

EXAMINING DIFFERENCES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT
AMONG U.S. STATES:
A REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF MPA PROGRAMS AND PROFESSIONALISM

By

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According to the literature, the differences in the institutionalization of professionalism in local government management observed among the U.S. states may be attributed to various formative factors. Given the prominence of the Master of Public Administration/Affairs (MPA) degree in the local government profession, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states. The importance of this study is to provide further evidence to previous research in this area regarding state/municipal features that may affect the character and incidence of professional local government management in regional contexts.

Utilizing an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis, the estimated effect of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on local government professionalism was evaluated while holding constant other control variables

determined to be associated with the actualization of professional local government management. In addition, comparative analysis involved categorization and description of characteristics indicative of the nature and contribution to professionalism in local government management of university-based MPA programs. The region of interest included the seven U.S. states of the West North Central Midwest: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

The findings suggest that an increase in the distance of a municipality from a university-based MPA program within the state and region is negatively associated with local government professionalism. Despite dissimilarities in composition and local government specificity among the regional MPA degree programs, the results corroborate the proposition that university-based MPA programs may contribute to professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence. This leads to the conclusion that the accessibility and dispersion of university-based MPA programs within a state may affect the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management, thus providing further understanding of the differences in the institutionalization of local government professionalism among regional U.S. states.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the impact of municipal proximity to university-based Master of Public Administration/Affairs (MPA) graduate degree programs on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism in regional U.S. states. Building on the theoretical foundations of previous research and literature in the field, this analysis aims to supply additional knowledge to the association between jurisdictional characteristics and professional administration at the local level. Thus, the objective is to further the understanding of contextual factors that affect differences in the institutionalization of professional local government management in U.S. states within a regional setting.

Background/Research Problem

In the field of public administration, the original models of professionalism in local government management emanate from the early 20th Century writings of influential reformers, such as Frank Goodnow and Richard Childs, which partly contributed to the establishment of a general manager/administrative officer position within municipal government. Although the manifestations of professionalism have since evolved, the basic principles essentially remain intact, providing a level of legitimacy and credibility to the purposefulness of professional institutions and practices. The term *professional* carries a distinct connotation, referring both to the individual occupying the position as well as the manner and structure in which the related duties, responsibilities, and tasks are performed. As such, professional management pertains to

the experience, authority, knowledge, and status of the appointed administrator in addition to the application of these qualifications with regard to the guidelines for ethical and appropriate behavior and the governmental framework in which the manager position is established.

In the terms of local government, managerial professionalism is demarcated by the appointment/employment of a chief executive/administrative officer (CAO), in the form of a city manager or administrator, who possesses the qualifications and expertise to oversee the daily functions of the modern city and abides by professional standards of practice. The local government manager maintains many roles, such as technical administrator, policy advisor and implementer, departmental supervisor, and community facilitator. The distinction of professional local government manager depends upon several characteristics, relating to the form of local government, the level of responsibility and authority allowed within the position, the adherence to professional criteria, and the recognition/credentialing by professional associations. Historically, the council-manager plan has represented the foremost professional form of local government management; however, structural adaptations in the configurations of local governments have added to the appearance of professional administration in the contemporary urban environment (Frederickson, Johnson, & Wood, 2004a). The International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the most renowned and prominent professional practitioner organization among local government managers and administrators, stands as an acknowledged authority in the field for the recognition and development of professional management, taking into consideration governmental

structure in addition to duties/roles, skills/training, and ethical conduct/integrity (ICMA, 2012a; Newland, 2002).

According to the literature, the institutionalization of professionalism in local government management may be influenced by various formative factors. Previous studies and research identify several components that may contribute to professional administration at the local level, including the demographics of jurisdictions (Lineberry & Fowler, 1967), the cultural atmosphere and predilections of citizens (Frederickson & Johnson, 2001), the training and education of managers (Slack, 1990), and the political designs that constitute professional performance and attitude (Nelson & Svara, 2012). The incidence of professional local government management also varies within contexts, suggesting that situational circumstances, features, and dispositions may affect the development and/or reception of professionalism within individual settings (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002). In other words, there is evidence that professional management may be viewed as a product, an amalgamation of stimulating factors that create a particular environment that is conducive to the formation and acceptance of professional local government structures, managers, and practices.

In the United States, the influence of political culture and regionalism is observable through national/local elections, state statutes, governmental forms, and policy priorities (Elazar, 1994). The variety of histories, ideals, traditions, and beliefs embedded within the vast geographical dimensions of the U.S. incontrovertibly generate a diverse range of preferences and proclivities, and these cultural attributes likewise impact the formation and utilization of governmental institutions. The most discernible and conspicuous institution representing the diversity of the American populace is the

state, a separated entity with legal boundaries that embodies the cultural views, principles, and penchants of a particular group of citizens. Within each state, socio-cultural characteristics in combination with political, economic, geographic, and other contextual features affect internal structures, creating a unique system of operation that adds to the creation of an exclusive situational setting. Even in contiguous states of similar regions, substantive dissimilarities exist in the prevalence of specific permutations and arrangements, such as the pervasiveness of professional local government management.

Thus, situational factors comprising cultural, social, political, economic, historical, and organizational aspects may be distinguished as determinants in the institutionalization of local government professionalism within different contexts. Because of their marked representativeness of local traits and regional variances, the individual U.S. states offer tangible contextual settings in which to assess these potential relationships. As such, this study further investigates the connections between the characteristics of U.S. states/municipalities and the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management.

Purpose of the Study

Over the last century, due to the rapid expansion and growth of cities, the proficient management of urban systems has become an essential facet in the functionality of modern society. According to Palen (2012), 80 percent of Americans reside in metropolitan areas, and it is estimated that 60 percent of the world's population will be urban within the next 20 years. Moreover, in the United States, the devolution of

services and programs from the national and state governments in combination with decreasing revenue sources and economic instability has placed considerable pressure on local officials to administer city operations as efficiently and effectively as possible. As a result, there is an impetus for competent practice in local government management, which necessitates the employment of skilled and capable managers.

In the broadest terms, local government management affects societal processes and the everyday lives of citizens in meaningful and various ways. The operation of local utilities provides reliable sources of electricity and clean water, city planners design roadways and alleviate traffic congestion, police and fire services protect people from harm, and city workers maintain streets and parks for safe transportation and recreation. What is more, the actions and policies of local governments can impact where people live and work and how people interact with each other and the environment. For instance, economic development pursuits by local officials may bring businesses and industries that provide employment opportunities and residential growth, and the enactment of social and environmental policies that promote sustainability and community betterment can make a difference in the quality of life for citizens and initiate purposeful change. As such, the dependable supervision and capable management of urban systems contribute to practical and stable societal order.

Hence, as cities grow and become more complex, the need for professional skills, values, and techniques in management likewise increases. In essence, the demands and problems of the modern urban environment require educated decision-making, training, and expertise in local government administration. Professional local government managers play an integral role in maintaining the localized base of the U.S. federal

structure by implementing and monitoring public policies and services, ethically and responsibly meeting the needs of communities and citizens, and acting as neutral and prudent administrators in contentious political atmospheres. However, the question remains as to why professional local government management is ignited, developed, and sustained in some contexts and lacking in others. Throughout the United States, differences abound among cities, states, and regions in relation to the nature and occurrence of local government professionalism, and the reasons for these deviations may be due to particular jurisdictional characteristics representative of the ambient setting. Given the importance of managerial aptitude and capacity in the future functionality of our urbanized society, there is cause for the further exploration of the situational factors that influence the institutionalization of professional local government management and facilitate the conception and incidence of professionalism in city administration.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states. The theoretical focus of this analysis is the perceived effect of jurisdictional and contextual traits on the identifiable and recognizable practice of local government professionalism within the conditional environment of a legally defined U.S. state. The intention of this research is to add to the body of local government and public administration literature pertaining to the understanding of the disparities in the institutionalization of professionalism in local government management among U.S. states through an investigation of further potential factors that may contribute to its existence. States represent a distinguishable entity typified by local preferences, institutions, organizations, cultures, and urban patterns, thus

providing a specialized level of evaluation. Furthermore, the contrast and diversity among jurisdictions, states, and regional settings allow for the examination of these variances and the related effects on professional local government management.

