was replaced with the respondent's selected state of residence. As respondents could select multiple responses, the total number of responses far exceeds the number of respondents. Responses to this question are provided in table 4.24.

Public policy/research organizations (85.8%), advocacy organizations (69.8%), and local newspapers (68.9%) were the most common selections. Neither policy nor advocacy organizations were further defined in the survey, and, given the increasing convergence of such organizations and some advocacy organizations' desire to present themselves as research organizations, respondents' ability to accurately distinguish the two is suspect. At 17%, cable TV news was near the bottom of selected sources. University faculty and research centers ranked high at 65.1%. Lobbyists and political apparatuses were identified by 50% and 46.2% of respondents, respectively. Such relatively high numbers hint at the purposes or uses for information seeking, as will be explored below. Respondents who selected national newspapers or cable TV news received follow-up questions to identify specific media outlets. A plurality of respondents (42.9%) identified *The New York Times* as their most frequently read national newspaper. *USA Today* was the least cited at 5.4%. A small number of respondents (N=18) indicated cable TV as a source of state information. Half of those indicated Fox as their most common source. MSNBC and CNN were both selected by 21.4% of the respondents. See figure 4.13. It should not be overlooked that some perceive the most frequently read newspaper to have a liberal outlook, whereas the most frequently watched cable TV news is decidedly conservative.

Policy Organizations

Respondents were asked a series of questions about sources of policy research. Questions explored familiarity, utilization, and trust. Respondents were also asked about their familiarity with a suggested list of national policy organizations that work on state-level issues. A list of

well-known organizations across the political spectrum was provided. Once again, respondents could select more than one response. The most frequently selected policy organizations were the Pew Research Center (93.8%), the Heritage Foundation (78.4%), and the Brookings Institution (76.3%). See table 4.25. Five respondents indicated familiarity with the GRA. These responses, if honest and intentional, are surprising. While GRA organizations seek to cultivate and maintain standing with policy actors, the GRA itself does not. The GRA maintains a public web page ("GRA" n.d.), but cultivating the GRA brand outside of current and potential members, has not been a focus of the organization. The five respondents who identified the GRA represent five different states. Two identified as journalists and one as a blogger. The other two respondents were a state government official and a governmental affairs professional.

This research explores the perception and reputation of GRA organizations. Perception and reputation presume some level of brand or organizational awareness. Each respondent was asked a simple top-of-mind question: 'There are many organizations in [your state] that provide data, information, or policy research about state and local issues. Which organization comes to mind first?' One hundred nineteen valid responses were collected. See table. 4.26. Two were national organizations and were excluded. The remaining were coded into eight categories and 'other.' The categories are policy organizations, issue organizations, media organizations, nonprofit/philanthropic associations, higher education institutions, business/industry organizations, and government units. The 'other' category include two responses listing Google, one for-profit consultant, and two organizations that could not be classified. Policy research organizations were most frequently cited (53%), with higher education organizations at 17.1%. See table 4.27. A majority of Democrats (54.1%) and Republicans (52.6%) and a plurality of independents (34.8%) indicated that a policy research organization was top of mind.

Of the 62 policy organizations listed, 22 (35.5) were GRA organizations. Again, respondents were asked to list the first organization that came to mind that provides data, information, or policy research about state and local issues. It is unlikely that any specific organization would be mentioned. GRA organizations were mentioned by respondents in nine states: Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin. These states have dozens, if not hundreds, of policy organizations. When media outlets and government units are added, as some survey respondents did, the numbers reach the thousands. Likewise, a diverse list of states demonstrates something other than an occasional GRA organization having an outsized presence in one or two states.

The remaining 44 policy organizations were categorized by ideology. Those policy organizations classified as 501(c)(3) nonprofits are nonpartisan by law, but their self-descriptions may indicate their ideological values. Based on keywords in each organization's 'About Us' web page or other self-descriptive web text, these 36 organizations were classified by an ideology based on the ideological typology developed by Rich (2004). Organizations employing terms such as "free market system, limited government, individual liberty, religious expression, and traditional family values, or to eliminating racial or ethnic preferences in government" (Rich 2004, 19) are classified as right-leaning or conservative. Organizations emphasizing "government policies and programs to overcome economic, social, or gender inequalities, poverty, or wage stagnation" (Rich 2004, 19) are classified as left-leaning or liberal. Based on this typology, 24 organizations (38.7%) were classified as left-leaning, and 16 (25.8%) were classified as right-leaning. See table 4.28. Democrats were more likely to identify a left-leaning organization as top of mind (50%). Republicans were more likely to identify a right-leaning organization (50%). Independents were more likely to identify a GRA organization (50%),

although only eight respondents identified as independent and provided a top-of-mind organization. See table 4.29.

Awareness of the organization is essential to utilize information from a policy organization or other sources of policy information. So, too, is trust. Information utilization presumes the source of that information is held in some level of regard. What are the factors that drive institutional trust? Four were theorized: ideological alignment of the source, personal relationships with individuals at the source, the probability the source will provide a specific or explicit policy recommendation, and friends' and colleagues' opinions of the organization. Respondents were asked, "When seeking sources of data, information, or policy research in [your state], how important are the following factors?"

Ideology

Across all respondents, 47.4% report liberal ideology is not at all important, 36% say slightly or moderately important, and 16.5% say very or extremely important. See table 4.30. Ninety-two of the 97 respondents provided a party identification. Among self-identified Democrats, 30.7% say an organization's liberal ideology is very or extremely important, compared to 28.2% who say it is moderately important, and 41% say not at all or only slightly important. See table 4.31. Interestingly, Republicans are more likely to say liberal ideology is important (45%) than are independents (20.9%). See table 4.32.

An almost identical percentage of respondents (48.5%) say a conservative organizational outlook is not at all important, as say the same regarding a liberal outlook (47.4%). Fourteen-point four percent say a conservative outlook is very important or extremely important, compared to the 16.5% who said the same regarding organizations with a liberal outlook. See table 4.33. A slightly higher percentage of Republicans favor organizations with a conservative

ideology, at 35%. This can be compared to the 30.7% of Democrats who indicated liberal ideology was very or extremely important. See table 4.34.

Independents are as likely to say conservative ideology is not at all important as liberal ideology—75% in both cases. See table 4.35. Respondents with other political affiliations are more likely to say that conservative ideology does not matter at all (75%) than say liberal ideology does not matter at all (15%). This should not be surprising. The Other category comprises Libertarians, but at least one self-described Socialist and others with description-defying labels that describe left-of-center politics.

Likely not surprisingly, a nonpartisan outlook or reputation ranks as highly important. Nonpartisanship is ranked as very or extremely important by 68.3% of all respondents. See table 4.36. Nonpartisanship is ranked as very or extremely important by 71.8% of Democrats, 65% of Republicans (table 4.37), and 76% of independents (table 4.38). Only a small number of those identified as Other (n=9) are outliers. A third indicates nonpartisanship is not at all important, a third say moderately important, and a third say very or extremely important.

Recommendations

Most policy organizations offer explicit suggestions, recommendations, or endorsements. Others, including some GRA organizations, refrain from doing so as part of their organizational culture. Explicit recommendations remove ambiguity for the reader and provide a clear action item or way of thinking. The absence of explicit recommendations invites the reader to consider the arguments and reach a conclusion, thus asking more of a reader. Does one approach garner more trust than another?

The literature suggests policymakers prefer research with discrete recommendations (Feldman, Nadash, and Gursen 2001; VanLandingham 2018; White and VanLandingham 2015),

this is not born out in the survey findings. While only 15.8% of respondents indicated

recommendations are not at all important, 54.7% responded they are slightly or moderately

important, but only 29.5% said they were very or extremely important. See table 4.39. However,

interesting variances appear between the parties. Of those reporting recommendations as not at

all important, 10.5% were Democrats compared to 26.3% who were Republicans. Conversely,

34.2% of Democrats report recommendations very or extremely important compared to 26.3% of

Republicans. See table 4.40.

Trust

The previous questions explored institutional factors. The final two questions explore

relationship variables. Do personal relationships translate to organizational trust? Respondents

were asked about the importance of personal relationships with board or staff members of

organizations.

Literature suggests that relationships between policymakers and researchers is very

important (Abelson 2009; Bimber 1996; Dooren and Van de Walle 2008; Rich 2018; Jones and

Louis 2018; Mintzberg 1973; Pollitt 2006a; Ter Bogt 2004). However, among all respondents,

38.1% say personal relationships are not at all important, 52.6% say not at all or only slightly

important, and 27.8% report that relationships are very or extremely important. See table 4.41.

Likewise, there is no meaningful variance in party affiliation. See table 4.42. Of those saying

relationships are not important, 33.3% are Democrats, and 35% are Republicans. Almost equal

percentages report relationships are very or extremely important—33.4% of Democrats and 35%

of Republicans.

The final question proves to be the most insightful—the importance that the organization

is well-known by the respondents' colleagues and peers. Across all respondents, 78.1% report

colleagues' and peers' knowledge of the organization as moderately, very, or extremely important. Very important is the most frequent among all responses, with 35.4% of responses, echoing aspects of club theory (Diane Stone 1996). See table 4.43.

Party affiliation is an important variable, but it may not be the most illuminating. Trust factors may vary more based on professional role than party affiliation. Respondents' professional roles were first re-coded as indicated in table 4.44. A plurality of respondents, 38%, were re-coded as working in the government sector, with 25% in journalism, and 22% in the social sector.

Table 4.45 displays the frequency and percentage of respondents reporting each of the five variables as very or extremely important. Given the low number of respondents coded in business and governmental affairs and the lack of conceptual cohesion in the Other category, these two categories were excluded. A nonpartisan reputation was perceived as the most important by 60.5% of those in government, 68% in journalism, and 86.4% in the social sector. The second highest rated variable was regarded among peers at 50.1% of those in government, 40% in journalism, and 60% in the social sector.

In summary, an organization's nonpartisan orientation or reputation and an organization's reputation among peers appear to be the two variables most frequently selected as markers of trust. Both findings have interesting implications. Reliance on the opinions of one's peers and colleagues may be a useful heuristic, especially when one is not, or does not believe oneself to be, educated in a given field or issue. Also, there may be implicit social pressures to consume the same media and information sources as one's peers.

Nonpartisanship presents a different challenge. There is certainly a degree to which respondents to this survey (and policy actors and the public, generally) may perceive

nonpartisanship as the socially acceptable answer. Thus, the validity of such responses may be in doubt. More fundamentally, however, concerns the meaning and utility of the term *nonpartisan*.

Most policy research organizations emphasize their nonpartisan identity. However, such an identity is not distinctive. Those policy research organizations, which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporations are nonpartisan by law—nonpartisanship is a legal requirement, not a self-selected value. Moreover, in this context, nonpartisanship means organizations cannot endorse candidates. They can advocate and lobby within IRS regulations. They can adopt an ideological position—and many, but not all, do so. Organizations that operate from liberal ideologies, conservative ideologies, and no discernable ideology are all legally nonpartisan. Such is a factor of nonprofit law and regulation, an area understood by few policy actors. It is unknown if survey respondents or policy actors generally understand what nonpartisanship means or does not mean regarding nonprofit policy organizations.

Before shifting to consider that question, it is important to note one additional possible shortcoming of these questions. As noted, the survey asked respondents, "When seeking sources of data, information, or policy research in [your state], how important are the following factors…." The instrument did not ask for what purpose or use information might be sought. Importance could vary by purpose. As explained by Weiss (1979) and others, there are many uses of policy research and not all involve decision making. Respondents could value and thus seek information from different kinds of organizations for different purposes, such as forming an opinion or researching an opposing opinion. Also, certain factors could be important so that policy actors could avoid the organization. For example, 10% of Republicans indicated that an organization's liberal outlook or reputation was very or extremely important. See table 4.31. These data could imply that these respondents find specific organizations' analyses insightful

regardless of ideological differences. Conversely, the data could imply that an organization's liberal reputation is important because it indicates what information sources conservatives should avoid.

Consulted Organizations

While the previous questions explored organizational familiarity and factors of organizational trust, the following section explores actual organizations consulted. Each respondent was asked this question: "When seeking data, information, or policy research about issues in [your state], which of the following organizations do you consult?" Respondents were presented with individualized lists of policy organizations. The choices included the organizations with which they already indicated familiarity. Provided options also included the GRA organization or organizations in the respondents' state of residence. Finally, included are organizations in the respondent's states of residence that are members of SPN, EARN, and SPP. These organizations are offered as operational and ideological counterparts to the GRA and were included as top-of-mind response options. Members of these three groups are more explicitly ideological than GRA members but describe themselves with language very similar to GRA members.

SPN was founded in 1992 with a mission to "catalyze thriving, durable freedom movements in every state, anchored with high-performing, independent think tanks" ("About SPN" n.d.). SPN claims 64 members and 90 associate members ("About SPN" n.d.). See table 1.2, "States with GRA, SPN, and EARN Members." SPN "is committed to delivering results that strengthen working families and defend our rights by promoting policies that create a level playing field and safeguard personal freedom, economic liberty, rule of law, property rights, and

limited government" ("About SPN" n.d.). EARN, founded in 1998, is a network of 60 state and

local organizations that

> ensure all Americans have the resources they need to build productive and secure lives. They promote high-road economic growth, pursuing economic development strategies that lessen racial and economic inequity and raise living standards for working people, families, and communities across the nation. They advance policies that raise wages, guarantee paid sick days and paid family leave, and establish standards for stable and predictable work schedules. They work to secure access to high-quality childcare, education and job training, and livable retirement benefits ("About EARN" n.d.).

SPP is a project of the Center for Budget Policies and Priorities and claims 40 members in 43

states ("State Priorities Partnership" n.d.). Member organizations

> use evidence and analysis to advance policies that give more people the opportunity to prosper. They do this by equipping lawmakers, journalists, advocacy organizations, nonprofit service providers, and the public with unassailable information that helps children get a quality education, families get medical care, and working people get the assistance they need to build a better life. ("About SPN" n.d.)

These self-descriptions of SPN and EARN are more ideological than the GRA's self-described

purpose to

> encourage individuals and organizations to engage in governmental research in the general interest. Governmental research involves the collection, analysis, and distribution of factual information on governmental activities to citizens and officials for the improvement of government and the reduction of its cost ("About GRA" n.d.).

SPN, EARN, and SPP organizations are right- and left-leaning state-level policy

organizations (SPOs) with which GRA organizations can be compared. Seventeen states

have at least one GRA, SPN, or EARN member. Many organizations are members of

both EARN and SPP. Respondents in states other than those in table 1.2 did not receive

this question.

A total of 74 organizations were provided, but the choices provided to each respondent varied by the number of organizations in the respondent's state of residence and the number of organizations with which they previously indicated familiarity. All but one of the 74 organizations were selected at least once. The Worcester Regional Research Bureau (WRRB), a GRA organization, was not selected by any respondent. The WRRB serves the Worcester, Massachusetts metropolitan area. While the metro is the second largest in New England, it is the smallest locality served by any of the 74 suggested organizations. Respondents were able to cite multiple organizations, and most did so. The 74 organizations, 73, excluding WRRB, were selected 410 times. While questions specified research and data on state issues, national organizations were frequently selected. With 37 citations, the Brookings Institution was the most frequently selected, representing 8.9% of all selections. Eight of the 10 most frequently selected organizations were national policy organizations. Notably, many respondents seek state-level research from national sources. At the same time, it is not surprising that national sources were chosen with such frequency. Respondents could select multiple organizations; by definition, national organizations were included in every respondent's array of choices. Respondents also offered 29 'Other' organizations a total of 37 times. These Other organizations are not included in subsequent analysis.

The 74 organizations were classified using the same methodology of Rich (2004) discussed above. Liberal organizations include those which are members of EARN or SPP or have similar goals and values generally aligned with more liberal-leaning political goals. Conservative organizations are those which are members of the SPN or have similar goals generally aligned with conservative political goals. Rich's (2004) method, discussed previously, was used to classify national organizations and state organizations not affiliated with EARN,

SPP, SPN, or GRA. It is worth noting that while the category 'Centrist' only contains five organizations, they were mentioned with a relatively high frequency. This methodology also allowed the classification of all but two national organizations. Self-descriptive language about the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute defies the taxonomy offered by Rich (2004), suggesting a more centrist orientation. A centrist identity is supported the Wake Forest University guide to political economy research (Krstevska 2023).

Frequency of recoded selections are provided in table 4.46. Left-leaning state organizations were selected most frequently—85 times—representing 20.7% of all selections. Right-leaning state organizations and GRA organizations were tied for the second most selections at 75, or 18.3% of all selections. Left-leaning national organizations were only selected 51 times, 12.4% of all selections.

Next, respondents were asked, "When seeking information or research about [issue] in [your state], which organization is your more trusted source?" Twelve issues were offered: general data and research, government operations, K–12 education, higher education, state and local taxes, state or local budgets, workforce, population and demographics, public health, poverty, the environment, and social issues. Each respondent's answer choices were populated with the organizations they reported consulting in the previous question. As with the previous question, organizations are categorized by ideology.

General data and research

When seeking general information and data about their home states, a plurality of respondents, 19 or 29.7%, indicated their most trusted organization is a GRA member. See table 4.47. Right-leaning national organizations are the least trusted, selected by only one respondent. See table 4.63. Pluralities of Democrats and independents indicated that a GRA organization is

their most trusted source for general information. See table 4.48. plurality of Republicans indicated that a right-leaning organization is their most trusted source. See table 4.49.