Research Question

The primary inquiry of this research pertains to the potential effect of the proximity/access to MPA graduate degree programs on the institutionalization of local government professionalism in U.S. states within a regional setting. Specifically, what is the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics? Building on the foundations of existing literature and contemporary trends, this question represents the central focus of this study and delineates the connections and purposes of interest within this context, adding to the extant knowledge regarding the factors that may influence the differences in professional local government management among U.S. states.

In relation to the literature, professionalism in local government management may be subject to a variety of formative stimuli. Following the municipal reform movement of the early 20th Century, myriad research studies have attempted to differentiate and clarify the conditions that may facilitate professional local government management. Examinations of legislative and political effects (Berman, 2003; Booth, 1968; Hero, 1986; Wirt, 1985), culture and demographics (Box, 1993; Simmons & Simmons, 2004; Wolfinger & Field, 1966), city size and arrangement (Protasel, 1988; Sayre, 1954), and occupational training and pressures (Crewson & Fisher, 1997; Lyden & Miller, 1976;

Svara, 1997) illustrate the breadth of research directed toward understanding the contributors to local government professionalism. The findings of previous studies suggest that professionalization may be a product of the environment, comprising situational ingredients that may either strengthen or weaken the propensity for professional management. Therefore, using jurisdictional context as a distinguishable arena for analysis, the further assessment of particular characteristics of U.S. states/municipalities that influence the nature/occurrence of professional local government management may offer additional understanding of the reasons for differences in institutionalization.

According to ICMA (2012b), the recognition of professionally managed localities among U.S. states varies considerably. Based on ICMA identifications, state-by-state comparisons reveal substantial differences in the number of recognized jurisdictions, the proportion of recognized council-manager governments, and the ICMA membership/credentialing of current local government managers. While some states, such as California, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, display appreciably high numbers of professional recognition, other states, such as Louisiana, Montana, and Wyoming, exhibit almost immeasurably low numbers, with Hawaii having no recognized jurisdictions (ICMA, 2012b).

Conceivably, urbanization and population may be determinants in the recognition of professional local government management within states, as is demonstrated in the high incidence of ICMA recognitions in states such as Texas, California, and Florida as opposed to states such as Utah, North Dakota, and Rhode Island (ICMA, 2012b). However, geographic location and/or regional distinction likewise appear to influence

these patterns as well, suggesting perhaps that other ecological factors may be contributing to the differences in recognition of local government professionalism. For instance, when assessed in groups of regional identity, Midwestern and Southwestern states have overall elevated numbers of professionally recognized jurisdictions, forms of government, and managers in comparison with Southern and Mountain states (ICMA, 2012b). Within these regional factions are further disparities among the states of particular areas, implying that differences in the recognition of professional local government management may be affected by state/municipal characteristics in addition to urbanization/population and regional distribution. For example, states such as Maine, Oregon, and Colorado noticeably stand out within their respective geographical areas, having relatively high incidences of professional recognition as compared to other contiguous and regional states of similar size and composition (ICMA, 2012b).

One such characteristic that may be influential in the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management is education. The notion of a profession of local government administration has long been associated with the educational skills and training of managers, abiding White's (1927) identification of "recognized means of preparation" as a component of professional status (p. 282). Further studies within the field have likewise corroborated the importance of educational attainment in the acknowledgement of the city management profession, placing an emphasis on the value of "formal academic preparation" in the areas of urban and municipal operation (Childs, 1965; Kline & Blanchard, 1973, p. 172; Ridley & Nolting, 1934; Stene, 1966; Stillman, 1974). In particular, ICMA (2012c) continues to advocate for education pertaining to the

study and application of public service and administration in the field of professional local government management, most notably in the form of the MPA degree.

The MPA graduate degree represents advanced educational and academic attainment in public administration, encompassing an array of public service knowledge and disciplines relating to public policy, organizational and personnel management, governmental operation, and budgeting and finance. Correspondingly, students may select specific areas of concentration, such as local government, to hone training and comprehension within a particular field of administrative study. University-based MPA programs are also typically influential in the public service arena, as faculty, staff, and students participate in a multitude of interactive and collaborative activities such as university extension and outreach, consultation and research, promotion and engagement, internships and volunteerism, and community board and committee involvement. Hence, university-based MPA programs may offer substantive educational and assistive contributions to the development, enhancement, and utilization of professional public administration within their geographic regions (Gabris, Davis, & Nelson, 2010).

Surveys among practicing U.S. city managers display a trend toward graduate education in public administration, symbolizing the importance of the MPA degree in the local government management profession. Grode and Holzer (1975) observe that the MPA holds high regard among municipal administrators, reporting accentuated support for the related training and utility of the degree. Renner (2001) asserts that, as of the year 2000, approximately 60 percent of surveyed city managers indicate the possession of a Master's degree in public administration, business administration, or another related area. The ICMA (2009) *State of the Profession Survey* affirms that the MPA degree represents

the most common educational attainment among practicing professional managers of U.S. local governments. In this way, the MPA degree has gained status as a “de facto requirement for most positions in local government management” (Hansell, 2002, p. 184), and Svava (2010) envisages that the MPA will be vital to the future of the local government profession. As such, the existence, proximity/access, and qualities of university-based MPA programs may be influential in the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management.

Therefore, taking into consideration the assertions and conclusions of previous research regarding the potential determinants and factors that contribute to professional local government management in situational contexts in combination with the identifiable disparities and differences in local professional recognition in U.S. states, there is cause to pursue further investigation into the relationships and reasons associated with these phenomena. Particularly, the examination of the effect of MPA programs on the propensity for professional local government management within U.S. states will add to the understanding of these issues. Thus, the research question for this study addresses the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism within regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to provide additional evidence of the regional U.S. state/municipal characteristics that may affect professional local government management. Apparent gaps in the extant literature suggest that this topic requires

further consideration. Prior research on the subject of the institutionalization of local professionalism includes a range of analytical models, assessing the effects of socioeconomic, demographic, political, and regional variables on both structure and performance (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Rice & Sumberg, 1997; Schnore & Alford, 1963; Sherbenou, 1961). However, contextual analyses concerning the reasons for differences in professional local government management among varying entities, particularly U.S. states, are relatively limited and dated. Notably, the impact of proximity/access to university-based MPA programs in relation to local government professionalism has not been amply examined within the existing literature. Thus, the aim of this study is to provide supplemental conclusions to the findings of previous research in this area to enhance the knowledge regarding state/municipal features that may influence the incidence and disparity of professional local government management in regional contexts.

A better comprehension of the situational factors that affect professionalism in local government management may lend to the domain of professional public administration. Professionalization continues to be a high priority in the field of public administration; as administrators assume more responsibility in management and implementation at all levels of government, the need for professionalism in decisions and practices likewise increases (Gabris et al., 2010). Professionalism embodies the fundamental tenets of public administration, incorporating and emphasizing adherences to efficiency, ethical responsibility and conduct, integrity, proficiency, responsiveness, and equity. Moreover, MPA programs sponsor the advancement of public administration as a discipline and practitioner field, and the prevalence of the MPA degree among

practicing city managers symbolizes a contribution to professional development. A further understanding of the regional impact of university-based MPA programs may help to substantiate and clarify the role of MPA programs in the creation, promulgation, and retention of professional public administrators and local government managers in U.S. states.

The transformative and dynamic nature of urban areas and systems necessitates a broader examination of the factors that promote professionally managed localities. Adaptations in the structures and forms of local government management signify a movement toward the increased utilization and purposefulness of professional administration (Frederickson et al., 2004a; Renner & DeSantis, 1999). What is more, the complexities of urban and metropolitan governance demand the application of developed acumen and training that coincide with the institutionalization of professional management (Matkin & Frederickson, 2009). Escalating urbanization in combination with the current economic recession that is occurring in the U.S. has strained local operations and services, requiring managerial expertise that extends beyond political representation. Therefore, an understanding of salient characteristics and features that foster the proliferation of professionalism in local government will be beneficial to the management and functionality of modern urban society.

In addition, professional associations, such as ICMA, that specialize in the improvement and progression of professional local government management would likely have interest in the contributing elements that may affect the prominence of their organization, affiliate organizations, and recognition and/or credentialing in U.S. states. Local government associations and practitioners may find purpose in identifying and

promoting certain state/municipal attributes that encourage professional development and management. Researchers and scholars may likewise utilize this information to expand the study of local government management and the reasons for disparate distributions of professionalism among jurisdictions, states, and regions.

Research that explores the factors influencing professional local government management could benefit local communities, neighborhoods, and citizens. Professional managers/administrators perform many roles and tasks that are advantageous to the local citizenry, such as promoting community involvement, negotiating economic development and expansion, facilitating the responsiveness/innovation of government, and building social capital (Nelson & Svava, 2012). Professional managers also apply a set of values to their decisions and actions, incorporating social fairness, justice, and representation into the administration of city services and functions (Nalbandian, 1999; 2006). Other core values of professional management include an adherence to efficiency and effectiveness in city operation, which are critical in times of financial and societal instability. Professional local government managers operate under a definitive standard of ethical behavior, solidified in the ICMA *Code of Ethics*, which attempts to mitigate deviant and/or corrupt behavior among those of the profession.

Finally, this study will create a foundation for future research pertaining to the identification of factors contributing to the differences in professional local government management among states and regions. The results of this analysis may provide a framework for examination on an aggregate scale, including comparisons among all 50 U.S. states, to broaden the knowledge of the impact of state/municipal characteristics and regionalism on government operations, configurations, and public administration.

Furthermore, this research approach may be applicable to international contexts that demonstrate similar institutional systems, involving potential comparisons between countries, global regions, and cultures.

Research Approach

In previous research relating to the study of professionalism in local government management, several methodologies have been employed depending upon the purposes and/or intents of the relationships, variables, and contexts being examined. Because the focus of this study encompasses the in-depth understanding of both quantitative and qualitative characteristics that may be associated with the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management, the research approach of this study incorporates the utilization of multi-methods including statistical and comparative. The main theoretical basis for a multi-methods approach is that a comprehensive assessment of the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on local government professionalism in regional U.S. states requires the identification, collection, and comparison of various forms of data to provide complete representation and analysis of the variables of interest. Thus, the justification for this combination of approaches reflects the type of data collected for the purposes of this study and the intent of triangulation by diversifying data sources and analyses.

The findings of previous studies suggest that quantitative statistical methods may be appropriate to assess the impact of a specific variable on the institutionalization of professional local government management. For example, existing research demonstrates that various socioeconomic/demographic and political variables, such as

population, race, age, income, housing values, homeownership, political affiliation, and policy/legislation, may have statistical associations with professional forms of local government. In addition, the legitimacy ascribed to the statistical significance of research findings within the disciplines of public administration and the social sciences authenticates the application and validity of statistical analysis. Several previous research studies have utilized quantitative statistical methods to examine the associations between specific variables and the acceptance, development, and prevalence of professional local government management (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Lyden & Miller, 1976; Schnore & Alford, 1963).

In relation to the research question and purpose of the study, there is also reason for the inclusion of qualitative methods. Through comparative analysis, the categorical and descriptive juxtaposition of criteria/characteristics indicative of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of university-based MPA programs offers supplemental information expressing the impact of municipal proximity to MPA-granting institutions. Comparative analysis also provides an ambient context for the further comprehension and interpretation of statistical data. Similar methods have been used in previous research that qualitatively and comparatively investigates aspects pertaining to the incidence and practice of professional local government management (Ammons, 2008; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Sherbenou, 1961; Svara & Watson, 2010).

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the effect of particular state/municipal characteristics on professional local government management in regional U.S. states.

Explicitly, the research question for this analysis specifies the examination of the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics. Therefore, within this model, the type, form, and character of data and the objectives of the research may substantiate certain limitations of the study.

Principally, the nature of the analysis limits both the scope and generalizability of the study. Because of the exploratory intent of this analysis and the depth of the data of interest, involving a full range of state/municipal characteristics pertaining to professional local government management including cultural trends, regional and local attributes, and institutional compositions, the number of states selected for investigation is limited. The selection of a limited number of states for analysis may likewise affect the generalizability of the study, as the research findings may be restricted by the states and region chosen for assessment. Furthermore, because the data collected are specific to the selected sample states, municipalities, and universities, the generalization of those data to other states, regions, and/or entities may be limited. Inherent differences in regional affiliations, political structures, state statutes, and social culture may contribute to these limitations in transferability and extrapolation. The temporal nature of the data utilized in this study may also limit generalizability, as data are only representative of the variables of interest at the time of data collection.

For clarification, this study is not an analysis of the tenets, technical functions, or purposes of professional local government management. Myriad research studies examine the roles, responsibilities, and values of professional managers as well as the

specific tasks and day-to-day operations of city management and administration. For the purposes of this study, the variables of interest are the nature/occurrence of professional local government management, as operationally defined in the methodology, and the selected state/municipal characteristics that may contribute to its existence. Thus, the reasons for and the strategies and intricacies of the duties, ethical considerations, and relationships of professional local government managers are limited to their relevance regarding the variables of interest.

This study is not an analysis of specific managerial techniques related to professional local government management practices and the impact of those tactics on policy outputs. For example, topics pertaining to the purposes and effects of performance measurement/management, economic development, reinventing government and/or New Public Management, interlocal agreements, public-private partnerships, strategic planning, Total Quality Management, and privatization/service contracting are only included in this study in relation to their potential consequences on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management. The worth, applicability, and outcome of these types of managerial strategies in relation to city administration, political and/or policy impacts, and local government operation are external to the scope of this study.

This study is also not an analysis of the policy implications and/or the efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and responsiveness of particular forms of local government. Other research has attempted to distinguish the effects of administrative/reformed and political forms of government in relation to budgetary formulations, financial expenditures, levels of service delivery, policy implementation, economic development, governance and

democracy, and quality of life indicators. The comparison and/or promotion of different forms of local government management relating to the impact of structure on political, administrative, and fiscal behaviors is limited to relevance to the variables of interest and the research question.

Contextual Setting

The U.S. states represent an assortment of institutional variations formulated from unique and diverse histories, cultures, and geographic influences. Beginning with the first colonial settlements, the states have exhibited contrasting differences in social structures, political orientations, economics, and societal progressions (Palen, 2012). Researchers have examined the U.S. states from numerous perspectives, attempting to identify and categorize the features and components contributing to the range of dissimilarities that span the American landscape. Within the framework of this study, the primary focus pertains to the evident disparities in the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management among the states. This distinction, along with other discrepancies, may be a product of context, signifying the differentiations, effects, and consequences of particular situational and regional characteristics such as geographic location, organizational systems and configurations, and sociopolitical cultures.

Basic comparisons of population patterns, urbanization, economic base, and state governments demonstrate observable situational conditions that may distinguish one state from another. Furthermore, regional similarities create grouping generalizations, providing for classification by geographical and positional location such as the Northeast,

the Southwest, and the Midwest. Such geographical divisions represent a common categorization of the U.S. states. As Elazar (1994) suggests, the “geo-historical location” of certain areas influences the formational development of systems and institutions, encompassing both the historical patterns of settlement and establishment as well as the environmental and topographical character of the land (p. 35). Elazar (1994) defines these regional separations in terms of political, social, and economic characteristics that have been shaped by geographic setting, creating exclusive structures of “sectionalism” that signify the nature and personality of specific locales (p. 137).