Government operations

When seeking information about government operations, a plurality of respondents selected a GRA organization—19 or 30.6%. National centrist organizations were least frequently selected, with three respondents or 4.8%. No respondents indicated national right-leaning organization was their most trusted source. See table 4.50. Again, pluralities of Democrats and independents indicated that a GRA organization was their most trusted source. See table 4.51. Sixty percent of Republicans indicated that a right-leaning organization was their most trusted source. See table 4.52. Whereas most questions in this survey section specified a state or local issue, this question said 'government operations' without specifying a level of government. Specification may have generated a different response.

Population and demographics

When seeking information or research on population and demographic, left-leaning state organizations were seen as most trusted, with 27% of respondents choosing a member of EARN or SPP. Conversely, left-leaning national organizations were only chosen by 4.8% of responses. Responses to this question were among the most evenly distributed. See table 4.53. Democrats were most likely to choose a left-leaning organization (45.5%), see table 4,54 and Republicans were most likely to choose a national right-leaning organization at 26.7%. See table 4.55.

Education

Pluralities of respondents indicate a GRA organization is their most trusted source of information on K–12 education (28.1%) and higher education (32.2%). See tables 4.56 and 4.59. Pluralities of Democrats (40.0%) and Republicans (46.7%) chose left- and right-leaning

organizations for K–12 education. See tables 4.57 and 4.58. For higher education, a plurality of Democrats (40.0%) chose a GRA organization, whereas a plurality of Republicans (33.3%) chose a conservative-learning organization. See tables 4.60 and 4.61.

Workforce

Again, GRA organizations were most frequently cited as most trusted in workforce research, with 29.7% of respondents. Right-learning organizations were cited by 6.3% of respondents. No respondent chose a left-leaning organization. See table 4.62. Democrats were equally likely to choose a left-leaning organization and a GRA organization, at 40.95% each. See table 4.63. In contrast, Republicans prefer right-leaning organizations, at 28.6%. See table 4.64.

Poverty

Thirty-six-point six percent of respondents indicated a left-leaning organization was their most trusted source of research on poverty. GRA organizations were cited with the second most frequency at 15.5% of responses. Both right- and left-leaning organizations were at the bottom, selected by 5.6% of respondents. See table 4.65. Perhaps not surprisingly, half of Democrats selected a left-leaning organization, whereas Republicans were more evenly split, with a plurality, but only 26.7%, choosing a GRA organization. See tables 4.66 and 4.67.

Public Health

Research in public health was the only topic in which 'Other' was the most cited response. Left-leaning organizations were cited second most among the offered choices at 18.0%. See table 4.68. Democrats were evenly divided at 23.8%. See table 4.69. Republicans showed a preference for national right-leaning organizations at 33.3%. See table. 4.70.

Environment

GRA organizations were cited by 31.4% of respondents as the most trusted sources of research on the environment, with left-leaning organizations cited most infrequently at 5.9% of respondents. See table 4.71. Democrats were most likely to see a GRA organization as most trusted (36.8%), with Republicans evenly split between GRA and national centrist organizations (26.7%). See tables 4.72 and 4.73.

Social Issues

Social issues followed the same pattern as environmental research, with GRA organizations most frequently chosen (27.9%) and national left-leaning organizations least cited (4.9%). See table 4.74. Democrats saw left-leaning organizations as most trusted, with Republicans see national right-leaning organizations as most trusted. See tables 4.75 and 4.76.

State and local economy

GRA organizations were selected by 42.4% of respondents as the most trusted on state and local economy research. On this topic, the national organizations were the least selected. See table 4.77. GRA organizations were selected by pluralities of both Democrats (43.5%) and Republicans (40.0%) and a majority of independents (50.0). See tables 4.78 and 4.79..

State and local taxes

State and local taxes mirror responses to state and local economy. Forty-six point three of respondents selected a GRA organization as the most trusted in this area, with national organizations at the bottom. See table 4.80. A majority of Democrats (58.3%) and a plurality of Republicans (33.3%) saw GRA organizations as the most trusted. See tables 4.81 and 4.82.

 State and local budgets

GRA organizations were chosen by a plurality of all respondents—47.8% as the most trusted source of research on state and local budgets. See table 4.83. GRA organizations were

also chosen by a majority of Democrats (54.2%) and a plurality of Republicans (40.0%). See tables 4.84 and 4.85.

Most trusted

The previous questions asked which organizations were respondents' most trusted sources of information on specific topics. The final question asked which organization is most trusted overall. Organizations marked as 'Other' were seen as most trusted by a slim margin of 4.3 percentage points (28.6%) over GRA organizations at 24.3%. See table 4.86. However, when party identification is considered, a plurality of Democrats (43.5%) selected a GRA organization, and a plurality of Republicans (37.5%) selected a right-leaning organization. See tables 4.87 and 4.88.

Data Analysis

The original research design included exploratory factor analysis of survey data. Exploratory factor analysis would be appropriate because of the lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the measures and the risk of collinearity in survey analysis. However, such low survey response rates made such analysis impossible. Thus, the provided analysis is more descriptive and qualitative.

The secondary data, provided in the first half of chapter four, describes 24 government research organizations in 20 states. The newest organization was founded in 2015 and the oldest in 1893. With mean age of 80, GRA organizations are among the oldest think tanks, policy research organizations, and even nonprofits in the United States. Their self-identification emphasizes objective, impartial, nonpartisan, or unbiased research and analysis. See table 4.4. In the most recent year complete data are available (2019), they employed 198 people, a mean of 8.25 and a median of six. These figures mean that GRA member organizations are similarly

sized to most nonprofits. In 2017, 56.4% of 501(c)(3) nonprofits employed nine or fewer people, and 39% employed fewer than five ("Research Data on the Nonprofit Sector" n.d.). In 2019, the organizations generated $24,345,264 in revenue, a mean of $1,058,490, and a median of $828,827. Sixty-eight percent of revenue came from contributions and 23% from earned income. Over the five years, 2015–2019, the organizations averaged $936,318 in expenses, with 73.8% directed to program expenses—primarily research.

.   Between 2015 and 2022, the GRA members produced approximately 3,813 pieces of research. Every organization produced research in public finance, 95% on government operations, and 90% on public services and the economy. Public finance accounted for 43.1% of total output. Public service research accounts for 30.9% of all research. Government research accounted for 16.5% of all research. Economic research accounted for 11.6% of all research. This research and related activities generated approximately 10,959 earned media stories across all organizations.

        GRA organizations produce policy research and data analysis to improve the function of state and local governments. The research must find an audience, regardless of how improvement is defined or measured. Measuring the marginal impact of any research product on any policy outcome remains elusive. Thus, this research seeks to understand GRA members' reputations and perceived value among state-level policy actors. Reputation precedes influence. If GRA organizations have a negative, or perhaps worse, no, reputation among policy actors, their ability to influence policy outcomes is limited, regardless of how influence is defined or measured. The survey of policymakers sought to assess the reputation of GRA organizations across the county. The survey only generated 109 responses. Thus, the results should be treated with caution, but they do provide insights into policy actors' thoughts.

The respondents also skewed more Democratic than the national electorate, with 38.7% identifying as Democrats, 26.4% as independents, and 21.7% as Republicans. These compare to Gallup findings suggesting that 24% to 31% identify as Democrats, 35% to 49% identify as independents, and 24% to 33% identify as Republicans ("Party Affiliation" 2007).

Survey results were not weighted because the survey units of analysis were policy actors in 16 states, and a demographic profile of such a population does not exist.

Of the 109 respondents, 85.5% reported that a policy or research organization was one source of information about issues in their home state—the most frequently provided source of information. Five percent of respondents were familiar with the GRA as a source of policy research, compared to 7.2% who were familiar with the more conservative SPN and 4.1% and 1% who were familiar with the more liberal EARN and SPP, respectively. That these four organizations registered at all with respondents is remarkable, given that they are primarily professional associations for their local members.

When asked, via an open response question, to list the organization that first comes to mind as a source of policy research in their home state, 53% listed a policy research organization. Of those, 38.7% cited a left-leaning organization, 25.8% cited a right-leaning organization, and 35.5% cited a GRA organization. These data roughly align with the party identification of respondents. Regardless, more than a third of respondents whose top-of-mind resource was a policy organization, and 21.5% of all respondents identified a GRA organization.

That said, Democrats were more likely to cite a left-leaning organization as top of mind, and Republicans were more likely to identify a right-leaning organization. GRA organizations were most likely to be cited as top of mind by a Democrat.

Organizations' ideological orientation was not seen as very important. When asked about the importance of an organization's liberal outlook or reputation, 58.7% of respondents indicated

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it was not at all or only slightly important, and only 30.7% of self-identified Democrats said it was very or extremely important. Conversely, 60.9% of respondents said an organization's conservative outlook or reputation was not at all or slightly important. Similarly, only 35% of Republicans said it was very or extremely important. In contrast, 68.3% of respondents said a nonpartisan outlook or reputation was very or extremely important, including 71.8% of Democrats and 65% of Republicans.

In summary, respondents suggest that an organization's nonpartisan reputation is important, although not as large a percentage as might be expected. Ideological alignment between the organization and the respondent is not as important. However, Republicans show a slight preference for alignment compared to Democrats.

When considering professional roles, respondents in government, journalism, and the social sector prioritized organizations' nonpartisan reputation, standing among peers, and personal relationships with staff and board, in that order but in different orders of magnitude. Nonpartisan reputation was prioritized by 86.4% of those in the social sector, 68% of journalists, and 60.5% of those in government. Standing among one's peers was prioritized by 60% of those in the social sector, 50% of those in government, and 40% of those in journalism. Personal relationships were prioritized by 47.3% of those in the social sector, 42.1% in government, and 40% in the social sector.

Respondents reported they value objectivity, but values may not reflect actual choices. When asked to choose from a list of organizations with which respondents previously indicated familiarity, six of the eight most selected organizations display a clear ideological lean, three conservative and three liberal. See table 4.60. When considering all organizations consulted, 33.1% lean liberal and 33.9% lean conservative, with 18.3% selecting GRA organizations and

14.6% selecting centrist organizations. Respondents were invited to select multiple organizations—and many chose multiple organizations across the political and ideological spectrum.

The most telling results were found when asking respondents for their most trusted single organizations on specific categories of policy issues. Respondents were asked to identify their most trusted policy organization when seeking information on a specific issue in their state. The topics provided were general information and data, government operations, demographics and population, K–12 education, higher education, workforce, poverty, public health, the environment, social issues, state and local economy, state and local budgets, and state and local taxes. Responses were coded as left-learning, right-leaning, or GRA organizations.

Across all respondents, right-learning organizations were not seen as the most trusted in any policy area. However, among Republicans, right-leaning organizations were most trusted on every issue except poverty, the environment, and state and local economy, budget, and taxes. Moreover, Republicans generally preferred right-learning national organizations to the state-level organizations of the SPN.

Overall, left-leaning organizations were the most trusted in two broad policy areas: demographics and population, and poverty. Democrats chose left-leaning organizations as most trusted in six of the 13 issues: demographics and population, K–12 education, workforce, poverty, public health, and social issues.

GRA organizations were the most trusted in 11 of the 13 areas. As noted above, left-leaning organizations were seen as more trusted in demographics and population, and poverty. Other non-categorized organizations were the most frequently cited in public health. Surprisingly, Democrats chose GRA organizations as most trusted or tied as the most trusted,

with a liberal organization in 10 of the 13 categories. Only in demographics and population, higher education, poverty, and social issues were GRA organizations not seen as most trusted (or tied as most trusted) by Democrats.

A final question asked about overall trust; however, no category gained enough respondents to be identified as the most trusted. Most respondents listed other organizations that were not classified. Among Democrats, GRA organizations were the most trusted. Among Republicans, state-level right-leaning organizations were most trusted. However, state-level right-learning organizations were not considered the most trusted on any discrete policy issue.

In conclusion, these results suggest mixed results for the stated hypotheses. A decision rule of 50.1% is used to accept or reject the null hypotheses.

H_1: Policy actors state a preference for policy organizations with a solid nonpartisan reputation. As reported, 68.3% of respondents, including 71.8% of Democrats, 65% of Republicans, 60.5% of those in government, 68% of those in journalism, and 86.4% of those in the social sector say an organization's nonpartisan reputation is very or extremely important. As a majority or supermajority of respondents and all sub-populations say an organization's nonpartisan research is very or extremely important, the null hypothesis can be rejected.

H_2: Policy actors' top-of-mind policy organizations are those that align with their ideology. Policy organizations were identified as top-of-mind sources of policy research and data by 62 respondents. Half of Democrats identified a left-leaning organization as top of mind, and half of Republicans identified a right-learning organization as top of mind. These data are right at the threshold of 50.1%. Technically, the null can be rejected, but the margin is very close.

H_3: Policy actors will not identify a GRA organization as top of mind. GRA organizations were selected as top of mind by 22 respondents, 35.5% of those who identified a

policy organization, and 35.5% of Democrats and 30% of Republicans. The null cannot be rejected. Since less than a third of all respondents identified a GRA organization as top of mind, the null can be rejected.

H4: Policy actors trust organizations that align with their ideology. GRA organizations were seen as most trusted in 11 of 13 policy areas. Technically, the null can be rejected. However, among Democrats, GRA organizations were chosen as most trusted in eight of 13 categories and tied with liberal organizations in two. Republicans demonstrated trust in national right-learning organizations and overall trust in state-level right-learning organizations. As the survey respondents skew Democratic, the null is not rejected. A larger response rate and a more professionally diverse pool of respondents would likely more robust findings on all four hypotheses.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The GRA lies at the very beginnings of public administration. Foundational ideas in theory, teaching, and practice of public administration—including ASPA itself—were cultivated, if not birthed, in the GRA. Today, the GRA is a small professional association of 20 to 25 government research organizations around the United States. It is virtually unknown in professional or academic policy circles. This anonymity is not the failure of strategy, but the result of decisions made over decades to function as a loose-knit fellowship of like-minded organizations nationwide. For most of the last century, GRA leadership has been provided by various member organizations' employees elected to serve in volunteer roles. From time to time, GRA leadership seeks to grow and expand. However, those efforts are constrained by the capacity of its volunteer leaders and the nature and culture of the GRA and its members.

Unlike the SPN, SPP, or EARN, the GRA does not seek to articulate a set of ideological values or policy goals. Instead, the organization operates with an explicit goal to support and encourage its member organizations and an implicit embrace of the politics—administration dichotomy. In turn, its members, save two outliers, are local in scope and devoted to a city, region, or, at most, a state. They may or may not be well-known in their localities, but like the GRA, they are largely unknown in broader circles. Like the GRA, the member organizations are average to small relative to the average US nonprofit organization. They, too, generally hold to nonpartisan and ideologically agnostic research and analysis—at least in contrast to the local counterparts in SPP, SPN, or EARN.

GRA organizations appear to reflect the classic politics-administration dichotomy of early public administration theory. They also strive to pursue non-ideological research. Accordingly, they appear out of step with modern public administration and public policy theory,

as well as the growing prevalence of more partisan think tanks operating at the state level.   This research explored the role and reputation of government research organizations in state policymaking. What is the reputation and perceived value of GRA members among state-level policy actors? What do GRA organizations do—do they contribute to the policy process?

The research was conducted along two parallel tracks. First, current member organizations of the GRA were examined. At the time, the GRA claimed 26 institutional members in 19 states. Two organizations were not included in the analysis: the Illinois Institute of Technology, a research university, and the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, a state agency. The other 24 GRA members were studied. The remaining 24 organizations were studied to understand their missions, staffing, finances, research output, and media coverage.

An estimated 46.5% of the US population live in an area served by a GRA organization. The organizations range from 129 to 7 years old, with a mean age of 70 and a median of 80. An average of 39 board members govern the organizations. The organizations employ an average of six. GRA organizations are similarly sized to most nonprofits.

In 2019, the organizations generated $24,345,264 in revenue, a mean of $1,058,490, and a median of $828,827. Sixty-eight percent of revenue came from contributions and 23% from earned income. Over the five years, 2015–2019, the organizations averaged $936,318 in expenses, with 73.8% directed to program expenses—primarily research.

The most common concepts in GRA members' mission statements are research/analysis, appearing in 75% of statements; objective/impartial/nonpartisan/unbiased, appearing in 54.2% of statements; and advance/improve/influence, appearing in 50% of statements. The organizations generated more than 10,377 earned media stories between 2015 and 2022, ranging from a high of

3,718 for the Wisconsin Policy Forum to a low of 27 for the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa.

While GRA organizations engage in various activities, their fundamental purpose is to produce policy research. Most organizations make most of their research available online, allowing an analysis of research production. Between 2015 and 2022, GRA organizations produced an estimated 3,813 publicly available research products, translating to an annual mean of 24.8 publications per organization. However, the mean is misleading. Seven-year publication totals range from 497 published by The Civic Federation in Chicago to a low of seven by the Pennsylvania Economy League. Most of the Economy League's work is specialized contract work and studies for local governments, which are not readily available to the public.

GRA research covers many topics but tends to focus on previews and reviews of legislative sessions, analyses of state budgets, revenues, expenditures, economic forecasts, school performance data, and evaluations of government services. The 3,813 topics were coded into 75 categories and then recoded into 20 categories in four major groups: public finance, public services, government, and the economy. The organizations published:

- 1,644 projects on public finance, 43.1% of all publications

- 1,178 projects on public services, 30.9% of all publications

- 546 projects on government operations, 14.3% of all publications

- 444 projects on the economy, 11.6% of all publications

Government operations projects focused strictly on design, function, and decisions made by government units and public opinion polls related to those decisions.