Applying this classification, Elazar (1994) enumerates three main geo-historical spheres, “the great Northwest, the greater South, and the greater West” (p. 138), which are further separated into eight sections indicative of regional association, including New England, the Middle Atlantic, the Near West, the Upper South, the Lower South, the Western South, the Northwest, and the Far West (pp. 180-192). Elazar’s (1994) sections designate regional distinctions, involving both geographical and cultural elements, which represent common social and environmental features that extend across state lines. These categorizations are similar to those used by the U.S. Census Bureau, which divide the states into regional divisions and subdivisions. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012a) classifications include the West with mountain and Pacific states; the Midwest with west north central and east north central states; the South with west south central, east south central, and south Atlantic states; and the Northeast with middle Atlantic and New England states. Thus, the organization of geographical regions incorporates several components, being representative of proximity, associational connection, topography, and cultural similarity.

Additionally, Elazar's (1972; 1994) analysis details the political subcultures that exist within the regional sections, reflecting the background and history of the traditions, beliefs, customs, and values of particular areas. These political subcultures define the relationships, structures, and motives of the regional populace in relation to political systems and ideals: the individualistic culture embraces a business and professional approach to political and governmental operation, the moralistic culture views government in terms of commonwealth and participation, and the traditionalistic culture exemplifies community-based ties and social order (Elazar, 1994, pp. 229-237).

Although Elazar's (1972; 1994) political subculture classifications disperse widely among the U.S. states, certain patterns may provide for regional characterizations. For instance, using Elazar's (1994) geo-historical spheres, the great Northwest and the greater West display strong moralistic and individualistic subcultures while the greater South appears more traditionalistic (pp. 242-243). Despite the lack of exclusivity within these classifications, it is evident that political culture offers another level of differentiation among the U.S. states, or, as Ellis (1993) asserts, "Elazar's categories are a welcome relief for those unwilling to accept that every state or region is culturally unique or alike" (p. 169).

The acceptance of regionalism and culture as contextual distinctions that may contribute to the differences in the nature of state systems, institutions, and paradigms is central to the purpose and research inquiry of this study. Regionalism and culture may impact political perceptions, legislation, governmental/organizational structures, and local policy priorities, thus creating a distinct environment for institutionalization (Berman, 2003; Elazar, 1994). Therefore, state/municipal characteristics and attributes

representative of regional and cultural settings may affect the institution of professional local government management.

One aspect that is demonstrative of the disparate institutionalization of professional local government management among U.S. states is the differences in professional association jurisdictional recognition. According to ICMA (2012a), the premier professional local government practitioner association, the designation of an officially recognized jurisdiction indicates the existence of professional structures and standards. The ICMA professional jurisdictional recognition process is as follows:

The ICMA recognition process identifies those local governments which by ordinance, charter or other legal document have established positions of professional authority. Recognition means the community is identified as one that provides a legal framework conducive to the practice of professional management. ICMA recognition falls into two categories— council-manager and general management. The criteria related to the council-manager government category are less flexible than those for the general management category. The reasons for this derive from the historical significance and the nature of the council-manager form. (ICMA, 2012b, para. 1)

Recognition includes city, county, organization, and special district jurisdictions (ICMA, 2012a). Individual jurisdictions must apply for recognition and provide the supporting documentation (ICMA, 2012a). The recognition is based on the criteria of the local government management category; thus, the jurisdiction will maintain its recognition as long as those criteria continue to be upheld, regardless of a change in personnel (ICMA, 2012a). In addition to the number of recognized jurisdictions, the proportions of form of government categorizations (council-manager or general

management) are likewise indicative of the stature of professional management within a state given the demarcation in the stringency of categorization criteria.

The CAOs of jurisdictions may also apply for membership to ICMA, as well as other municipal staff that meet the criteria for acceptance. Moreover, most states possess ICMA-affiliated state professional associations with similar standards for admission. The state associations adhere to the promulgations of ICMA and provide an accompanying localized level of professional development and support. In this way, the prevalence of ICMA and state association membership among practitioners may provide another indication of local government professionalism within a state. The standards for full ICMA membership are as follows:

Full (voting) membership is for chief administrative officers (CAOs) whose scope of responsibility meets these six criteria: appointment, policy formulation, budget, appointing authority, organizational relationships, and qualifications; assistant/deputy chief administrative officers; and other senior-level staff in local government who have significant administrative duties and report to a CAO whose position meets the six criteria for joining. (ICMA, 2012d, para. 3)

Membership in ICMA and affiliated state associations provides local government managers and staff access to educational conferences and materials, practitioner support networks, and professional improvement activities. In particular, ICMA offers a voluntary credentialing program that promotes the professional development of individual local government managers/members. Involvement in the credentialing program, which requires the attainment of specified educational and experiential standards, completion of the applied knowledge assessment, and approval by the

credentialing board, officially recognizes the professional expertise of local government practitioners and exemplifies a commitment by the association and the member to continued education and advancement in the field of local government management (ICMA, 2012e). As such, the ICMA credentialed status of local government managers/members may likewise indicate the level of recognized professionalism within states. The eligibility requirements for application to the credentialing program are as follows:

To be eligible to receive the credential, an individual must be a Full Member of ICMA, adhering to the ICMA *Code of Ethics* and its rules of enforcement as a requirement of membership. A member must also be in service to local government or have clearly demonstrated a commitment and connection to the profession within the last five years. (ICMA, 2012e, para. 3)

According to ICMA (2012b), 49 states and the District of Columbia have at least one recognized jurisdiction, the only state excluded being Hawaii. Disparities among the states in this regard are evident, yet to some extent justifiable. For example, large land-area and high population and urbanization states such as Texas (322), Pennsylvania (345), California (485), Michigan (258), and Florida (274) display high numbers of recognized jurisdictions, which would be expected given the higher number of eligible jurisdictions. Conversely, states with lower populations and rural orientations such as Wyoming (17), Rhode Island (18), North Dakota (3), South Dakota (7), Idaho (9), and Delaware (11) possess substantially lower numbers of recognitions (ICMA, 2012b).

However, regional comparisons reveal further differences. For example, Arkansas (14), Louisiana (6), Mississippi (13), Alabama (24), Tennessee (81), North

Carolina (271), Kentucky (41), and Georgia (128) represent states of relatively similar proximity, topography, and cultural characteristics yet exhibit noticeable disparities in the number of recognized jurisdictions. The same pattern is evident in other regions, such as among California (484), Oregon (102), Idaho (9), Nevada (16), Utah (31), and Arizona (77) in the western region and among Maine (167), New Hampshire (43), Massachusetts (110), New York (76), New Jersey (145), and Connecticut (34) in the northeast region (ICMA, 2012b).

What is more, discrepancies exist among the proportions of recognized council-manager jurisdictions, ICMA membership for CAOs, and the number of credentialed managers. For instance, Vermont (94%), Tennessee (75%), Alaska (74%), and New Mexico (66%) exhibit relatively high proportions of council-manager recognitions; however, the proportions of the ICMA membership of CAOs for the same states, Vermont (40%), Tennessee (43%), Alaska (34%), and New Mexico (34%), and number of credentialed managers, Vermont (3), Tennessee (14), Alaska (3), and New Mexico (11), are relatively low. Conversely, other states possess lower proportions of council-manager recognitions, such as Nebraska (23%), Alabama (29%), and Utah (32%), yet have comparable and/or higher proportions of CAO membership, Nebraska (51%), Alabama (42%), and Utah (52%), and number of credentialed managers, Nebraska (16), Alabama (5), and Utah (11), as compared with other states (ICMA, 2012b; 2012f).

Thus, the regional culture and/or geo-historical sectionalism of U.S. states may influence the character and arrangement of political traditions, beliefs, expectations, and paradigms, which affect institutionalization. Moreover, professionalism in local government may be indicated through several jurisdictional and managerial distinctions,

such as form of government, professional association recognition, and associational membership and credentialing. Identifiable differences in these criteria are perceptible at both state and regional levels. As such, the acceptance and legitimacy of U.S. state and regional dissimilarities in political culture, related governmental processes, and in the recognition of indicators of professional local government management provide a contextual setting and foundation for the focus, purpose, and research question of this study.

Chapter II

PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT:

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states. Therefore, an examination of previous research regarding the status, development, acceptance, and prevalence of local government professionalism is relevant to this analysis. A comprehensive review of the extant literature elucidates the current body of knowledge within the field and provides a theoretical basis and framework for this study.

Previous research on professionalism in local government management that relates to the purpose and focus of this analysis may be categorized into three main streams. First, to assess the nature/occurrence of professional local government management, there must be a clear understanding of the properties and indicators of local government professionalism; the initial objective of this review is to establish the defining features that provide a recognizable classification of professional status/structure in local government management. Second, to answer the research question, there is reason to affirm that the incidence and practice of professional local government management may be affected by various ambient factors; the next objective of this review is to demonstrate the circumstances and qualities of these potential associations. Third, several previous studies address specific relationships between regional, cultural, historical, political, economic, demographical, social, and compositional characteristics and the institutionalization of professional local government management in individual

contexts. The final objective of this review is to interpret the findings and implications of these studies and to construct a research foundation for this analysis.

Professionalism in Local Government

The conception of professional management in U.S. local government originated from the structural changes and managerial philosophies that gained widespread acceptance during the municipal reform era beginning in the late 1800s (Stillman, 1974). In the early part of the 20th Century, the confluence of public administration and scientific management coupled with the edifications of the New York Municipal Research Bureau solidified a pragmatic basis for the introduction of administrative professionals within the context of city management (McDonald, 2010; Stillman, 1974; Stivers, 2000). The general manager experiment in Staunton, Virginia in 1908 created a precedent and model for the infusion of administrative expertise into the operation of city government (Crosby, 1911; Sommers, 1958).

The advent of the city manager position meant that the administrative duties of the city would be the responsibility of a nonpolitical CAO appointed by the city council (Nalbandian, 1991; Stillman, 1974). In 1915, the endorsement of the council-manager form of government by the National Municipal League (1944) represented a movement in urban transformation that was intended to counter the political machines and bosses that contributed to corruption and inefficient practices at the local level and to address the increasing urban management issues of the industrialized city (Stillman, 1974; Svara, 2001). Although there may still be debate pertaining to the *professional* title of local government managers (McDonald, 2010; Stillman, 1977), the propositions of existing

literature along with the propagations of practitioner associations support the notion that professionalism in local government management has since attained a level of conceptual and practical legitimacy (Kline & Blanchard, 1973).

Historically, the council-manager plan has been endorsed as the archetypical structure for professional local government management. As Morris (1973), Ridley and Nolting (1934), and White (1927) suggest, the complexity and urbanization trends of the modern industrial city produced a necessity for administrative expertise, integrity, and functionality, which provided an impetus for the establishment of the council-manager form of government. Additionally, the nominal embodiment of the politics-administration dichotomy contributed to the appeal of the plan, as the council-manager distinction appeared to exemplify this separation (Montjoy & Watson, 1995). Because of the procedural authorities and duties delineated within the designation, the council-manager structure maintains a professional connotation that inherently distinguishes it from alternative forms of government (James, 1914; Sommers, 1958). In other words, the acknowledgement of a city manager and the delegation of specific roles and responsibilities to a CAO create a symbolic and systemic character of professionalism that is not portrayed in other structural forms or positions of city management (Price, 1941).

As a product of the reform movement, the emphases on administrative expertise and managerial competency encompassed within the council-manager model imply a presumed attainment of professional management. Evidence of this assertion may be gleaned from the promulgations of the *Model City Charter*, which, since its initial endorsement of the council-manager form, has maintained both implicit and explicit

indications that the council-manager plan denotes an intrinsic realization of professionalism in local government (Nalbandian, 1991; Svara, 2001). What is more, the reflections of those individuals within the profession corroborate the importance of form of government. Research demonstrates that, not only is the structural designation of the local government still indicative of the professional nature of the jurisdiction, most managers view the retention/adoption of the council-manager plan as an endorsement of professional practice (Ammons, 2008; Harlow, 1981; Nelson & Svara, 2012; Renner, 2001; Svara, 1999a). Fundamentally, due both to its historical significance and to its definitive criteria for managerial roles and responsibilities, the council-manager form of government continues to be perceived as a professional model that signifies a notable differentiation in the processes and qualities ascribed to that particular structure. For example, ICMA (2012a) includes recognition for both council-manager and general management structures; however, the council-manager plan is still distinguished as the “preferred form of governmental organization” (para. 8).

The professional connotations of the council-manager plan further support the importance of form of government. Interpretations and examinations of the training, duties, and professional traits of CAOs substantiate the form of government distinction, suggesting that local government managers that attain the title of “city manager” possess a pronounced association with professional conduct (Ammons, 2008, p. 33; Stone, Price, & Stone, 1940). In this regard, particularized features such as qualifications and experience, roles and responsibilities, ethical standards, and administrative competencies demonstrate the normative criteria of professionalism assigned to the city manager position and, in turn, the council-manager form of government (Donaldson, 1973;

Fletcher, 1971; James, 1915; Stillman, 1977). Hence, the professional merits attributed to the city manager status reflect the inherent professional disposition of the city manager plan, indicating that both designations symbolize a professional characterization.

Accordingly, the addition of CAOs to other forms of government implies a movement toward professional management (Frederickson et al., 2004a; Renner & DeSantis, 1999).

While form of government is important, professionalism in local government management has been identified through other manifestations. Prior research in the field, such as White's (1927) criteria for a professional city manager position, acknowledges the institution and practice of local government professionalism by way of individual competencies and achievements. By these standards, education and training represent core facets of professional development and character (Childs, 1965; Kline & Blanchard, 1973; Nalbandian, 2005; Newell, 2004; Ridley & Nolting, 1934; Slack, 1990; Stene, 1966). Because technical expertise and administrative capacity are considered strengths of the council-manager plan, a focus on education remains as a prominent priority of local government managers and affiliated professional associations such as ICMA (Green, 1989; Hansell, 2002; Renner, 2001; Stillman, 1974). This includes both formal means of university education such as bachelor and graduate degrees, most notably the MPA, as well as experiential and shared knowledge through professional development and certification. Thus, the educational/technical attainments and experience-related aptitudes of CAOs may likewise contribute to the professional nature of managers and local governments.

A component of the education of local government professionals involves recognition through certification/credentialing processes. Credentialing provides a

professional distinction for managers capable of demonstrating skills and knowledge that pertain to the professional priorities and practices in the local government management field. The emphasis on individual professional advancement signifies a belief in the importance of managerial proficiency, as the complexity of the modern urban environment requires a combination of technical training and experiential learning (Fletcher, 1971; Streib, 2005). Professional associations advocate credentialing as an indication of professionalism that extends beyond the jurisdictional recognition of form of government (Ammons, 1994; Hansell, 2002). Beginning in 2002, ICMA (2012e) provides a voluntary credentialing program that assesses and awards the expertise and experience of participants as part of an individual commitment to career-long professional development.