The second line of inquiry was a survey of state policy actors in 16 states. The survey was designed to understand respondents' sources for research about their states, top-of-mind

policy research organizations, and the relative levels of trust they have for various state-level policy organizations. In addition to various well-known national policy organizations and GRA organizations, respondents were asked about members of the State Policy Network, State Policy Priorities, and EARN—three associations of more ideologically aligned policy research organizations.

A total of 6,023 survey invitations were sent to state legislators, state cabinet members, executives of community foundations, journalists, and leaders of interest and advocacy groups. However, only 109 completions were received, yielding a final response rate of 1.8%. Respondents were older, more educated, white, and Democratic than the national average. Survey results were not weighted because the survey units of analysis were policy actors in 16 states, and a demographic profile of such a population does not exist.

When asked which policy research organization is top of mind, 35.5% of policy actors nationwide identified a GRA organization, including 35.5% of Democrats and 30% of Republicans. Organizations' ideological orientation was not seen as very important. A majority of all respondents, 58.7%, said an organization's liberal reputation was not important, and only 30.7% of self-identified Democrats said it was very important. Likewise, 60.9% of all respondents said an organization's conservative outlook or reputation was not at all or slightly important, and only 35% of Republicans said it was very or extremely important. In contrast, 68.3% of respondents said a nonpartisan outlook or reputation was very or extremely important, including 71.8% of Democrats and 65% of Republicans. At the same time, a nonpartisan reputation was prioritized by a majority of respondents in government (60.5%) but at a lower rate than respondents in the social sector (86.4%) and journalism (68%).

When asked which organization they most trust to provide research and data in 13 policy areas, most respondents chose a GRA in 11 of 13 areas. Democrats chose a GRA organization in 8 of 13 areas and a GRA and liberal learning organization in two. Across all respondents, right-learning state organizations were not seen as the most trusted in any policy area. However, among Republicans, right-leaning organizations were most trusted on every issue except poverty, the environment, and state and local economy, budget, and taxes. Moreover, Republicans generally preferred right-learning national organizations to the state-level organizations of the SPN.

Overall, left-leaning organizations were the most trusted in two broad policy areas: demographics and population, and poverty. Democrats chose left-leaning organizations as most trusted in six of the 13 issues: demographics and population, K–12 education, workforce, poverty, public health, and social issues.

A final question asked about overall trust. Among Democrats, GRA organizations were the most trusted. Among Republicans, state-level right-leaning organizations were most trusted. However, state-level right-learning organizations were not considered the most trusted on any discrete policy issue.

Each of these findings contradicted the stated hypotheses and the researchers' suppositions.

Several limitations constrain the study, most notably the low response rates. With only 109 survey completions across 16 states, the planned quantitative analysis was not feasible. Moreover, a second survey of GRA, SPN, SPP, and EARN organization leaders also collected very few responses. The responses did not yield enough data to warrant inclusion in the final analysis. In addition to the low response rate, the survey of policy actors could have been further

simplified. Some questions yielded responses that, while interesting, did not advance the research. At the same time, additional questions on how policy actors use research and their understanding of the term *nonpartisan* may have proven valuable.

Most survey respondents were elected officials or civil servants. Respondents from government and journalism were more likely to cite a GRA organization as most trusted. Social sector respondents were more likely to choose left-learning state organization. A different mix of respondents by role could have shifted the findings. Likewise, a greater alignment between areas of GRA work and respondents' work might shift the findings. For example, EdNC in North Carolina is focused exclusively on education. North Carolina respondents working in or with a strong interest in education likely now EdNC well. However, it is possible that policy actors working in other sectors have much less exposure or familiarity with EdNC.

In retrospect, the research question and methodology were too broad. The study focused on all GRA organizations and all areas of policy. Most GRA organizations have a wide range of interests, but it is unlikely they are equally well-known, well-regarded, or influential in all areas. Likewise, while surveyed policy actors are undoubtedly well informed, generally, they are not all similarly informed or engaged in all policy issues. There could easily be a mismatch between a given GRA organization's primary focus and the primary interests of survey respondents in that particular state.

Limiting the focus of the study to one or two specific policy domains or a smaller number of localities would have likely yielded better results. For example, research could have focused on all GRA organizations' work in K-12 education or tax revenues or all policy areas but only among GRA organizations in New England. Either approach would have allowed more customized collection instruments and a more targeted universe of potential respondents.

The research focused on generally non-ideological research organizations which are members of the GRA. One the one hand they understand government research as s slightly different line of inquiry much of what passes for policy research. On the other hand, in practice many organizations like to share the values and approach of GRA but are not members. If units of analysis were expanded to include GRA-like organization, in addition to dues paying members, the results would have likely been more robust.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of nonprofits are actively engaged in policy research, but they are not alone. Academics, journalists, paid consultants, and others work in this space. However, when asked what kinds of organizations policy actors consult, over 80% said a nonprofit policy organization. This suggests that policy actors value the real and potential contributions of nonprofit organizations, even if an increasing number exhibit ideological leanings. Nonprofits can emphasize their nonpartisan nature but can risk their reputation if trying use the legal concept of nonpartisanship to mask a clear ideological orientation.

As described in chapter one ASPA grew out of GRA. Almost a century later, they inhabit different spaces. Both are membership organizations seeking to advance public administration and public policy---GR organizations in direct ways and ASPA, or ASPA members, often in indirect way. However, there are opportunities for both. Policy actors in this research tended to not rely heavily on academic researchers. Likely few are members of ASPA. GRA organizations enjoy relationships with these local policymakers that ASPA members may not. ASPA and its members seek ways connect research with policy. GRA organizations seek ways to expand capacity and build credibility. There are opportunities for both continued research in the relationship between the two organizations but also practical opportunities for collaboration at the local level.

This research is the first known study of GRA organizations and creates the first comprehensive data of their work. The GRA itself does not have such data. As indicated above, future research should shrink, rather than expand, the analysis conducted thus far. Replicating a similar study, limited to one or two localities, or focusing on one or two policy areas, would be more manageable and more conducive to more rigorous analysis. Likewise, an in-depth, most-different case study exploring similar GRA organizations operating in different political contexts would prove insightful.

Finally, an in-depth case study of the policy research environment of a given state, encompassing the relevant members of GRA, SPP, SPN, and EARN, advocacy organizations, legislative research agencies, and relevant national think tanks, would be immensely valuable. The researcher is unaware of any such study that comprehensively examines the real-world environment of a relatively limited number of policy organizations operating in the same jurisdiction.

GRA organizations are small, generally pursuing research that neither builds theory, advances the field, or breaks new ground. Some are little more than basic data shaping and translation for non-professionals. Such work is not valued in academic policy circles. GRA organizations are unknown outside their local jurisdictions. Even within, they are often less well known than ideologically aligned organizations that are often better funded generally speaking, not as well known as However, these data suggests that state and local policy actors know and trust GRA organizations and their output. GRA organizations

While measuring influence proves elusive, influence presumes both awareness and trust. GRA organizations may be less well known compared to local ideological guided counterparts, but they may be better trusted. Non-ideological research is more trusted. What implications may

be drawn from that? It may provide encouragement for GRA organizations and suggest new aspects to emphasize in fundraising. It may also suggest general measures of name recognition and general awareness are less important. Most notably, it creates an interesting new way to think about research utilization, at least at the state and local level. The relationship between ideology of the research producer and its reception among policy actors can be explored. Likewise, the findings affirm themes in the literature. Policy actors seek and value research that helps them understand a specific problem or conceptualize a specific solution, Such is the day to day work of GRA organization—and rarely what is published in journals. Finally, the research suggests that nonpartisan identify is important, but perhaps more so is non-ideological identity. In an increasingly partisan political environment, this creates a space for organizations to differentiate themselves in the marketplace and, perhaps, see greater success in influencing policy.

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Appendix A
Conflict of Interest

The researcher served as executive director of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) from October 1, 2015, through the duration of the research project. PARCA has been a GRA member since its founding in 1988. Staff have attended GRA Annual Meetings and served on the GRA board, and PARCA managed the financial and membership records for almost 20 years, ending in 2012. PARCA research projects have received 12 research awards from the GRA as of July 2019. Additionally, the researcher maintains professional relationships with leaders of the Alabama Policy Institute and Alabama Arise, Alabama's SPN and EARN/SPP affiliates.

Survey of State Policy Actors

In which state do you live?

▼ Alabama ... Wyoming

How long have you lived in SELECTED STATE

○ less than one year

○ one to five years

○ six to ten years

○ ten years or more

Which of the following best describes your primary professional role?

○ state cabinet-level official

○ business leader

○ governmental affairs professional

○ journalist

○ foundation/philanthropy executive

○ nonprofit leader

○ state government agency head

○ state legislator

○ city government official

○ county government official

○ state government official

○ blogger

○ other _____

How long have you been a SELECTED ROLE

○ less than one year

○ one to five years

○ six to ten years

○ ten years or more

Are you a registered lobbyist?

○ yes

○ no

When seeking data, information, or policy research about issues in SELECTED STATE, what sources do you consult? Please check all that apply.

☐ cable TV news

☐ local TV news

☐ local news/talk radio

☐ local newspapers

☐ national newspapers

☐ advocacy organizations

☐ political organizations (elected officials, party leadership, party platform, etc.)

☐ public policy/research organizations

☐ university faculty/research centers

☐ academic journals

☐ my professional journal

☐ my professional association

☐ interest groups

☐   lobbyist(s)

☐   other _____

Which national paper do you most frequently read? (If newspapers were selected as an information source)

○ The New York Times

○ The Washington Post

○ The Wall Street Journal

○ USA Today

○ other _____

Which cable news network do you most frequently watch? (if cable news was selected as an information source)

○ Fox

○ Fox Business

○ CNBC

○ MSNBC

○ Newsmax

○ CNN

○ CSPAN

○ other _____

There are many national public policy organizations working on state-level policy issues. Which of the following organizations are you familiar with? Please check all that apply.

☐   ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council)

☐   Brookings Institution

☐   Pew Research Center

☐   Cato Institute

- [ ] Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

- [ ] Heritage Foundation

- [ ] Urban Institute

- [ ] SPN (State Policy Network)

- [ ] EARN (Economics Analysis and Research Network)

- [ ] GRA (Government Research Organization)

- [ ] SPP (State Priorities Partnership)

- [ ] AEI (American Enterprise Institute)

- [ ] Hoover Institution

- [ ] Center for American Progress

- [ ] Economic Policy Institute

- [ ] Other _____

There are many organizations in SELECTED STATE that provide data, information, or policy research about state and local issues. Which organization comes to mind first?

_____

When seeking sources of data, information, or policy research in SELECTED STATE, how important are the following factors?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
The organization has a liberal outlook/reputation.	○	○	○	○	○
The organization has a conservative outlook/reputation.	○	○	○	○	○
The organization has a nonpartisan outlook/reputation.	○	○	○	○	○
The organization is well-known by my colleagues and peers.	○	○	○	○	○
I have personal relationships with people at the organization.	○	○	○	○	○
The organization provides specific recommendations.	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

When seeking data, information, or policy research about issues in SELECTED STATE, which of the following organizations do you consult? Please check all that apply. (Choices offered were

the national organizations selected above and the GRA, EARN, and SPN members in the respondent's state of residence)

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the SELECTED ORGANIZATION(S), from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

(Organizations listed were those from which respondents indicated they seek information)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't Know
Their work is relevant to issues in SELECTED STATE.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their information is useful to me in my work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
They are an independent voice.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their work is timely.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I trust what they say.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their work is clear and easy to understand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their staff is competent and respected.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their board is competent and respected.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
They are reliably conservative in outlook.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
They are reliably liberal in outlook.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

My colleagues and peers hold them in high regard.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I usually agree with their findings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their work is objective.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Their work is nonpartisan.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
They are well-known by my colleagues and peers.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

When seeking information or research about the following issues in SELECTED STATE, which organization is your more trusted source?

(Organizations listed were those from which respondents indicated they seek information)

K–12 education
higher education
state or local taxes
state or local budgets
state or local economy
workforce
population/demographics research
general data and research about the state
health/public health
state or local government operations
poverty research
the environment
social issues

Which of the following organizations do you trust most?

(Organizations listed were those from which respondents indicated they seek information)

Questions for Legislators Only

There are many uses for information, data, and research in policymaking. Please drag and drop the following statements to order them from the most common to the least common ways you use data, information, or research in your work.

_____ To learn about issues already important to me or my constituents.
_____ To learn about issues I know less about.
_____ To understand what people with beliefs similar to mine think.
_____ To understand what people with beliefs different from mine think.
_____ To help me make a decision.
_____ To help me explain a decision I have made.
_____ Other

I seek more data, information, or policy research than necessary to delay making a decision.

○ always

○ sometimes

○ occasionally

○ never

I seek more data, information, or policy research than necessary to avoid making a decision.

○ always

○ sometimes

○ occasionally

○ never

I sometimes seek data, information, or policy research even though I already know what I think or have made a decision.

    ○ always

    ○ sometimes

    ○ occasionally

    ○ never

On economic or fiscal issues, my views are best described as:

    ○ very liberal

    ○ somewhat liberal

    ○ moderate

    ○ fairly conservative

    ○ very conservative

    ○ prefer not to say

On social issues, my views are best described as:

    ○ very liberal

    ○ somewhat liberal

    ○ moderate

    ○ fairly conservative

    ○ very conservative

    ○ prefer not to say

I consider myself a

○ Democrat

○ Green

○ Independent

○ Libertarian

○ Republican

○ Socialist

○ Other _____

○ Prefer not to say

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be

☐   White or Caucasian

☐   Black or African American

☐   American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native

☐   Asian

☐   Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐   Other

☐   Prefer not to say

Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?

○ yes

○ no

○ prefer not to say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

○ Some high school or less

○ High school diploma or GED

○ Some college, but no degree

○ Associate or technical degree

○ Bachelor's degree

○ Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, Ph.D., JD, MD, DDS, etc.)

○ Prefer not to say

What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

○ Less than $25,000

○ $25,000–$49,999

○ $50,000–$74,999

○ $75,000–$99,999

○ $100,000–$149,999

○ $150,000 or more

○ Prefer not to say

What is your current age?

○ under 30

○ 31 to 50

○ 51 to 70

○ 71 and over

○ Prefer not to say

Tables

GRA Member Agency	Location	Jurisdictional Focus
Table 1.1. Members of the Governmental Research Association, 2022		
ATI*	Boise, ID	State
BMRB	Boston, MA	City
BGR	New Orleans, LA	State
CGR	Rochester, NY	Nation
CRCM	Livonia, MI	Sate
CF	Chicago, IL	City
CFC	Denver, CO	State
EdNC	Raleigh, NC	State
ELGP	Philadelphia, PA	City
FTW	Tallahassee, FL	State
ITT	Chicago, IL	NA
IFPI	Indianapolis, IN	State
MTP	Boston, MA	State
MCFE*	St. Paul, MN	State
NTA*	Carson City, NV	State
PEL	Harrisburg, PA	State
PARCA	Birmingham, AL	State
PARC	Baton Rouge, LA	State
RIPEC	Providence, RI	State
SI	Nashville, TN	State
TACI*	Des Moines, IA	State
TFI	Springfield, IL	State
TACIR†	Nashville, TN	State
UF	Salt Lake City, UT	State
WRC	Seattle, WA	State
WPF	Milwaukee, WI	State
WRRB	Worchester, MA	City

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all organizations are 501(c)(3) nonprofits.
*501(c)(4)
†government commission

Source: "GRA Organizations" n.d.