As Kline and Blanchard (1973) and White (1927) assert, the status of *professional* connotes the existence of and adherence to regulatory standards and/or norms that provide some discernible guidelines of professional conduct and integrity. A central aspect of professional character involves the ethical observances and actions of members of the profession. As the historical formation of the council-manager plan embodied the purposefulness of ethical behavior, the continued existence of a tangible and enforceable ethical standard in the practice of local government management helps to maintain a level of professional legitimacy. The ethical commitments of CAOs play an influential role in professional management, as the discretionary features of public administration in conjunction with contentious local political environments may produce volatile situations that require an adherence to ethical principles (Cooper & Gulick, 1984; Menzel, 1995; Traaen, 1991). The ICMA *Code of Ethics*, originally developed in 1924, itemizes the

ethical expectations of professionalism in local government management and creates decipherable criteria for professional performance and attitude within the association (ICMA, 2012d; Streib & Rivera, 2009).

Professional practitioner associations, such as ICMA, add to the support and development of professional local government management. Due to their commitments to education and training, the dissemination of knowledge, the recognition of structural and individual professional attributes, and ethical conduct, professional local government associations play a role, both formally and informally, in the sustainment of professional practices and standards (Stillman, 1974; Stone et al., 1940). As Kline and Blanchard (1973) and Ridley and Nolting (1934) contend, distinctions of professional associations, including recognition of form of government and memberships, indicate an adherence to professionalism, implying that associational affiliations symbolize a tacit acknowledgement and fulfillment of the criteria and promulgations represented by the organization. In other words, professional associations contribute to professionalism in the field through the creation, promotion, and sponsorship of professional recognition and development that both explicitly and implicitly guide the practices of professional local government managers and the processes of professional local government management (Ammons, 1994; Bosworth, 1958; Green, 1989).

Thus, the defining features of professional local government management may be represented through several indicators. Form of government, particularly the council-manager plan, impacts the structural operations, roles, and responsibilities of local government management, all of which carry emblematic characterizations of the professional nature of the jurisdiction. The historical and contemporary reverence for the

council-manager model likewise demonstrates the importance of form of government and of the inclusion of CAOs in relation to professional disposition. The competencies and qualities of individual managers further distinguish the professional stature of local governments. In this way, training and experience, identified through certification and credentialing attainments, convey an added distinction of professionalism. Professional practitioner associations also play an integral role in local government professionalism. Through the provision and acknowledgment of ethical standards, criteria for admission, and training/development, membership in professional associations implies a commitment and adherence to the organization's ideals of professional local government management.

Factors Affecting Professionalism

Professionalism in local government management may be classified by the traits of both jurisdictions and managers, such as form of government, CAO positions, certifications/credentialing, and associational memberships. These features represent indicators of the professional management and orientation of the local government. However, the conclusions of previous research suggest that the application and institutionalization of professional local government management may be products of and/or influenced by ambient social, political, economic, and cultural characteristics that affect the propensity for professionalism. As such, the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management may be contingent on various organizational, jurisdictional, structural, regional, and even global factors.

According to the literature, culture and context create a distinct atmosphere that contributes to local values, beliefs, and structures (Ellis, 1993), in turn representing formative determinants in relation to the institutions of politics and governance. As Elazar (1994) posits, local political cultures stem from regional variances in history, customs/traditions, ethnicities, and geographical locations, and these subcultures, reflected in state and regional organizations and policies, influence local practices, actions, and decisions. For example, state statutes affect local jurisdictions, as illustrated by the impact of Dillon's Rule on the political power stratification within state boundaries (Ostrom, Bish, & Ostrom, 1988). However, due to reform movements, the expansion of home-rule statutes has provided local entities some latitude in choice and control of local government structures (Berman, 2003; Mead, 1997; Story, 1926). Thus, state statutes construct limitations and prescriptions for local government management (Koenig & Kise, 1996; Nelson, 2011). Yet, jurisdictional command over structure is important, as this designation produces a framework for the procedures, roles, and relationships of local governance (Morgan, 1997; Svava & Watson, 2010).

The structural and procedural configurations of cities have become salient topics over the last decade, as adaptations in administrative and political forms of local government have created a Type III city that displays features of each (Frederickson et al., 2004a; 2004b). In essence, through compositional changes such as the election processes of mayors and councils, the size of councils, and the introduction of a CAO position, mayor-council cities have become more administrative while council-manager cities have become more political (Carr & Karuppusamy, 2008; Frederickson & Johnson, 2001). Frederickson et al. (2004a) postulate that certain jurisdictional characteristics,

including socioeconomic demographics and city size/age, along with recommendations of the *Model City Charter* instigate and influence transformations in city structure (Frederickson, Wood, & Logan, 2001). Nevertheless, despite these trends, the council-manager form, even with adaptations, retains a more pronounced professional connotation (Frederickson & Johnson, 2001).

Structural adjustments to the council-manager form of government may have varying effects on the institutionalization of professionalism. Invariably, the issue of political representation has long been a concern for council-manager cities (Lockard, 1962). Resistance to professional management may emanate from public apprehensions concerning the centralization of authority, administrative discretion, and equitable responsiveness to community interests (Box, 1993). However, adaptive structures, particularly in relation to the election process and role of the mayor, may add an element of political representation to council-manager/administrative forms of government (Wikstrom, 1979). As Booth (1968) and Svara (2003) contend, the direct election of mayors and an expansion of mayoral responsibility may provide components of representative legitimacy and may strengthen the acceptance of council-manager government and professional management.

The size of cities has also been associated with the potential for professional local government management. Childs (1965), in his review of the first 50 years of the council-manager plan, avers that council-manager government initially began in several large cities, including Dayton and Cincinnati, and that the subsequent expansion of the council-manager concept included cities of all sizes. In addition, prospective speculations insinuate that the metropolitan characteristics and growing size and

complexity of modern cities demonstrate a need for professional management (Henry, 1971; Matkin & Frederickson, 2009; Slack, 1990). However, given the predominance of the mayor-council form of government in cities of populations over 250,000 (ICMA, 2011), the political disposition and culture of large cities appear to remain as obstacles to council-manager success and the reception of professionalism in local structures (DeSantis, Glass, & Newell, 1992; Watson & Hassett, 2004).

As Banfield and Wilson (1963), Nalbandian (1989), and Peterson (1981) acknowledge, city politics produce a unique temperament that embodies the compositional diversity of the urban area, including the officials that represent the local government. The structural arrangement of council-manager government presupposes a level of necessary interaction between political and administrative representatives. Expressly, the working relationship between the city manager and the city council signifies a compulsory aspect of procedural and organizational functionality (Svara, 1985; 2002). In this way, the political environment and the personal ideologies of elected officials and managers may present sources of conflict within the city government and, in turn, may limit the extent and character of professional management.

However, the potential for professionalism in local government may not necessarily be limited to local/internal factors. As creatures of the state, local governments remain subject to the laws and authority of state legislatures that typically exert influence over local entities through constitutional directives, policies, mandates, and charters (Kemp, 2003). Although the home rule distinction allows for some discretionary control at the local level, state legislation may dictate the extent of professional management permitted in the structural and statutory choices of

municipalities (Nelson, 2011). Other external political, economic, and institutional forces may also affect the likelihood of local government professionalism, as fluctuations in state, national, and international politics; changes in the local, domestic, and global economies; and progressions in the standards of international professional associations such as ICMA impact the contexts in which professional practice may occur (Wirt, 1985). In effect, the expansion of the global society has created a worldwide interconnectedness that extends to all levels of government and permeates the options and choices of national, state, and local officials (Clarke & Gaile, 1997).

Thus, the practice, acceptance, and nature of professional local government management may be influenced by multiple factors. Organizational and structural features, including the prevalence of adaptive attributes, may affect the roles of professional managers and the existence and approval of professional management in localities. Furthermore, the composition and culture of cities, indicated by traits such as socioeconomic/demographic diversity, size, and complexity, create an exclusive situational context that may or may not be conducive to the reception of professional forms of government. As a result, politics and the related effects of political representation and ideology likewise direct the extent of professional practices, as concerns regarding administrative discretion, authority, and legitimacy may ignite sources of conflict among managers, citizens, and elected officials. Finally, external forces, encompassing the political, economic, and institutional aspects of state, national, and global interests, may additionally manipulate the potential for professional management at the local level.