Table 1.2. States with GRA, SPN, EARN, and SPP Members

State	GRA	SPN	EARN/ SPP
Alabama	PARCA	Alabama Policy Institute	Alabama Arise *†
Colorado	CFC	Independence Institute	Bell Policy Center* Colorado Center on Law and Policy* Colorado Fiscal Institute*†
Florida	FTW	Foundation for Government Accountability James Madison Institute	Florida Policy Institute*† Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy*
Idaho	ATI	Idaho Freedom Foundation	Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy†
Iowa	TACI	Tax Education Foundation	Iowa Policy Project* Iowa Fiscal Partnership†
Louisiana	BGR PAR	Pelican Institute for Public Policy	Louisiana Budget Project*†
Massachusetts	MTF MTF WRRV	Pioneer Institute	Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center*†
Michigan	CRC	Mackinac Center for Public Policy	Michigan League for Public Policy*†
Minnesota	MCFE	Center of the American Experiment Freedom Foundation of Minnesota	Minnesota Budget Project*†
Nevada	NTA	Nevada Policy Research Institute	Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada*

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State		Left column	Right column
New York	CGR	Empire Center for Public Policy	Fiscal Policy Institute*†
North Carolina	EdNC	Civitas Institute John Locke Foundation	North Carolina Justice Center*†
Pennsylvania	ELGP PEL	Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy Alternatives Freedom Foundation	Keystone Research Center & P.A. Budget and Policy Center*†
Rhode Island	RIPEC	Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity	The Economic Progress Institute*†
Utah	UF	Libertas Institute Sutherland Institute	Voices for Utah Children*†
Washington	WRC	Freedom Foundation Washington Policy Center	Economic Opportunity Institute* Washington State Budget and Policy Center*†
Wisconsin	WPF	Badger Institute, MacIver Institute for Public Policy Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty	Center on Wisconsin Strategy* Wisconsin Council on Children and Families* Wisconsin Budget Program†

Note:
± member of EARN
† member of SPP

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Table 3.1. Survey Respondents' Primary Professional Role

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
state legislator	27	25.5	24.5
journalist	27	25.5	51.0
nonprofit leader	13	12.3	63.3
foundation/philanthropy executive	10	9.4	72.7
state government official	9	8.5	81.2
other	6	4.7	85.9
state government agency head	4	3.8	89.7
business leader	4	3.8	93.5
governmental affairs professional	3	2.8	96.3
blogger	2	1.9	98.2
state cabinet-level official	2	1.9	100.0
Total	106	100.0	

Table 4.1. Age of GRA Member Organizations, 2022

GRA Member Agency	Founding Year	Age
BMRB	1932	90
BGR	1932	90
CGR	1915	107
CRC	1916	106
CFC	2005	17
ELGP	1909	113
EdNC	2006	16
FTW	1979	43
IFPI	1987	35
MTF	1932	90
MCFE	1958	64
NTA	1922	100
PEL	1945	77
PARCA	1988	34
PAR	1950	72
RIPEC	1913	109
TACI	1940	82
TFI	1961	61
CF	1893	129
SI	2015	7
UF	1945	77
WRC	1932	90
WPF	1940	82
WRRB	1985	37
Mean		72
Median		80

Table 4.2. The Population of Jurisdictions Served by GRA Members, 2020

GRA Member Agency	Jurisdiction	2020 Population
PARCA	Alabama	5,024,579
CFC	Colorado	5,773,714
FTW	Florida	21,538,187
CF	Chicago	2,746,388
TFI	Illinois	10,066,120*
IFPI	Indiana	6,785,528
TACI	Iowa	3,190,369
BGR	New Orleans	383,997
PAR	Louisiana	4,273,760†
BMRB	Boston	675,647
MTF	Massachusetts	6,147,752‡
WRRB	Worcester	206,518
CRCM	Michigan	10,077,331
MCFE	Minnesota	5,706,494
NTA	Nevada	3,104,614
CGR	New York	20,201,249
EdNC	North Carolina	10,439,388
ELGP	Philadelphia	1,603,797
PEL	Pennsylvania	11,398,903§
RIPEC	Rhode Island	1,097,379
SI	Tennessee	6,910,840
UF	Utah	3,271,616
WRC	Washington	7,705,281
WPF	Wisconsin	5,893,718
Total		154,223,169
Share of US Population		46.5%

Note:
* Illinois population minus the population of Chicago
† Louisiana population minus the population of New Orleans
‡ Massachusetts population minus the populations of Boston and Worcester
§ Pennsylvania population minus the population of Philadelphia

Source: Data from (US Census Bureau 2020)

Table 4.3. GRA Members' NTEE-CC Classification

Organization	NTEE Major Group and Decile Code	NTEE Decile Code Descriptions
CFC	B5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
CF	P99	Human Services—Multipurpose and Other
SI	S5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
BGR	V5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
CGR	W5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
CRC	W5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
PAR	W5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
WRC	W5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
WRRB	W5	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis
MTF	W19	Nonmonetary Support
BMRB	W20	Government and Public Administration
IFPI	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
WPF	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
RIPEC	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
MCFE	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
NTA	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
TFI	W22	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
TACI	W23	Public Finance, Taxation, Monetary Policy
EdNC	W24	Citizen Participation
FTW	W99	Public, Society Benefit— Multipurpose and Other
UF	W99	Public, Society Benefit— Multipurpose and Other
PARCA	W5, B5, S20	Research Institutes and/or Public Policy Analysis Community/Neighborhood Development, Improvement
ELGP	W99	Public, Society Benefit—Multipurpose and Other
	S20	Community/Neighborhood Development, Improvement
PEL	W99	Public, Society Benefit—Multipurpose and Other
	S20	Community/Neighborhood Development, Improvement

Source: Data from ("GuideStar Nonprofit Reports and Forms 990 for Donors, Grantmakers, and Businesses" n.d.)

Note: Organized by NTEE Code, then Decile Code, then alphabetically
B Education, P Human Services. S Community Improvement, Capacity Building
V Social Science Research Institutes W Public, Society Benefit

Table 4.4. Most Frequent Concepts in GRA Member Mission Statements

Term	Frequency	Percent of Mission Statements
research, analysis	18	75.0%
objective, impartial, nonpartisan, unbiased	13	54.2%
advance, improve, influence	12	50.0%
educate, inform, understand	11	45.8%
cost, expenditure, finance/fiscal	10	41.7%
government	9	37.5%
effective	8	33.3%
government official/policymaker	8	33.3%
public policy	8	33.3%

Table 4.5. Frequency of Concepts in 501(c)(3) GRA Member Mission Statements		
Term	**Frequency**	**Percent of Mission Statements**
research, analysis	17	70.8%
objective, impartial, nonpartisan, unbiased	12	50.0%
advance, improve, influence	11	45.8%
educate, inform, understand	11	45.8%
cost, expenditure, finance/fiscal	8	33.3%
public policy	8	33.3%

Table 4.6. Frequency of Concepts in 501(c)(4) GRA Member Mission Statements

Term	Frequency	Percent of Mission Statements
efficient	3	75%
tax/tax policy	3	75%
cost, expenditure, finance/fiscal	2	50%
evaluate	2	50%
government	2	50%
transparency	2	50%

Table 4.7. Frequency of Concepts in Non-Taxpayer GRA Member Mission Statements		
Term	**Frequency**	**Percent of Mission Statements**
research, analysis	14	58.3%
advance, improve, influence	9	37.5%
educate, inform, understand	9	37.5%
objective, impartial, nonpartisan, unbiased	9	37.5%
public policy	7	29.2%
effective	6	25.0%
government official/policymaker	6	25.0%

Table 4.8. Frequency of Concepts in Taxpayer-Focused GRA Member Mission Statements

Term	Frequency	Percent of Mission Statements
cost, expenditure, finance/fiscal	6	25.0%
tax/tax policy	5	20.8%
efficient	4	16.7%
government	4	16.7%
objective, impartial, nonpartisan, unbiased	4	16.7%
research, analysis	4	16.7%

Table 4.9. GRA Member Agency 2019 Revenue by Source as Percent of Total Revenue

Organization	Contributions	Investments	Other	Special Events	Program Services
BMRB	119.7%	3.6%	0.0%	-23.4%	0.0%
BGR	71.5%	29.2%	0.0%	-0.8%	0.0%
CGR	2.3%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	94.3%
CRC	62.3%	37.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
CF	102.2%	4.9%	0.4%	-7.5%	0.0%
CFC	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EdNC	94.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	5.5%
FTW	84.9%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	14.0%
IFPI	108.8%	0.0%	0.0%	-8.8%	0.0%
MTF	91.8%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%
MCFE	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	99.8%
NTA	70.0%	0.6%	29.4%	0.0%	0.0%
PEL	60.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	39.6%
PARCA	43.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	56.1%
PAR	63.2%	30.1%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%
RIPEC	66.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.6%
TACI	0.0%	0.0%	85.6%	0.0%	14.4%
TFI	0.0%	0.6%	1.7%	0.0%	97.6%
SI	99.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
UF	79.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.7%
WRC	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
WPF	47.1%	18.9%	0.3%	0.0%	16.3%
WRRB	61.7%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%
Mean	68.5%	7.6%	1.1%	1.6%	23.2%

Note: Columns equal 100% except for three organizations. Government grants and sales are excluded. Only the Wisconsin Policy Forum reports this revenue source, accounting for 17% of the total revenue. Only the Nevada Taxpayers Association and the Public Affairs Research Council report sales revenue totaling 0.1% and 0.3% of total revenue, respectively.

Source: ("GuideStar" n.d.)

Table 4.10. GRA Organizations' Expenses 2015–2019

GRA Organizations	Total	Mean
BMRB	$4,061,912	$812,382
BGR	$4,734,125	$946,825
CGR	$8,964,645	$1,792,929
CRC	$4,520,229	$904,046
CF	$8,536,687	$1,707,337
CFC	$316,312	$105,437
EdNC	$4,848,803	$969,761
FTW	$11,741,051	$2,348,210
IFPI	$645,206	$129,041
MTF	$6,133,637	$1,226,727
MCFE	$1,885,403	$377,081
NTA	$1,375,435	$275,087
PEL	$18,946,693	$3,789,339
PARCA	$4,240,309	$848,062
PAR	$4,842,848	$968,570
RIPEC	$3,451,035	$690,207
TACI	$790,398	$158,080
TFI	$2,965,834	$593,167
SI	$2,125,730	$425,146
UF	$3,065,970	$613,194
WRC	$2,323,849	$464,770
WPF	$5,187,530	$1,037,506
WRRB	$1,762,064	$352,413
Total	$107,465,705	$21,535,316

Note: Colorado Futures Center data from 2017 to 2019.
Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa expenditures are not allocated by area

Table 4.11. GRA Member Agency Mean Revenue, Expenses, and Net, 2015–2019

Organization	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Net Revenue	Margin	Mean Net Revenue
BMRB	$4,213,390	$4,061,912	$151,478	3.7%	$30,296
BGR	$7,941,137	$4,734,125	$3,207,012	67.7%	$641,402
CGR	$9,234,876	$8,964,645	$270,231	3.0%	$54,046
CRC	$4,818,151	$4,520,229	$297,922	6.6%	$59,584
CF	$8,656,622	$8,536,687	$119,935	1.4%	$23,987
CFC	$309,175	$316,312	-$7,137	-2.3%	-$2,379
EdNC	$6,837,142	$4,848,803	$1,988,339	41.0%	$397,668
FTW	$11,932,706	$11,741,051	$191,655	1.6%	$38,331
IFPI	$743,483	$645,206	$98,277	15.2%	$19,655
MTF	$6,389,691	$6,133,637	$256,054	4.2%	$51,211
MCFE	$1,857,739	$1,885,403	-$27,664	-1.5%	-$5,533
NTA	$1,477,947	$1,375,435	$102,512	7.5%	$20,502
PEL	$19,227,795	$18,946,693	$281,102	1.5%	$56,220
PARCA	$3,970,937	$4,240,309	-$269,372	-6.4%	-$53,874
PAR	$5,072,848	$4,842,848	$230,000	4.7%	$46,000
RIPEC	$3,519,673	$3,451,035	$68,638	2.0%	$13,728
TACI	$813,056	$790,398	$22,658	2.9%	$4,532
TFI	$2,926,249	$2,965,834	-$39,585	-1.3%	-$7,917
SI	$3,463,153	$2,125,730	$1,337,423	62.9%	$267,485
UF	$2,927,852	$3,065,970	-$138,118	-4.5%	-$27,624
WRC	$2,107,640	$2,323,849	-$216,209	-9.3%	-$43,242
WPF	$7,661,860	$5,187,530	$2,474,330	47.7%	$494,866
WRRB	$2,193,988	$1,762,064	$431,924	24.5%	$86,385
Total	$118,297,110	$107,465,705	$10,831,405	10.1%	$2,165,329

Source: Data from ("GuideStar" n.d.)

Note: Colorado Futures Centers are 2017—2019 averages

Table 4.12. GRA Members' Publicly Available Research: 2015 to 2022

Organization	Research Publications	Percent of Total Publications
CF	497	13.0%
CRC	474	12.4%
WPF	346	9.1%
FTW	333	8.7%
MCFE	318	8.3%
MTF	267	7.0%
ELGP	178	4.7%
BMRB	171	4.5%
SI	164	4.3%
PARCA	162	4.2%
UF	132	3.5%
PARCA	120	3.1%
WRC	118	3.1%
TFI	86	2.3%
WRRB	80	2.1%
RIPEC	79	2.1%
NTF	78	2.0%
CGR	72	1.9%
BGR	71	1.9%
IFPI	45	1.2%
CFC	15	0.4%
PEL	7	0.2%
Total	3,813	100.0%

Table 4.13. Distribution of Organizations' Research by Major Category

	Percent of Total Output					
	0 to19.9%	**20 to 39.9%**	**40 to 59.9%**	**60 to 79.9%**	**80 to 100%**	**Totals**
Public Finance	5 (22.7%)	7 (31.8%)	5 (22.7%)	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	22 (100%)
Public Services	6 (27.2%)	5 (22.7%)	7 (31.8%)	2 (9.0%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (90.1%)
Government	12 (54.5%)	7 (31.8%)	2 (9.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0)%	21 (95.5%)
Economy	16 (72.7%)	3 (13.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (90.1%)

Note: The table displays the number of organizations and percentage of all organizations whose publications by topic fell in a given range. For example, public finance publications accounted for up to 19.9% of publications for five organizations—22.7% of all organizations.

Table 4.14. Publicly Available GRA Research 2015–2022, Public Finance

Organization	Projects	Percent of Total
CF	CF	20.8%
MCFE	197	12.0%
MTF	190	11.6%
CRC	162	9.9%
WPF	133	8.1%
FTW	116	7.1%
BMRB	87	5.3%
WRC	81	4.9%
TFI	76	4.6%
NTF	39	2.4%
SI	39	2.4%
RIPEC	36	2.2%
GGR	35	2.1%
PAR	31	1.9%
PARCA	26	1.6%
IFPI	16	1.0%
WRRB	16	1.0%
UF	8	0.5%
CGR	6	0.4%
PEL	4	0.2%
ELGP	3	0.2%
CFC	1	0.1%
Total	1,644	100.0%

Table 4.15. Public Finance Publications as a Share of All Publications

Organization	All Publications	Public Finance Publications	Public Finance as a Percent of All Publications
TFI	86	76	88.4%
MTF	267	190	71.2%
CF	497	342	68.8%
WRC	118	81	68.6%
MCFE	318	197	61.9%
PEL	7	4	57.1%
BMRB	171	87	50.9%
NTF	78	39	50.0%
BGR	71	35	49.3%
RIPEC	79	36	45.6%
WPF	346	133	38.4%
IFPI	45	16	35.6%
FTW	333	116	34.8%
CRC	474	162	34.2%
PAR	120	31	25.8%
SI	164	39	23.8%
WRRB	80	16	20.0%
PARCA	162	26	16.0%
CGR	71	6	8.5%
CFC	15	1	6.7%
UF	132	8	6.1%
ELGP	178	3	1.7%
Total	3,812	1,178	100.0%

Table 4.16. GRA Organization's Public Service Research, 2015–2022

Organization	Projects	Percent of Projects
CRC	205	17.4%
WPF	139	11.8%
FTW	106	9.0%
SI	100	8.5%
CF	94	8.0%
PARCA	77	6.5%
UF	76	6.5%
ELGP	67	5.7%
MTF	53	4.5%
BMRB	49	4.2%
WRRB	40	3.4%
PAR	39	3.3%
CGR	36	3.1%
IFPI	19	1.6%
WRC	18	1.5%
BGR	16	1.4%
MCFE	15	1.3%
RIPEC	15	1.3%
CFC	10	0.8%
TFI	4	0.3%
Total	1,178	100.0%

Table 4.17. Publicly Available GRA Research 2015–2022, Public Service Sub-Topics

Public Service Topics	Projects	Percent of Total Public Service Projects
Education	437	37.1%
Health and healthcare	244	20.7%
Quality of life	133	11.3%
Transportation	94	8.0%
Housing	63	5.3%
Criminal Justice	56	4.8%
Environment, conservation, and natural resources	54	4.6%
Infrastructure	52	4.4%
Public safety	35	3.0%
Childcare	10	0.8%
Total	1,178	100.0%

Table 4.18. Government Research by Sub-Topic

Topic	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Executive/administration	224	41.0	41.0
Legislature	152	27.8	68.7
Elections	124	22.7	91.4
Public Opinion	47	8.6	100.0
Total	547	100.0	

Table 4.19. Government Research by Organization and as a Percentage of Total Research

Organization	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Percent of the Organization's Research
MCFE	94	17.2	17.2	29.6
CRC	83	15.2	32.4	17.5
CF	47	8.6	41.0	9.5
PAR	40	7.3	48.3	33.3
NTF	39	7.1	55.4	50.0
PARCA	37	6.8	62.2	22.8
WPF	37	6.8	68.9	10.7
FTW	34	6.2	75.1	10.2
UF	30	5.5	80.6	22.7
BMRB	27	4.9	85.6	15.8
CGR	19	3.5	89.0	26.4
BGR	16	2.9	92.0	22.5
WRRB	14	2.6	94.5	17.5
IFPI	9	1.6	96.2	20.0
MTF	5	0.9	97.1	1.9
WRC	4	0.7	97.8	3.4
PEL	3	0.5	98.4	42.9
TFI	3	0.5	98.9	3.5
ELGP	2	0.4	98.7	1.1
RIPEC	2	0.4	99.1	2.5
SI	2	0.4	99.5	1.2
CFC	0	0.0		0.0
Total	547	100.0		

Table 4.20. Economic Research by Organization

Organization	Projects	Percent	Cumulative Percent
ELGP	106	23.9	23.9
FTW	77	17.3	41.2
WPF	37	8.3	49.5
RIPEC	26	5.9	55.4
CRC	24	5.4	60.8
SI	23	5.2	66.0
PARCA	22	5.0	70.9
MTF	19	4.3	75.2
UF	18	4.1	79.3
WRC	15	3.4	82.7
CF	14	3.2	85.8
MCFE	12	2.7	88.5
CGR	11	2.5	91.0
PAR	10	2.3	93.2
WRRB	10	2.3	95.5
BMRB	8	1.8	97.3
BGR	4	0.9	98.2
CFC	4	0.9	99.1
TFI	3	0.7	99.8
IFPI	1	0.2	100.0
Total	444	100.0	

Table 4.21. Earned Media Coverage by GRA Organization, 2015–2022

Organization	Media Stories	Percentage of All Media Stories
WPF	3771	34.4
CF	1070	9.8
UF	899	8.2
MTF	813	7.4
FT	600	5.5
PAR	420	3.8
RIPEC	386	3.5
SI	380	3.5
EdNC	340	3.1
BGR	337	3.1
PARCA	300	2.7
CRC	297	2.7
PEL	235	2.1
CGR	233	2.1
IFPI	217	2.0
WRRB	144	1.3
BMRB	131	1.2
TFI	86	0.78
CFC	69	0.63
ELGP	63	0.57
WRC	59	0.54
MCFE	50	0.46
NTF	30	0.27
TACI	29	0.26
Total	10,959	100.0

Table 4.22. Earned Media Coverage by GRA Organization by Market, 2015–2022

Organization	State	Nation	Media Stories	Percentage of All Media Stories
WPF	3718	52	3770	34.7
CF	985	66	1051	9.7
UF	880	18	898	8.3
MTF	728	84	812	7.5
FTW	593	6	599	5.5
PAR	409	11	420	3.9
RIPEC	370	12	382	3.5
SF	354	8	362	3.3
EdNC	334	3	337	3.1
BGR	172	152	324	3.0
PARCA	294	6	300	2.8
CRC	268	14	282	2.6
PEL	228	7	235	2.2
CGR	232	1	233	2.1
IFPI	213	2	215	2.0
WRRB	130	14	144	1.3
BMRB	114	17	131	1.2
TFI	78	8	86	0.8
CFC	69		69	0.6
ELGP	59	3	62	0.6
WRC	53	4	57	0.5
MCFE	39	7	46	0.4
NTA	30		30	0.3
TACI	27	2	29	0.3
Total	10,377	497	10,874	100.0

Table 4.23. Survey Respondents by State of Residence

State	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illinois	11	10.4	10.4
Colorado	9	8.5	18.9
Indiana	8	7.6	26.4
Massachusetts	8	7.6	34.0
Utah	8	7.6	41.5
Florida	7	6.6	48.1
Minnesota	7	6.6	54.7
Washington	7	6.6	61.3
North Carolina	6	5.7	67.0
Louisiana	5	4.7	71.7
Michigan	5	4.7	76.4
Rhode Island	5	4.7	81.1
Wisconsin	5	4.7	85.9
Idaho	4	3.8	89.6
Tennessee	4	3.8	93.4
Iowa	2	1.9	95.3
California	1	0.9	96.2
District of Columbia	1	0.9	97.2
Maryland	1	0.9	98.1
Nevada	1	0.9	99.1
New Mexico	1	0.9	100.0
Total	106	100.0	

Table 4.24. Sources of Respondents' Data, Information, and Policy Research

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Percent of Respondents (N 106)
Public policy/research organizations	91	12.4	12.4	85.8
Advocacy organizations	74	10.1	22.5	69.8
Local newspapers	73	9.9	32.4	68.9
University faculty/research centers	69	9.4	41.8	65.1
Interest groups	58	7.9	49.7	54.7
National newspapers	56	7.6	57.3	52.8
Lobbyist(s)	53	7.2	64.5	50.0
Political organizations (elected officials, party leadership, party platform, etc.)	49	6.7	71.2	46.2
My professional association	46	6.3	77.4	43.4
Local news/talk radio	44	6.0	83.4	41.5
Local TV news	37	5.0	88.4	34.9
Academic journals	37	5.0	93.5	34.9
Cable TV news	18	2.5	95.9	17.0
Other	15	2.0	98.0	14.2
My professional journal	15	2.0	100.0	14.2
Total	735	100.0		

Table 4.25. Respondents' Familiarity with National Policy Organizations

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Percent of Respondents (N=97)
Pew Research Center	91	14.1	14.1	93.8
Heritage Foundation	76	11.8	25.9	78.4
Brookings Institution	74	11.5	37.4	76.3
Cato Institute	67	10.4	47.8	69.1
Center for American Progress	54	8.4	56.2	55.7
ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council)	50	7.8	64.0	51.5
AEI (American Enterprise Institute)	46	7.1	71.1	47.4
Urban Institute	45	7.0	78.1	46.4
Hoover Institution	43	6.7	84.8	44.3
Economic Policy Institute	38	5.9	90.7	39.2
Center for Budget and Policy Priorities	24	3.7	94.4	24.7
Other	19	3.0	97.4	19.6
SPN	7	1.1	98.5	7.2
GRA	5	0.8	99.2	5.2
EARN	4	0.6	99.9	4.1
SPP	1	0.2	100.0	1.0
Total	644	100.0		

Table 4.26. Top-of-Mind Sources of State Policy Information

State	Organization	Classification
Colorado	ACLU of Colorado	policy organization
	Bell Policy Center	policy organization
	Colorado Fiscal Institute (3)	policy organization
	Colorado Health Institute (2)	issue organization
	Colorado Independence Institute	policy organization
	Google	media organization
	Mental Health Colorado	issue organization
	Philanthropy Colorado	nonprofit/philanthropic association
	University of Colorado at Denver	higher education
Florida	The Economic Council	business/industry organization
	Florida Chamber of Commerce	business/industry organization
	FISAS (Florida Information Sharing & Analysis Organization)	other
	Florida Policy Institute (x2)	policy organization
	League of Women Voters	policy organization
	Taxwatch (Florida TaxWatch)	policy organization
	University of Florida	higher education
Illinois	Better Government Association	media organization
	Center for Tax and Budget Accountability (2)	policy organization
	Civic Federation of Chicago (2)	policy organization
	Illinois Policy Institute	policy organization
	Latino Policy Forum	policy organization
	Paul Simon Public Policy Institute	higher education
	Southern Illinois University	higher education
	Wirepoints	policy organization
Indiana	Citizens Action Coalition	policy organization
	Hudson Institute	policy organization
	Indiana Department of Environmental Management	government
	Indiana Philanthropy Alliance (2)	nonprofit/philanthropic association
	Indiana University (2)	higher education
	Purdue University (2)	higher education
	State of Indiana	government
Iowa	Common Good Iowa	policy organization
	Iowa Business Council	business/industry organization

	Iowa State University Extension	higher education
Louisiana	BGR (Bureau of Governmental Research)	policy organization
	Family Forum	policy organization
	LABI (Louisiana Association of Business and Industry)	business/industry organization
	Public Affairs Research Council (4)	policy organization
Massachusetts	BCBS Foundation (BCBS Foundation of Massachusetts)	policy organization
	Google	other
	Massachusetts Nonprofit Network	nonprofit/philanthropic association
	Massachusetts Taxpayers Association	policy organization
	MassINC (Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth) (2)	policy organization
	MIT Research Papers	higher education
	Rural Policy Council (Rural Policy Advisory Commission)	government
	State House News Service	media organization
	Strategies for Children	issue organization
Michigan	Citizens Research Council (3)	policy organization
	Council of Michigan Foundations	nonprofit/philanthropic association
	Mackinac Center for Public Policy (x2)	policy organization
	Michigan League for Public Policy	policy organization
	Public Sector Consultants	other
Minnesota	Center of the American Experiment	policy organization
	Children's Defense Fund, MN	policy organization
	The Council of State Governments	government
	The Fed (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis)	government
	Center for Fiscal Excellence (Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence)	policy organization
Nevada	NPRI (Nevada Policy Research Institute)	policy organization
North Carolina	EDF (Environmental Defense Fund)	policy organization
	Institute of Government, University of North Carolina	higher education
	Legislative staff analysis	government
	John Locke Foundation	policy organization
	the Justice Center (North Carolina Justice Center)	policy organization
	NC Policy Watch (now NC Newsline)	media organization
	The Smoky Mountain News	media organization
Rhode Island	ACLU (of Rhode Island)	policy organization
	Economic Progress Institute	policy organization
	DataSpark (now Rhode Island Longitudinal Data	government

	System)	
	Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (4)	policy organization
Tennessee	Beacon center	policy organization
	Legislative staff analysis	government
	SCORE (State Collaboration on Reforming Education) (2)	issue organization
	Sycamore Institute	policy organization
Utah	Google	other
	Kem Gardner Institute, University of Utah (5)	higher education
	Sutherland Institute	policy organization
	Utah Foundation (3)	policy organization
Washington	Economic Opportunity Institute	policy organization
	Economic Policy Institute	policy organization
	Staff (Legislative staff analysis)	government
	Ruckelshaus Center, Washington State University	higher education
	TCC (Tacoma Community College)	higher education
	Washington Policy Center (2)	policy organization
	WSIPP (Washington State Institute for Public Policy)	government
	WSMA (unknown)	other
Wisconsin	Center on Wisconsin Progress	policy organization
	UW CORE program	higher education
	UW Madison	higher education
	Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty	policy organization
	Wisconsin Policy Forum	policy organization
	WSFB (Washington Farm Bureau Federation)	issue organization

Note: Respondents' responses are listed first. The responses in clarified in parentheses when necessary. One organization, WSMA, was impossible to identify accurately and was thus clarified as 'Other.' Numbers indicate the number of times respondents cited the organization.

Table 4.27. Top-of-Mind Sources of State Policy Information by Type of Organization

Organization Type	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Policy research organization	62	53.0	53.0
Higher education	20	17.1	70.1
Government	10	8.5	78.6
Issue organization	7	6.0	84.6
Media organization	5	5.1	89.7
Nonprofit/philanthropic association	6	3.4	93.2
Business/industry organization	4	3.4	96.6
Media	4	3.4	100.0
Other	4	3.4	
Total	102	100.0	

Table 4.28. Top-of-Mind Policy Organizations: GRA and Ideological Orientation

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Left-leaning ideology	24	38.7	38.7
GRA member	22	35.5	74.2
Right-leaning ideology	16	25.8	100.0
Total	62	100.0	

Table 4.29. Frequency of Organizational Ideology by Party Identification

	Democrat	Republicans	Independent	Libertarian	Other
GRA organization	7 (35.5)	3 (30.0)	4 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	
Left-leaning organization	10 (50.0)	2 (20.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (50.0)	2 (66.7)
Right-leaning organization	3 (15.0)	5 (50.0)	2 (25.0)		1 (33.3)
Total	20	10	8	2 (4.2)	3

Table 4.30. Importance of Organization's Liberal Reputation, All Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	46	47.4	47.4
Slightly important	11	11.3	58.8
Moderately important	24	24.7	83.5
Very important	12	12.4	95.9
Extremely important	4	4.1	100.0
Total	97	100.0	

Table 4.31. Importance of Organizations' Liberal Reputation, Democrats and Republicans

	Democrats			Republicans		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	8	20.5	20.5	9	45.0	45.0
Slightly important	8	20.5	41.0	2	10.0	55.0
Moderately important	11	28.2	69.2	7	35.0	90.0
Very important	10	25.6	94.9	1	5.0	95.0
Extremely important	2	5.1	100.0	1	5.0	100.0
Total	39	100.0		20	100.0	

Table 4.32. Importance of Organizations' Liberal Reputation Independents and Others						
	Independents			**Other**		
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	18	75.0	75.0	2	18.2	18.2
Slightly important	1	4.2	79.2	6	54.5	72.7
Moderately important	4	16.7	95.8	2	18.2	90.9
Very important		0.0	95.8	1	9.1	100.0
Extremely important	1	4.2	100.0		0.0	100.0
Total	24	100.0		11	100.0	

Table 4.33. Importance of Organizations' Conservative Reputation, All Respondents			
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	47	48.5	48.5
Slightly important	12	12.4	60.8
Moderately important	24	24.7	85.6
Extremely important	5	5.2	90.7
Very important	9	9.3	100.0
Total	97	100	

Table 4.34. Importance of Organizations' Conservative Reputation, Democrats and Republicans

	Democrats			Republicans		
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	14	35.9	35.9	3	15.0	15.0
Slightly important	9	23.1	59.0	2	10.0	25.0
Moderately important	11	28.2	87.2	8	40.0	65.0
Extremely important	2	5.1	92.3	2	10.0	75.0
Very important	3	7.7	100	5	25.0	100.0
Total	39	100	100	20	100.0	100.0

Table 4.35. Importance of Organizations' Conservative Reputation, Independents and Others

	Independents			Others		
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	18	75	75	7	77.8	77.8
Slightly important	1	4.2	79.2		0.0	77.8
Moderately important	4	16.7	95.8	1	11.1	88.9
Extremely important	1	4.2	100		0.0	88.9
Very important				1	11.1	100.0
Total	24	100		9	100.0	

Table 4.36. Importance of Organizations' Nonpartisan Reputation

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	9	9.2	9.2
Slightly important	5	5.1	14.3
Moderately important	17	17.3	31.6
Very important	41	41.8	73.5
Extremely important	26	26.5	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

Table 4.37. Importance of Organizations' Nonpartisan Reputation, Democrats and Republicans

	Democrats			Republicans		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	1	2.6	2.6	1	5.0	5.0
Slightly important	4	10.3	12.8	1	5.0	10.0
Moderately important	6	15.4	28.2	5	25.0	35.0
Very important	18	46.2	74.4	10	50.0	85.0
Extremely important	10	25.6	100.0	3	15.0	100.0
Total	39	100.0		20	100.0	

Table 4.38. Importance of Organizations' Nonpartisan Reputation, Independents and Others

	Independents			Others		
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	3	12.0	12.0	3	33.3	25.0
Slightly important			12.0			25.0
Moderately important	3	12.0	24.0	3	33.3	50.0
Very important	10	40.0	64.0	2	22.2	100.0
Extremely important	9	36.0	100.0	1	11.1	100.0
Total	25	100.0		9	100.0	

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Table 4.39. Importance of Organizations' Recommendations			
Not at all important	15	15.8	15.8
Slightly important	21	22.1	37.9
Moderately important	31	32.6	70.5
Very important	21	22.1	92.6
Extremely important	7	7.4	100.0
Total	95	100.0	

Table 4.40. Importance of Organizations' Recommendations, Republicans and Democrats

	Democrats			Republicans		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	4	10.5	10.5	5	26.3	26.3
Slightly important	7	18.4	28.9	5	26.3	52.6
Moderately important	14	36.8	65.8	4	21.1	73.7
Very important	10	26.3	92.1	3	15.8	89.5
Extremely important	3	7.9	100.0	2	10.5	100.0
Total	38	100.0		19	100.0	

Table 4.41. Importance of Relationships at the Organization

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	37	38.1	38.1
Slightly important	14	14.4	52.6
Moderately important	19	19.6	72.2
Very important	24	24.7	96.9
Extremely important	3	3.1	100.0
Total	97	100.0	

Table 4.42. Importance of Relationships at the Organization, Democrats and Republicans

	Democrats			Republicans		
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Not at all important	13	33.3	33.3	7	35.0	35.0
Slightly important	6	15.4	48.7	1	5.0	40.0
Moderately important	7	17.9	66.7	5	25.0	65.0
Very important	12	30.8	97.4	6	30.0	95.0
Extremely important	1	2.6	100.0	1	5.0	100.0
Total	39	100.0		20	100.0	

Table 4.43. Importance that the Organization is Known by Colleagues and Peers

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	14	14.6	14.6
Slightly important	7	7.3	21.9
Moderately important	28	29.2	51
Very important	34	35.4	86.5
Extremely important	13	13.5	100
Total	96	100	

Table 4.44. Reported Professional Roles, Frequencies, and Re-Coded Values

Reported role	Re-Coded Sector	Frequency
State cabinet-level official state government agency head State government official State legislator	Government	38
Journalist Journalists and journalism professors	Journalism	25
Foundation/philanthropy executive Nonprofit leader	Social Sector	22
Business leader	Business	4
Governmental affairs professional Political media consultant	Governmental affairs	3
Blogger Academic Activist and advocate Association management Marketing director Physiciab (*sic*) Police officer PR (*sic*) Professor	Other	8

Table 4.45. Importance of Variables by Professional Role

	Government		Journalism		Social Sector	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Liberal Reputation	8	21.0	3	12.0	3	14.3
Conservative Reputation	7	18.4	2	3.2	3	14.3
Nonpartisan Reputation	23	60.5	17	68.0	19	86.4
Makes Recommendations	11	29	6	24	6	31.6
Relationships	16	42.1	10	40	9	47.3
Peers Value	19	50.0	10	40.0	12	60.0

Table 4.46. Consulted Organizations by Ideology

Classification	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
Left-leaning organizations	85	20.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)	75	18.3
GRA organizations	75	18.3
Right-leaning organizations	64	15.6
Centrist organizations (national)	60	14.6
Left-leaning organizations (national)	51	12.4
Total	410	100.0

Table 4.47. Most Trusted Source for Research About the State

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	19	29.7	29.7
Left-leaning organizations	16	25.0	54.7
Right-leaning organizations	12	18.8	73.4
Other	10	15.6	89.1
Centrist organizations (national)	5	7.8	96.9
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	1.6	98.4
Right-leaning organizations (national)	1	1.6	100.0
Total	64	100.0	

Table 4.48. Most Trusted Source of Research About the State, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations	8	36.4	4	23.5
GRA organizations	10	45.5	6	35.3
Centrist organizations (national)			1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	4.5		
Other			5	29.4
Right-leaning organizations	3		1	5.9
Total	22		17	

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations			2	13.3
GRA organizations			2	13.3
Centrist organizations (national)	1	33.3	2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.7
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	2	66.6	6	40.0
Total	3		15	