Professionalism: Contexts, Relationships, and Characteristics

A review of previous research revealed the indications and classifications of professional local government management and the various factors that may influence the institutionalization of professionalism. Further studies have examined the relationships between the features of local government professionalism and specific contextual conditions/characteristics that may impact its prevalence, development, functionality, and acceptance. The findings described in the subsequent literature display these potential associations and supply a research foundation for this analysis.

As Mathewson (1959) and Sayre (1954) note, the public desire for political representation in large cities has historically impeded the reception of council-manager government and the associated roles of professional managers, suggesting that structural adaptations may improve the potential for the advancement of professional management in cities of larger populations and political dispositions. Understandably, the geographic span and population size of a city create particular circumstances, pertaining to demographic and socioeconomic diversity, administrative complexity, and political heterogeneity (Banfield & Wilson, 1963; Boynton & Wright, 1971). Case studies of Kansas City, Missouri confirm that the cultural and social characteristics of a locale can affect the operation of council-manager government but also demonstrate that professional structures may be viable in large political cities (Gabis, 1964; Matscheck, 1938; Skidmore, 2001). A collection of jurisdictional case studies in Svava and Watson (2010) identify socioeconomic/demographic composition, electoral processes, and political history as significant factors in the selection and success of professional governmental structures in large and politically oriented cities. In this way, large cities

present unique situations for council-manager/professional forms of government that may require structural and procedural adaptations for survival (Boynton & Wright, 1971; Skidmore, 2001; Vieg, 1939).

In relation to the acceptance and performance of professional management, the trend in structural adaptations appears to signify support for a balance of professional administration and modes for political representation. Although city size remains as an ostensible deterrent, adjustments to the council-manager plan, such as the direct election of mayors, may reduce the potential for abandonments (Protasel, 1988). Newell, Glass, and Ammons (1989) observe that larger council-manager cities display a shift to political representativeness, with district elections for council members, larger council sizes, and direct elections for mayors. However, overall, most cities seem to be moving toward council-manager and/or reformed structures, particularly in relation to the increase in the appointment/employment of CAOs that introduce an element of administrative professionalism into political forms of government (Frederickson et al., 2004a; Renner & DeSantis, 1999).

Schnore and Alford (1963), in their analysis of American suburbs, find that the socioeconomic composition of cities may influence the choice and incidence of certain types of government. Within the sample of suburban entities, council-manager government is the most common form in cities of populations over 25,000 and of southern and western regions of the United States. In addition, those suburbs possessing the council-manager form of government report the highest percentages of white-collar occupations, high school completion, median family income, population growth, and owner-occupied homes. These findings appear consistent with Sherbenou's (1961)

connection between suburban median housing value and council-manager structures and the conclusions of Wolfinger and Field (1966), which suggest that city manager government in the United States is associated with city size (under 250,000), at-large elections, percentage of white-collar residents, median family income, and median years of school. Wolfinger and Field (1966) also acknowledge the impact of regional affiliation on structure of local government in their sample of cities from the Northeast, Midwest, West, and South.

Additional research supports associations between regional demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and the governmental procedures and configurations of cities. Dye and Macmanus (1976) purport that certain population variables, when assessed within regions, are the most significant predictors of form of government and types of elections. Although no specific combination of independent variables could be deciphered, the attributes of interest include size of city, growth rate, median family income, percent nonwhite, education level, white-collar employment, homeownership, and age of city. Correspondingly, an analysis of urban governmental configurations in home-rule cities in the state of Colorado displays that population size, age of city, and education level are significantly associated with local preferences for electoral structures when controlling for state law and variation (Hero, 1986).

Similar studies examine the occurrence/prevalence of urban governmental structures in relation to reform institutions. Lineberry and Fowler (1967) present data on reformed and unreformed cities (administrative and political) confirming that reformed structures are more likely to be in municipalities of smaller populations with higher levels of educational attainment, owner-occupied homes, white-collar status, and homogeneity,

which are also associated with nonpartisan and at-large electoral structures. However, the authors contest the notion of controlling for regional affiliation, arguing instead that the attitudinal/socioeconomic variables of populations are representative of distinctions in demographics and culture. Berman and Merrill (1976), in an assessment of reformism attitudes of citizens in Phoenix, Arizona, affirm that political affiliation, race, age, and education significantly relate to support for reform institutions, which is also corroborated by Svava (1977), with a majority of Republicans, whites, older citizens, and college graduates favoring at-large elections. Simmons and Simmons (2004) assert that a higher proportion of minority population is significantly associated with the mayor-council structure and higher levels of education are related to the council-manager form; however, cities with growing Hispanic populations show a movement toward reformed government.

In their renowned study of city managers in the state of Florida, Kammerer, Farris, DeGrove, and Clubok (1962) find that structural characteristics affect the tenure of managers, which may relate to the professional receptivity of the municipality. In the analysis, significant correlations exist between manager tenure and the direct election of the mayor (negative), the manager's role in policy initiation (positive), the professional status of the manager (negative), and the city's experience with the manager plan (positive). Kammerer et al. (1962) conclude that popular election of the mayor and the socioeconomic/demographic composition of the community influence structural operations and, in turn, the length of manager tenure, and that the professional title of city managers may make them more vulnerable to political conflict and/or termination. The findings of related studies likewise indicate significant associations between manager

tenure and the population size of the city, perceptions of political stability and discretionary latitude, educational background and training, and form of government (Crewson & Fisher, 1997; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Watson & Hassett, 2003).

The organizational and political environment may likewise limit the ability and desire of local government managers to maintain the position, including occupational issues such as job satisfaction and/or frustration (Watson & Hassett, 2004; Zhang, Yao, & Cheong, 2010). Employment agreements, relating to salary and other personal incentives, have been found to be significant in relation to manager satisfaction (Feiock & Stream, 1998; Henry, 1971; Lyden & Miller, 1976). Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) and Zhang et al. (2010) aver that the political procedures of the local government, including the policy role of the city manager and the council/mayoral election processes, may affect the tenure of professional local government managers as well. Thus, as traditional interpretations contend that longer manager tenure is often associated with experience, education, and expertise (Feiock & Stream, 1998; Stene, 1966), the attributes of the political environment and resultant structural factors may impact the extent of professional management in local governments.

Furthermore, the inherent division of authority implied in the politics-administration separation may play a part in the acceptance and scope of professional practice and discretion exerted by city managers/administrators (Box, 1992). Abney and Lauth (1982) propose that the form of government may dictate the degree of council intervention in administrative affairs, as those structures that demonstrate more administrative attributes, such as the council-manager form, may experience less political infringement in administration. Although the boundary of authority in particular

municipal operations may shift depending upon circumstances (Svara, 1999b), the perceptions among managers and councils suggest that the professional expertise and/or status of the CAO may limit and/or threaten the role of the council (Saltzstein, 1974). Consequently, this may generate a potential source of conflict, involving issues of power, personality, and politics (Carrell, 1962). In effect, the extent of authority exercised by the city council may impinge on the professional discretion afforded to the city manager, thus creating a possible disconnect between expected and/or directed administrative roles and the normative pursuits of professional administrators (Box, 1992; Svara, 2002).

The influence of politics on professional local government management may additionally entail contrasts in ideology, culture, and the interpretation of managerial roles. The political beliefs and values of city managers may stem from several sources, including educational and experiential backgrounds, professional standards, and moral obligations (Almy, 1975; Edwards & Galloway, 1981), and may guide the decisions and actions of managers in relation to their construal of public duties and responsibilities (Wirth & Vasu, 1987). The political culture of the region, state, and/or city may shape the professional role expectations of managers, officials, and citizens (Elazar, 1972). As Frederickson et al. (2004a) observe, council-manager cities tend to exhibit the characteristics of individualistic and moralistic political subcultures, which may translate to associated institutions and practices. In this way, community politics, diversity, interests, and needs may formulate the professional roles of local government managers, incorporating aspects of democratic governance and political culture into the realm of professional administration (Nalbandian, 1989; 1999).