Table 4.49. Most Trusted Source of Research About the State, Libertarians and Republicans

Table 4.50. Most Trusted Source of Research on Government Operations			
Classification	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
GRA organizations	19	30.6	30.6
Lefty-leaning organizations	15	24.2	54.8
Other	12	19.4	74.2
Right-leaning organizations	9	14.5	88.7
Left-leaning organizations (national)	4	6.5	95.2
Centrist organizations (national)	3	4.8	100.0
Right-leaning organizations (national)			
Total	62	100.0	

Table 4.51. Most Trusted Source of Research on Government Operations, Democrats and Independents				

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	8	40.0	2	12.5
GRA organizations	9	45.0	6	37.5
Centrist organizations (national)	1	5.0	1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.3
Other	2	10.0	6	37.5
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	20		16	

Table 4.52. Most Trusted Source of Research on Government Operations, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	1	25.0	1	25.0
GRA organizations	2	50.0	2	50.0
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	25.0	1	25.0
Other				
Right-leaning organizations				
Total				

Table 4.53. Most Trusted Source of Research on Demographics and Population

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Left-leaning organizations	17	27.0	27.0
GRA organizations	13	20.6	47.6
Other	12	19.0	66.7
Centrist organizations (national)	10	15.9	82.5
Right-leaning organizations (national)	5	7.9	90.5
Right-leaning organizations	3	4.8	95.2
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	4.8	100.0
Total	63	100.0	

Table 4.54. Most Trusted Source of Information on Demographics and Population, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations	10	45.5	4	25.0
GRA organizations	7	31.8	3	18.8
Centrist organizations (national)	2	9.1	2	
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	4.5	1	6.3
Other	2	9.1	6	37.5
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	22		16	

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations				
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)	1	33.3	1	33.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	33.3	1	33.3
Other				
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	3		15	

Table 4.55. Most Trusted Source of Research on Demographics and Population, Libertarians and Republicans

Table 4.56. Most Trusted Source of Research on K–12 Education

Organizations	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	18	28.1	28.1
Left-leaning organizations	13	20.3	48.4
Right-leaning organizations	12	18.8	67.2
Other	11	17.2	84.4
Right-leaning organizations (national)	4	6.3	90.6
Centrist organizations (national)	3	4.7	95.3
	3	4.7	100.0
Total	64	100.0	

Table **4.57**. Most Trusted Source of Research on K–12 Education, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	8	40.0	3	18.8
GRA organizations	7	35.0	6	37.5
Centrist organizations (national)	1	5.0	1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	15.0	4	25.0
Other	1	5.0	2	12.5
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	20		16	100.0

Table 4.58. Most Trusted Source of Research on K–12 Education, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations			1	6.7
GRA organizations			3	20.0
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)	2	50.0	2	13.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	2	50.0	7	46.7
Total	4		15	

Table 4.59. Most Trusted Source of Research on Higher Education			
Classification	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
GRA organizations	19	32.2	32.2
Other	10	16.9	49.2
Left-leaning organizations	9	15.3	64.4
Right-leaning organizations	8	13.6	78.0
Right-leaning organizations (national)	5	8.5	86.4
Left-leaning organizations (national)	5	8.5	94.9
Centrist organizations (national)	3	5.1	100.0
Total	59	100.0	

Table 4.60. Most Trusted Source of Research on Higher Education, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	6	30.0	1	6.7
GRA	8	40.0	7	46.7
Centrist organizations (national)	1	5.0	2	13.3
National Conservative/Libertarian				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	15.0	1	6.7
Other	1	5.0	4	26.7
Right-leaning organizations	1	5.0		
Total	20		15	

Table 4.61. Most Trusted Source of Research on Higher Education, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations			2	13.3
GRA			2	13.3
Centrist organizations (national)	1	25.0	1	6.7
National Conservative/Libertarian	2	50.0	3	20.0
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	1	25.0	5	33.3
Total	4		15	100.0

Table 4.62. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Workforce

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	19	29.7	29.7
Other	15	23.4	53.1
Left-leaning organizations	12	18.8	71.9
Centrist organizations (national)	8	12.5	84.4
Right-leaning organizations (national)	6	9.4	93.8
Right-leaning organizations	4	6.3	100.0
Left-leaning organizations (national)			
Total	64	100.0	

Table 4.63. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Workforce, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	9	40.9	2	12.5
GRA organizations	9	40.9	5	31.3
Centrist organizations (national)	2	9.1	1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other	2	9.1	7	43.8
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	22		16	

Table 4.64. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Workforce, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	1	25.0	3	21.4
Centrist organizations (national)	1	25.0	2	14.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)	1	25.0	4	28.6
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			3	21.4
Right-leaning organizations	1	25.0	2	14.3
Total	4		14	

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Table 4.65. Most Trusted Source of Research on Poverty

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Left-leaning organizations	26	36.6	36.6
GRA organizations	11	15.5	52.1
Other	9	12.7	64.8
Right-leaning organizations	9	12.7	77.5
Centrist organizations (national)	8	11.3	88.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)	4	5.6	94.4
Left-leaning organizations (national)	4	5.6	100.0
Total	71	100.0	

Table 4.66. Most Trusted Source of Research on Poverty, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	11	50.0	10	58.8
GRA organizations	4	18.2	1	5.9
Centrist organizations (national)	3	13.6	2	11.8
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	5.9
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	13.6		
Other	1	4.5	3	17.6
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	22		17	

Table 4.67. Most Trusted Source of Research on Poverty, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	1	25.0	3	20.0
GRA organizations	1	25.0	4	26.7
Centrist organizations (national)	1	25.0	1	6.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)			3	20.0
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	1	25.0	2	13.3
Total	4		15	

Table 4.68. Most Trusted Source of Research on Public Health

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Other	13	21.3	21.3
Left-leaning organizations	11	18.0	39.3
GRA organizations	10	16.4	55.7
Left-leaning organizations (national)	10	16.4	72.1
Right-leaning organizations (national)	7	11.5	83.6
Right-leaning organizations	5	8.2	91.8
Centrist organizations (national)	5	8.2	100.0
Total	61	100.0	

Table 4.69. Most Trusted Source of Research on Public Health, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	5	23.8	4.0	28.6
GRA organizations	5	23.8	3.0	21.4
Centrist organizations (national)	1	4.8		
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)	8	38.1	1.0	7.1
Other	2	9.5	6.0	42.9
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	21	100.0	14	100.0

Table 4.70. Most Trusted Source of Research on Public Health, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations			2	13.3
GRA organizations			1	6.7
Centrist organizations (national)	1.0	25.0	1	6.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)	2.0	50.0	5	33.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.7
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	1.0	25.0	3	20.0
Total	4	100	15	100.0

Table 4.71. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Environment

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	16	31.4	31.4
Other	11	21.6	52.9
Left-leaning organizations	7	13.7	66.7
Right-leaning organizations	6	11.8	78.4
Right-leaning organizations (national)	4	7.8	86.3
Centrist organizations (national)	4	7.8	94.1
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	5.9	100.0
Total	51	100.0	

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	5	26.3	2.0	13.3
GRA organizations	7	36.8	3.0	20.0
Centrist organizations (national)	2	10.5	4.0	
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1.0	
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	15.8		
Other	2	10.5	5.0	33.3
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	19	100.0	15	100.0

Table 4.72. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Environment, Democrats and Independents

Table 4.73. Most Trusted Source of Research on the Environment, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	1.0	25.0	4	26.7
Centrist organizations (national)	1.0	25.0	4	26.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)			3	20.0
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			1	6.7
Right-leaning organizations	2.0	50.0	3	20.0
Total	4	100	15	100.0

Table 4.74. Most Trusted Source of Research on Social Issues

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	17	27.9	27.9
Other	13	21.3	49.2
Left-leaning organizations	8	13.1	62.3
Right-leaning organizations	8	13.1	75.4
Right-leaning organizations (national)	7	11.5	86.9
Centrist organizations (national)	5	8.2	95.1
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	4.9	100.0
Total	61	100.0	

Table 4.75. Most Trusted Source of Research on Social Issues, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	8	38.1	6.0	37.5
GRA organizations	6	28.6	1.0	6.3
Centrist organizations (national)	4	19.0		
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1.0	6.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	2	9.5	1.0	6.3
Other	1	4.8	7.0	43.8
Right-leaning organizations				
Total	21		16	

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations			3	20.0
GRA organizations				
Centrist organizations (national)	1.0	33.3	2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)	1.0	33.3	5	33.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations	1.0	33.3	3	20.0
Total	3		15	

Table 4.76. Most Trusted Source of Research on Social Issues, Libertarians and Republicans

Table 4.77. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Economy

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	28	42.4	42.4
Other	13	19.7	62.1
Left-leaning organizations	8	12.1	74.2
Right-leaning organizations	4	6.1	80.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	5	7.6	87.9
Right-leaning organizations (national)	5	7.6	95.5
Centrist organizations (national)	3	4.5	100.0
Total	66	100.0	

Table 4.78. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Economy, Democrats and Independent

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	7	30.4		
GRA organizations	10	43.5	8	50.0
Centrist organizations (national)			1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	13.0		
Other	3	13.0	5	31.3
Right-leaning organizations			1	6.3
Total	23		16	

Table 4.79. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Economy, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	2	50.0	6	40.0
Centrist organizations (national)			1	6.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)			3	20.0
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	25.0		
Other	1	25.0	2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations			3	20.0
Total	4	100.0	15	100.0

Table 4.80. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Taxes

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	31	46.3	46.3
Other	12	17.9	64.2
Left-leaning organizations	9	13.4	77.6
Right-leaning organizations	5	7.5	85.1
Left-leaning organizations (national)	5	7.5	92.5
Right-leaning organizations (national)	4	6.0	98.5
Centrist organizations (national)	1	1.5	100.0
Total	67	100.0	

Table 4.81. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Taxes, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Left-leaning organizations	6	25.0	1	6.3
GRA organizations	14	58.3	8	50.0
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	2	8.3		
Other	2	8.3	5	31.3
Right-leaning organizations			1.0	
Total	24	100.0	16	100.0

Table 4.82. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Taxes Party, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Libertarians		Republicans	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	2	50.0	5	33.3
Centrist organizations (national)			1	6.7
Right-leaning organizations (national)	1	25.0	2	13.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	25.0		
Other			3	20.0
Right-leaning organizations			4	26.7
Total	4	100.0	15	100.0

Table 4.83. Most Trusted Source of Research on State and Local Budgets

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
GRA organizations	32	47.8	47.8
Other	9	13.4	61.2
Left-leaning organizations	8	11.9	73.1
Right-leaning organizations	6	9.0	82.1
Left-leaning organizations (national)	6	9.0	91.0
Right-leaning organizations (national)	4	6.0	97.0
Centrist organizations (national)	2	3.0	100.0
Total	67	100.0	

Table 4.84. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Budget, Democrats and Independents

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	6	25.0	1	6.3
GRA organizations	13	54.2	9	56.3
Centrist organizations (national)			1	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)			1	6.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)	3	12.5		
Other	2	8.3	3	18.8
Right-leaning organizations			1	6.3
Total	24	100.0	16	100.0

Table 4.85. Most Trusted Source of Research on State/Local Budgets, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	2	50.0	6	40.0
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)		25.0	1	6.7
Left-leaning organizations (national)	2	50.0	1	6.7
Other			2	13.3
Right-leaning organizations			5	33.3
Total	4	100.0	15	100.00

Table 4.86. Most Trusted Organization

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Other	20	28.6	28.6
GRA organizations	17	24.3	52.9
Left-leaning organizations	13	18.6	71.4
Right-leaning organizations	8	11.4	82.9
Right-leaning organizations (national)	8	11.4	94.3
Centrist organizations (national)	3	4.3	98.6
Left-leaning organizations (national)	1	1.4	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations	9	39.1	3	16.7
GRA organizations	10	43.5	3	16.7
Centrist organizations (national)			3	6.3
Right-leaning organizations (national)				
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other	4	17.4	8	44.4
Right-leaning organizations			1	5.6
Total	23	100.0	18	100.0

Table 4.87. Most Trusted Organization, Democrats and Independents

Table 4.88. Most Trusted Organization, Libertarians and Republicans

Classification	Democrats		Independents	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Left-leaning organizations				
GRA organizations	1	25.0	2	12.5
Centrist organizations (national)				
Right-leaning organizations (national)	3	75.0	5	31.3
Left-leaning organizations (national)				
Other			3	18.8
Right-leaning organizations			6	37.5
Total	4	100.0	16	100.0

Table 4.89. Most Trusted Source by Role, Business and Government Affairs

Classification	Business		Government affairs	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
EARN/SPP				
GRA				
National Centrist				
National Conservative/Libertarian	2	66.6		
National Liberal				
Other			2	50.0
SPN	1	33.3	2	50.0
Total	3	100.0	4	100.0

Table 4.90. Most Trusted Source by Role, Government, Journalism, Social Sector

Classification	Government		Journalism		Social Sector	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
EARN/SPP	7	26.9	2	9.1	4	33.3
GRA	8	30.8	6	27.3	3	25.0
National Centrist			2	9.1	1	8.3
National Conservative/ libertarian	5	19.2			1	8.3
National Liberal			1	4.5		0.0
Other	4	15.4	10	45.5	3	25.0
SPN	2	7.7	1	4.5		
Total	26	100.0	22	100.0	12	100.0

Table 4.91. Most Trusted Organizations by Topic		
Topic	**Most Trusted**	**Frequency and Percent**
General information and data	GRA organizations	19 (29.7)
Government operations	GRA organizations	19 (30.6)
Demographics and population	Left-leaning organizations	17 (27.0)
K–12 Education	GRA organizations	18 (28.1)
Higher Education	GRA organizations	19 (32.2)
Workforce	GRA organizations	19 (29.7)
Poverty	Left-leaning organizations	26 (36.6)
Public health	Other	13 (21.3)
Environment	GRA organizations	16 (31.4)
Social issues	GRA organizations	17 (27.9)
State and local economy	GRA organizations	28 (42.4)
State and local taxes	GRA organizations	31 (46.3)
State and local budgets	GRA organizations	32 (47.8)
Most trusted	Other	20 (28.6)

Table 4.92. Most Trusted Organizations by Topic, Party Affiliation

Topic	Democrat		Republican	
General information and data	GRA organizations	10 (45.5)	Right-leaning	6 (40.0)
Government operations	GRA organizations	9 (45.0)	Right-leaning	9 (60.0)
Demographics and population	Left-leaning organizations	10 (45.5)	Right-leaning national organizations	4 (26.7)
K–12 Education	Left-leaning organizations	8 (40.0)	Right-leaning organizations	7 (46.7)
Higher Education	GRA organizations	8 (40)	Right-leaning organizations	5 (33.3)
Workforce	Left-leaning / GRA organizations	9 (40.9)	Right-leaning national organizations	4 (28.6)
Poverty	Left-leaning organization	11 (50.0)	GRA organization	4 (26.7)
Public Health	Left-leaning / GRA organizations	5 (23.8)	Right-leaning national organizations	5 (33.3)
Environment	GRA organizations	7 (36.8)	GRA / centrist organizations	4 (26.7)
Social issues	Left-leaning organizations	8 (38.1)	Right-leaning national organizations	5 (33.3)
State and local economy	GRA organizations	10 (43.5)	GRA organizations	6 (40.0)
State and local taxes	GRA organizations	14 (58.3)	GRA organizations	5 (33.3)
State and local budgets	GRA organizations	13 (54.2)	GRA organizations	6 (40.0).
Most trusted	GRA organizations	10 (43.5)	Right leaning organizations	6 (37.5)

Figure 4.1. Board Size and Total Revenue, Fitted Regression

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.54884							
R Square	0.30122							
Adjusted R Square	0.26628							
Standard Error	739649							
Observations	22							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	1	4.717E+12	4.7166E+12	8.6214	0.008165257			
Residual	20	1.094E+13	5.4708E+11					
Total	21	1.566E+13						
	Coefficient	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	444681	275113.55	1.61635328	0.12168	-129196.121	1018558	-129196	1018558
X Variable 1	16144.4	5498.3736	2.93622177	0.00817	4675.037891	27613.9	4675.04	27613.9

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Figure 4.2. Size of GRA Organizations' Staff, 2022
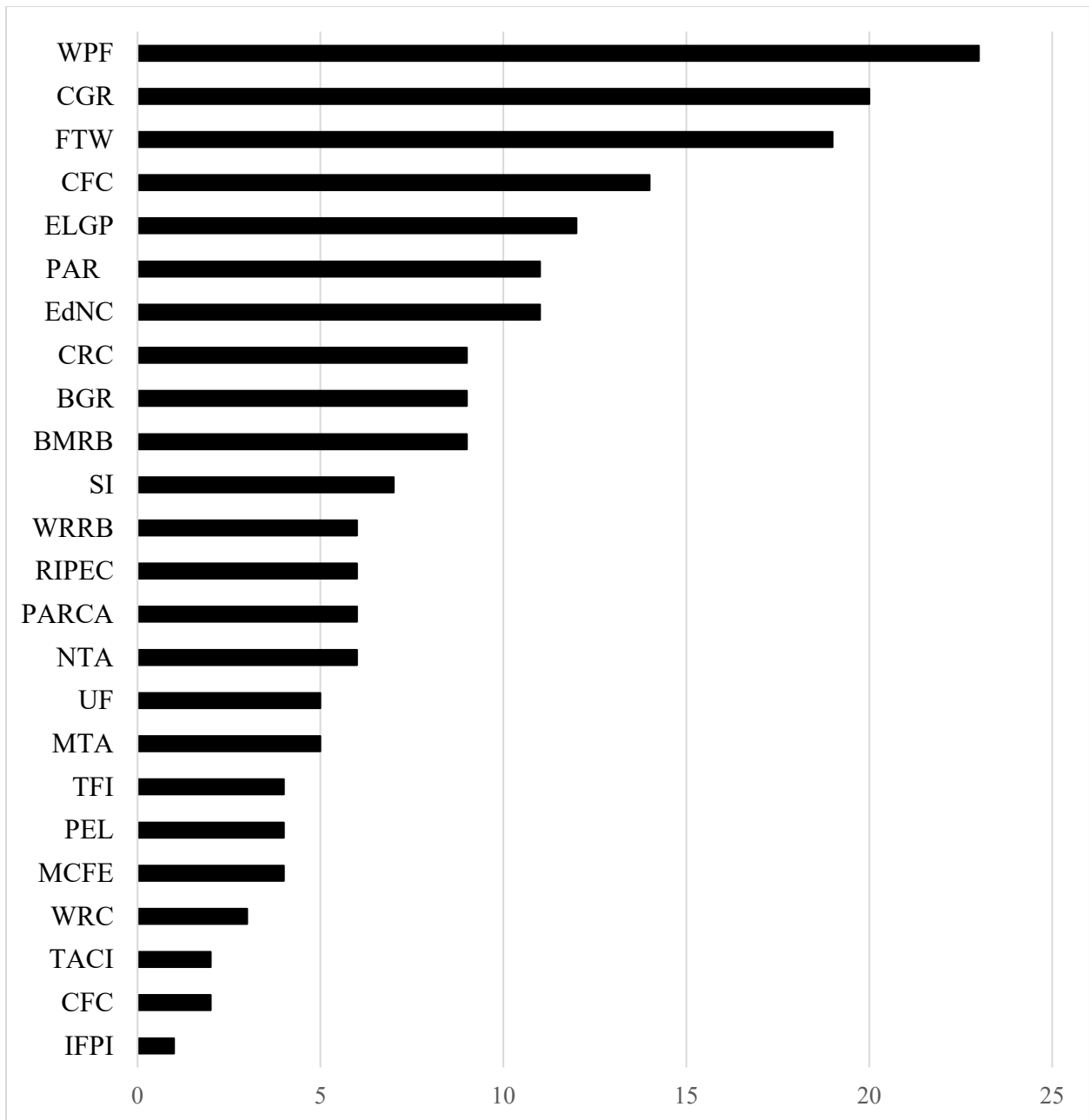
Figure 4.3. GRA Organizations Revenue, 2019
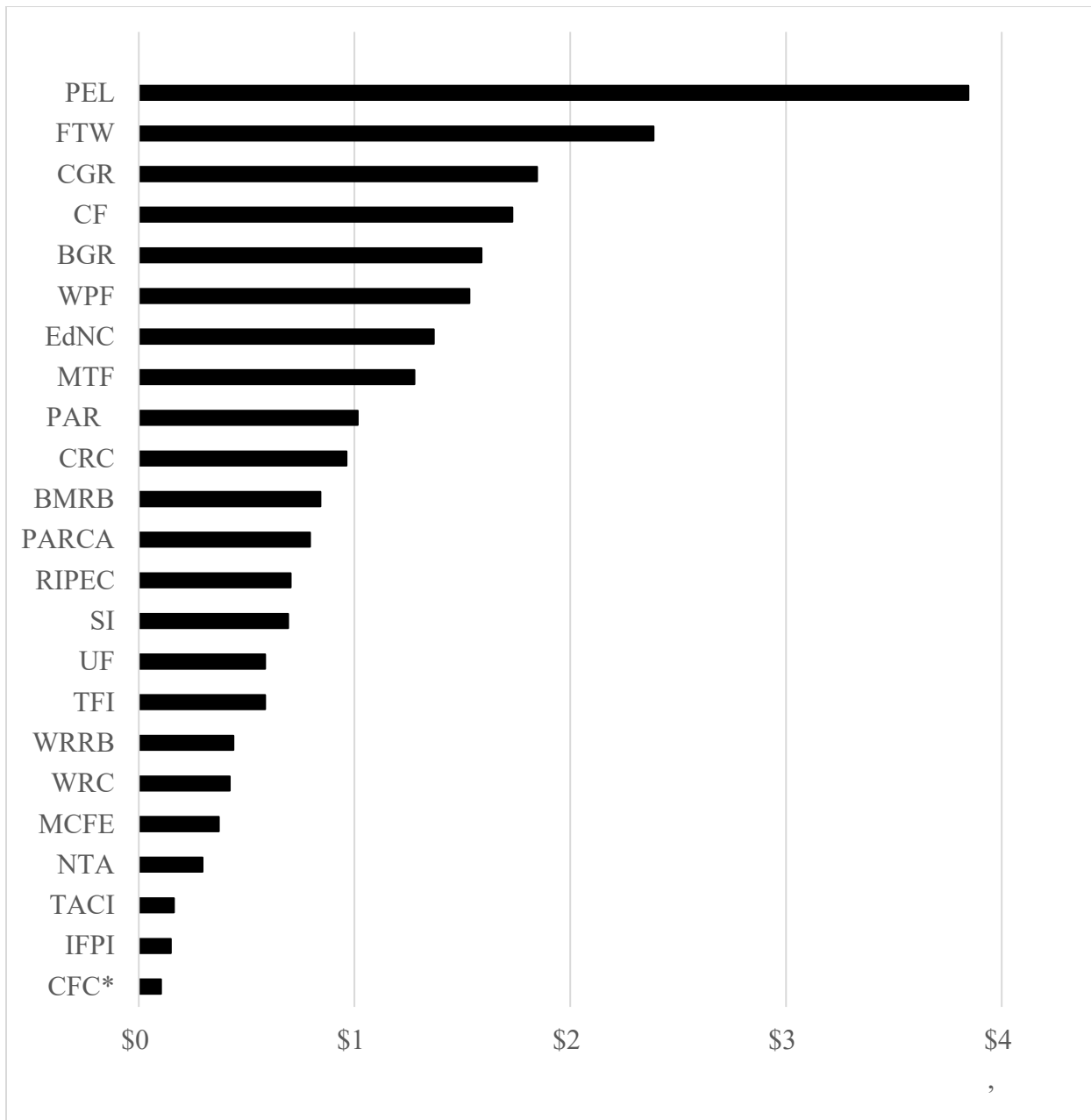
Figure 4.4. Publicly Available GRA Health and Healthcare Research by Year
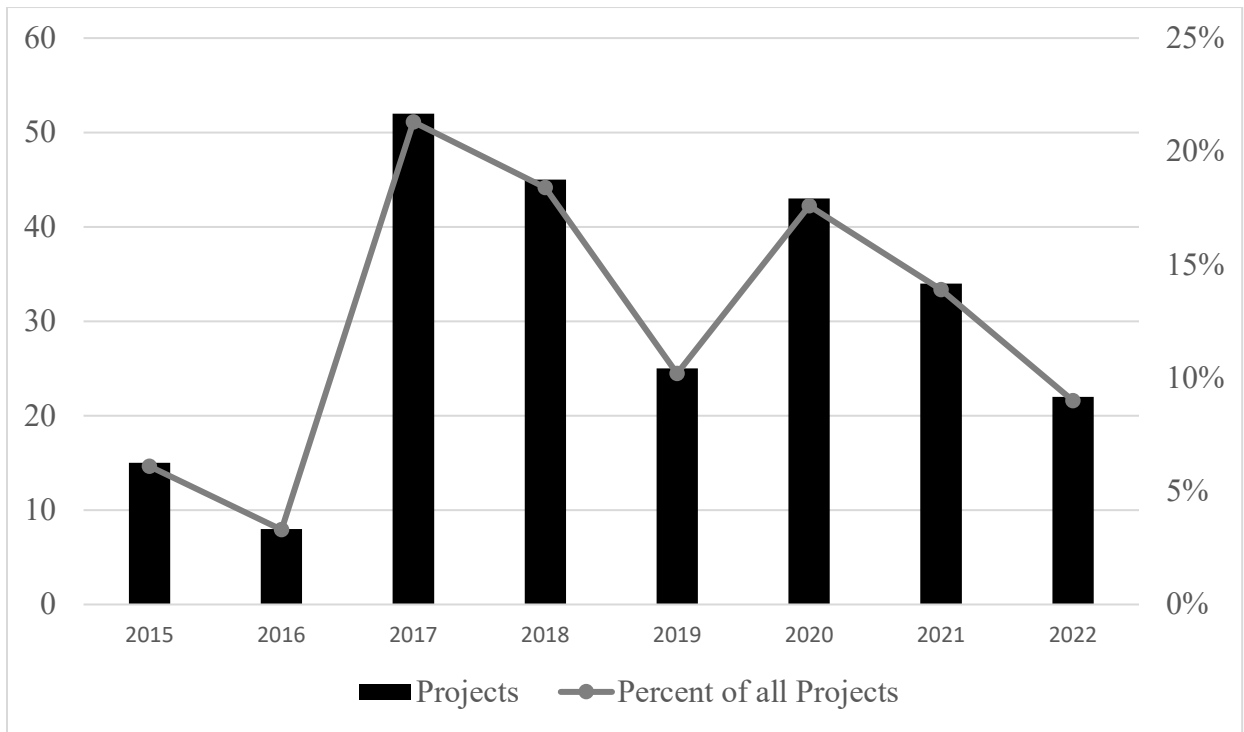
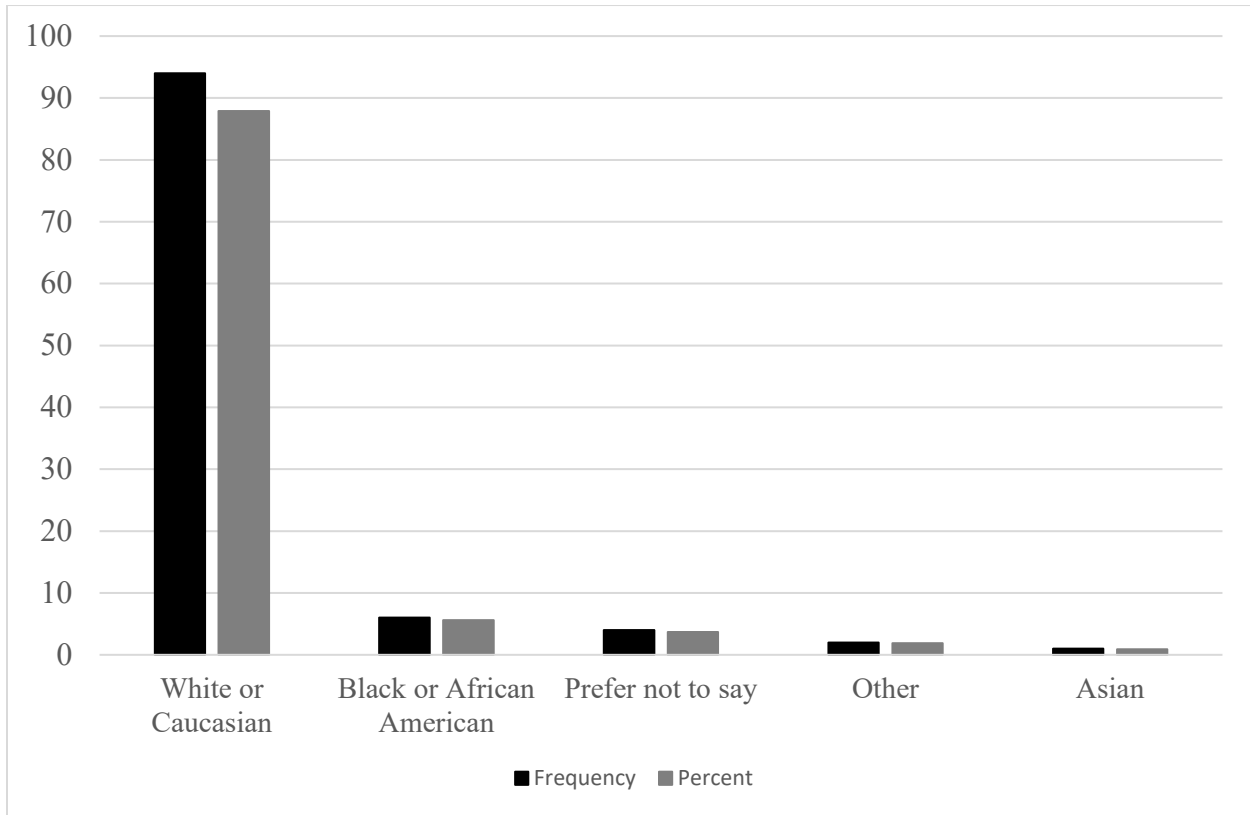**Figure 4.5**. Length of Survey Respondents in State
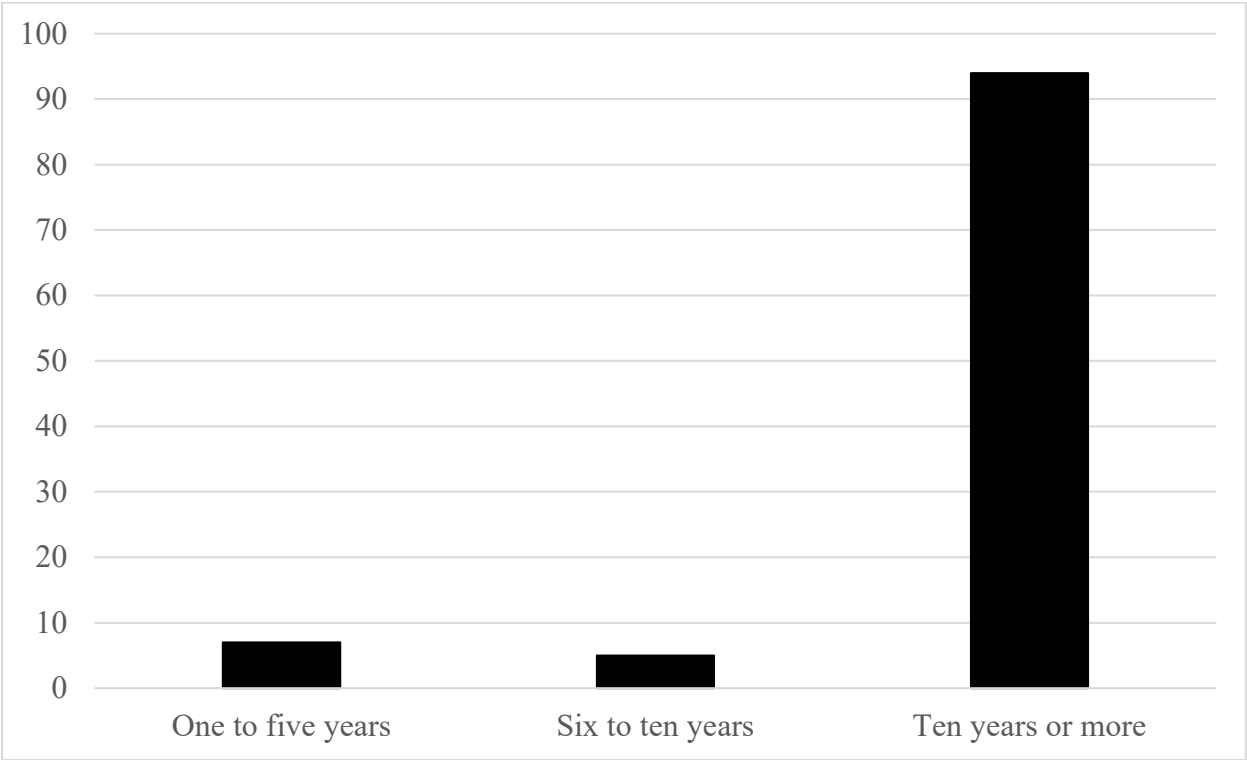
Figure 4.6. Respondents' Identified Race

Note: Census respondents reporting race other than White alone, Black or African American alone, or Asian alone, divided by the total population.
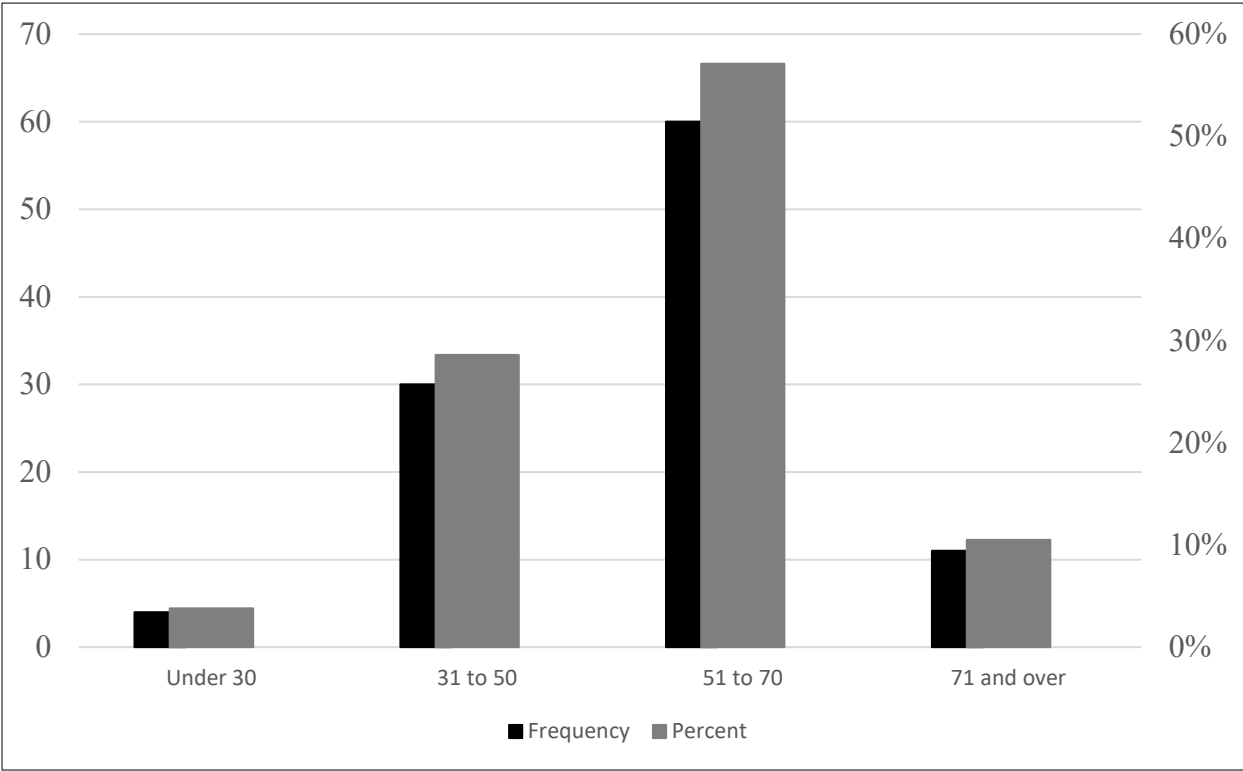
Figure 4.7. Age of Respondents

Figure 4.8. Respondents' Highest Education Level
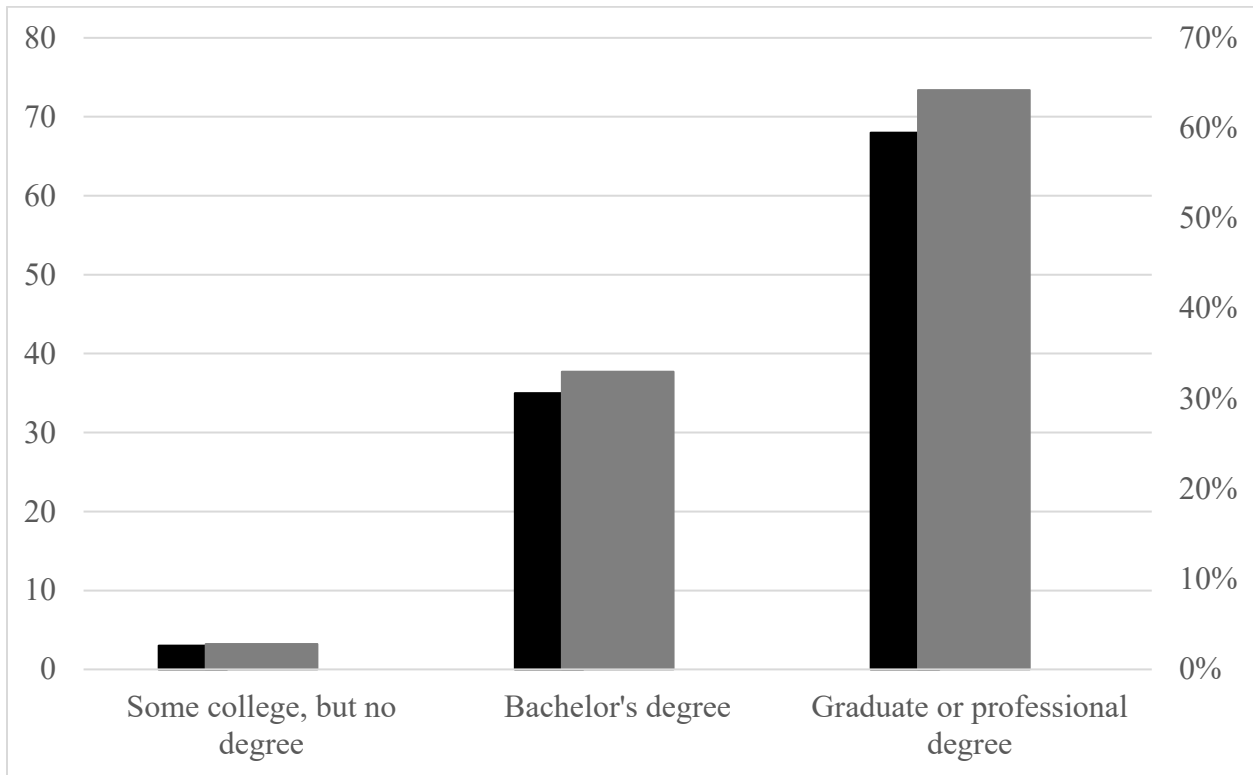
Figure 4.9. Respondents' Household Income
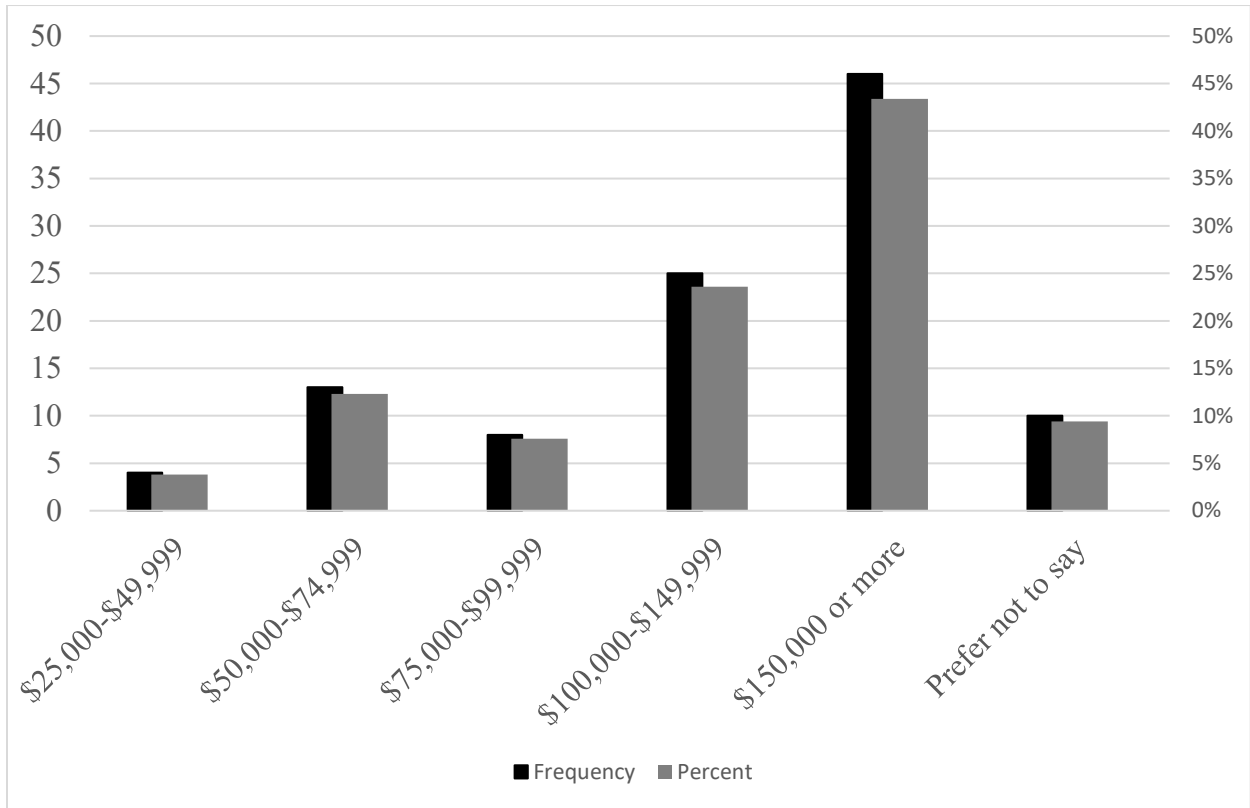
Figure 4.10. Respondents' Party Affiliation
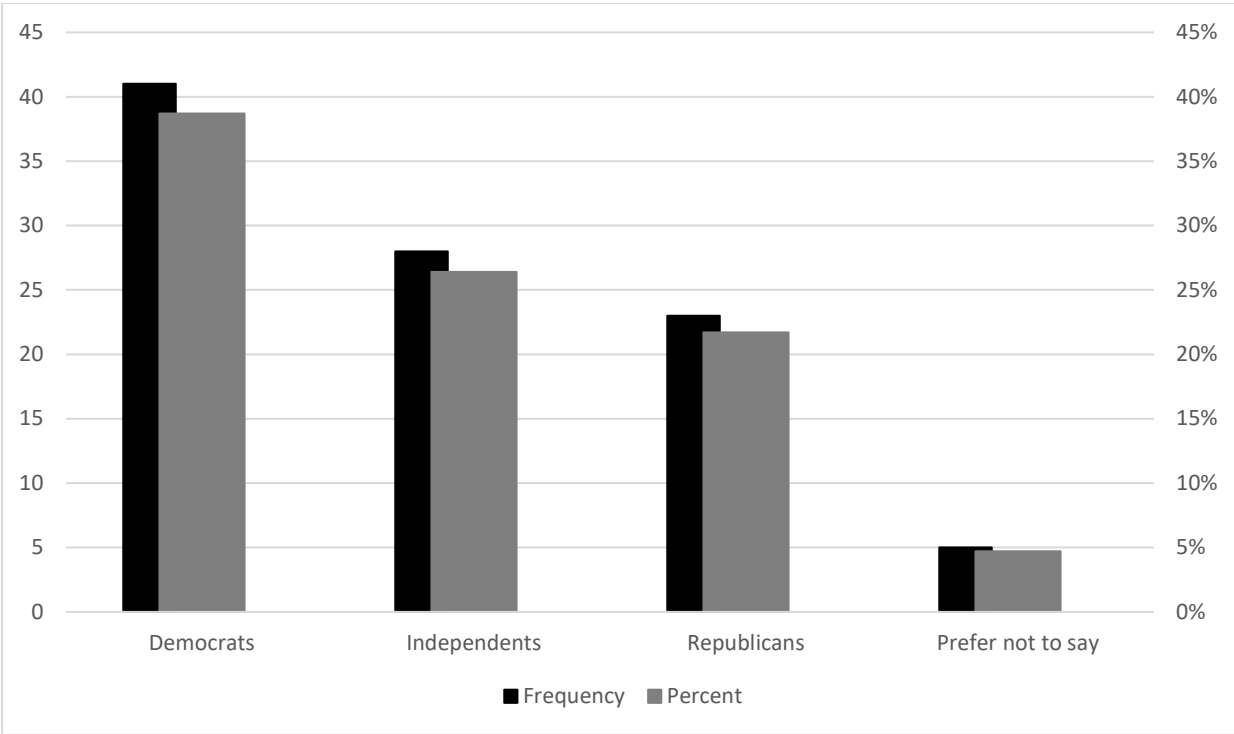
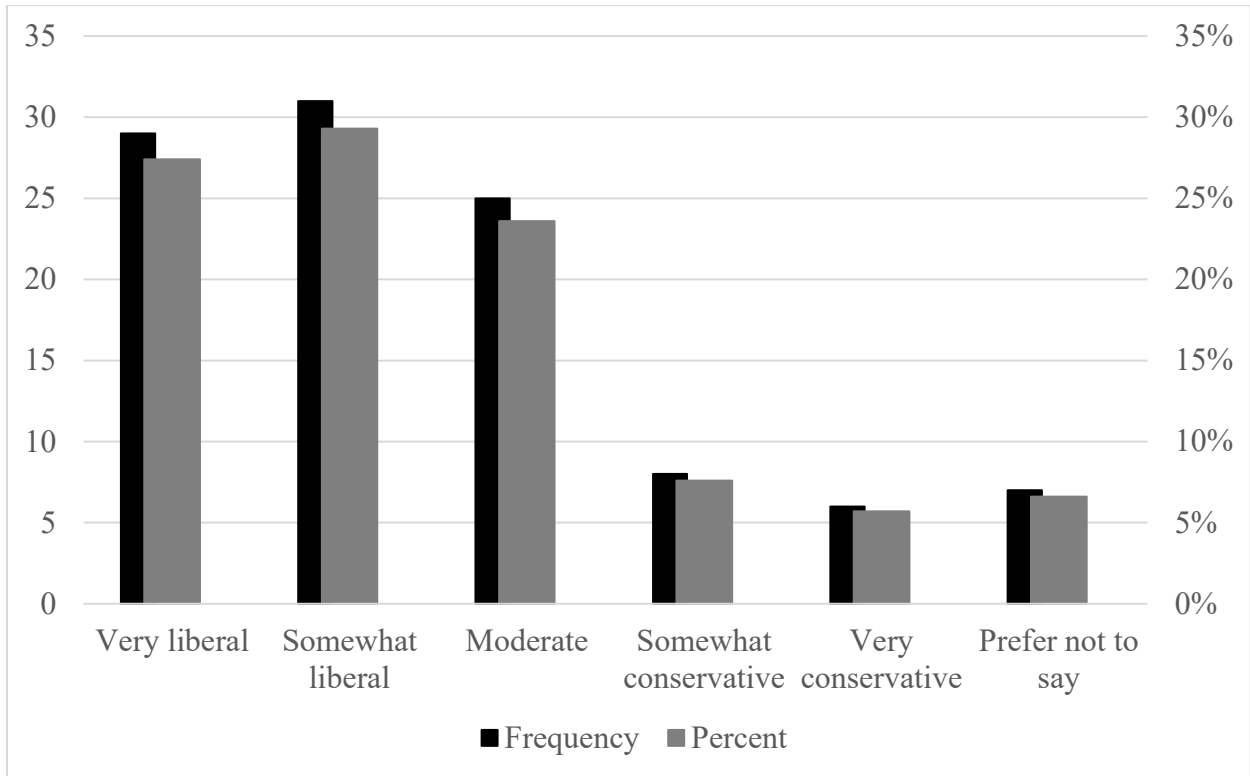**Figure 4.11**. Respondents' Ideological Identification, Social Issues

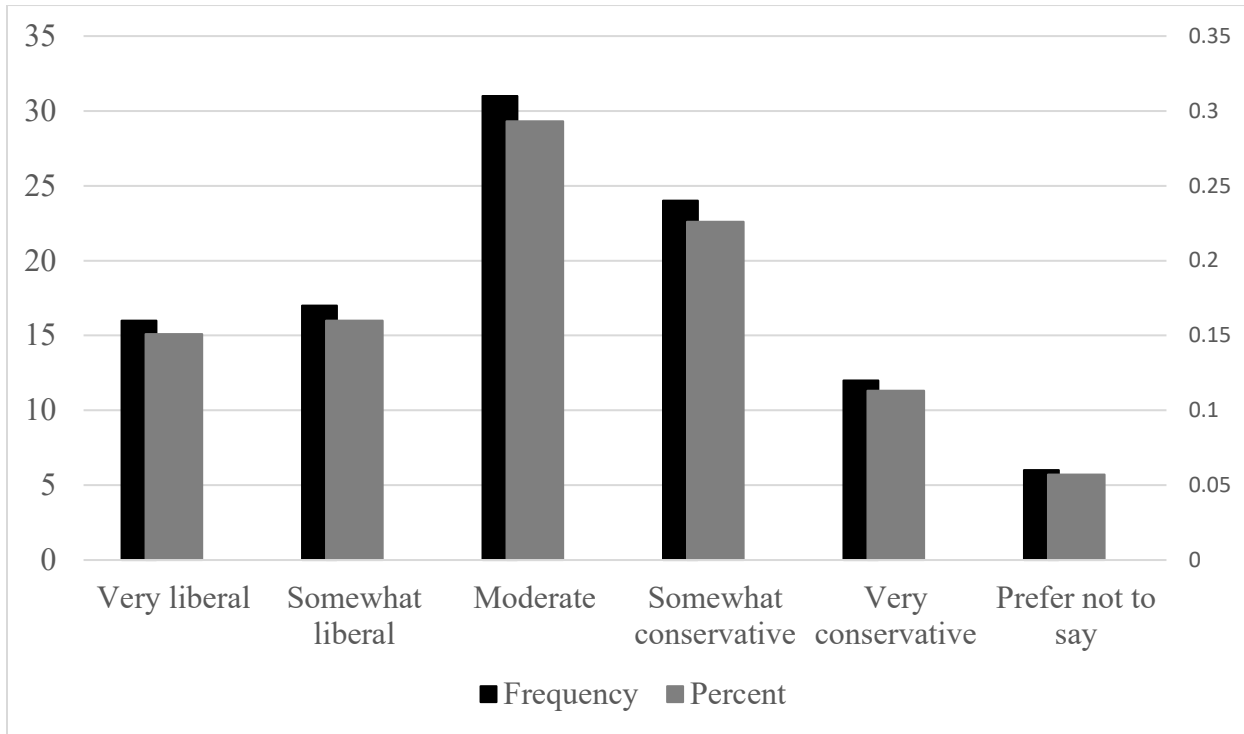**Figure 4.12**. Respondents' Ideological Identification, Economic Issues

Figure 4.13. Most Frequently Watched Cable TV News Network