The institutionalization of professionalism in local government management has been evaluated, to some extent, through contextual comparisons of particular entities. In a comparative study of western countries, Mouritzen and Svava (2002) posit that form of local government is the most visible indication of the leadership/professional character of local officials and jurisdictions. The researchers identify multiple contributors to the incidence of professional local management, including culture, political environment and stability, structural relationships, socioeconomic/demographic characteristics, normative institutions, and the commitment to democratic governance (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002). Sigelman (1976), in a comparative examination of the quality of administration in U.S. state governments, finds that socioeconomic and demographic indicators, such as education, median income, and diversity of the population, are related to administrative quality while the character of the state's political culture was not significant. Nelson (2011), in a comparison of cities with populations greater than 10,000 in U.S. states, concludes that state legislative requirements, regional affiliation, per capita income, population density, and population growth may be associated with the potential for local professional structures.

Thus, research pertaining to the contexts, relationships, and characteristics of professional local government management demonstrates that several specific variables have been associated with the nature and/or occurrence of professionalism. The composition and classification of the city, relating to size, suburban/metropolitan, socioeconomic status, and demographic diversity, may induce the preference and selection of form of government. In addition, aspects of the political environment of the city, including election processes, council size, representation, state legislation, and

culture/history, may likewise be determinants of the structural and professional makeup of local governments. In sum, the findings of these studies indicate that the institutionalization of local government professionalism may be affected by several city, state, and regional variables. Therefore, in relation to the purpose of this study, a legitimate basis exists for further examination of particular state/municipal characteristics and/or factors that impact professional local government management in regional U.S. states.

Theoretical Framework

A review of existing research displays that various indicators may be representative of local government professionalism, that the nature/occurrence of professional management may be contingent on several aspects of the jurisdictional environment, and that substantive associations have been established between cultural, regional, historical, political, socioeconomic/demographical, and compositional characteristics and the institutionalization of professional local government management. According to the literature, form of government remains as a principal indication of local professionalism, as structural arrangement provides an organizational layout for the roles and procedures that meet the criteria for a professional standard. However, adaptations to governmental form, notably the addition of a CAO, may signify the infusion of professional administration into political types of local structures. The professional standing of the jurisdiction and manager may likewise be emblematic of the extent of professionalism exemplified within municipalities. The recognition of the governmental entity as a professionally managed jurisdiction and the membership/credentialed status of

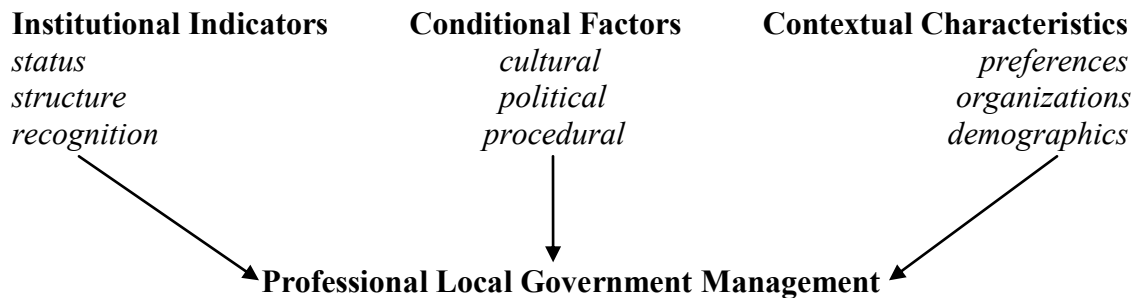
CAOs denote the existence of a professional structure and an individual adherence to professional conduct and practice.

Evidence from the literature also affirms that professional local government management may be subject to conditional factors. The political and social culture of the region and/or state creates a distinct situational environment that influences legal and policy choices and affects the personality and perception of government. While potentially furthering the acceptance of professional/administrative forms of government, procedural adaptations in local structures, including the election processes of the mayor and council, may limit the scope of influence of professional managers and thus diminish the professional character of the jurisdiction. The size/classification of the city and the temperament of the local political atmosphere may hinder the receptiveness to professional management as well, suggesting that city politics/demographics play a role in the structural and institutional incidence of local government professionalism. The exogenous political, economic, and social contexts of jurisdictions may present additional factors that can affect the sentiment and disposition of the locale.

Taken further, the findings of previous research distinguish contexts, relationships, and characteristics in relation to the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management. The structural arrangements of cities determine guidelines for practice and electoral procedures, create administrative and professional positions, and typically represent the political attitudes of the regional/local area. Certain socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural characteristics appear to be congruent with council-manager/reformed governments and potentially conducive to preferences for professional/structural forms and processes. Moreover,

political/organizational components affect the professional stature of the local government, as political orientations/ideologies, roles, authority, and manager satisfaction may be integral elements in the professional makeup of the jurisdiction. Comparative studies of western countries and U.S. states corroborate the contextual nature of these relationships and present a purpose for further analyses. Figure 1 shows these three primary streams of professional local government management literature.

Figure 1. Streams of professional local government management literature



Overall, a review of the literature demarcates the qualities and indications of professionalism in local government management and the associations with multiple internal and external variables/factors. In addition, interstate and regional comparisons exhibit the influence of geographical/cultural context in relation to the institutionalization of professional management in local jurisdictions. Therefore, the theoretical foundations of the extant literature provide a framework for further investigation within this area. Although previous studies have examined and identified factors describing and affecting professionalism, the deficiency of research specific to regional/state effects on professional local government management supplies reason for this study. An understanding of the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on the nature

and/or occurrence of professional local management in regional U.S. states will add to the comprehension of state differences in local government professionalism.

Although form of government remains as a prime indication of professional management at the local level, the literature suggests other aspects may be representative of professionalism as well. Specifically, the existence of CAO positions, professional association jurisdictional recognitions, professional association memberships, and professional development symbolized through credentialing distinctions may likewise be expressive of the nature/occurrence of professional local government management. The inclusion of these indicators in further research may offer an expanded view of local government professionalism for a more comprehensive assessment of disparities in institutionalization among regional U.S. states.

In prior studies, variables indicative of city population size and growth, age of city, socioeconomic/demographic composition, political orientation, and structural adaptations are associated with professional local government management. The affirmed impact of these characteristics on the reception, nature, and prevalence of local government professionalism demonstrates the diversity of influences on professional city management and warrants an investigation of other potential state/municipal factors in further research. Notably, the proximity/access to university-based MPA programs has not been amply examined within this context.

The MPA degree is the most common educational attainment among U.S. local government managers (Grode & Holzer, 1975; Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001), and university-based MPA programs may contribute to the promotion and advancement of professional public administration within their geographic regions

(Gabris et al., 2010). Features of MPA programs such as educational approach (Denhardt, 2001; Wang, Bunch, & Stream, 2013), program design (Koven, Goetzke, & Brennan, 2008), core curriculum (Roeder & Whitaker, 1993), departmental status (Baldwin, 1988), internships (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989), and program outcomes (Poister & Ingraham, 1991) have been found to be instrumental in the quality of public service education and the development of professional administrators. What is more, university-based education has been deemed integral to meeting the modern demands for professional training in the public sector (Mirabella & Wish, 2001), and the MPA has been distinguished as fundamental to the future vitality of the local government management profession (Svara, 2010). Given the emphasis on education in professional administration and management, the specific preparatory and outreach contributions of MPA programs, and the current predominance of the MPA degree among practicing city managers, the effect of the proximity/access to university-based MPA programs on professionalism requires additional study.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this analysis incorporates the assertions of previous literature that distinguish the indicators of professional management and the local/regional factors and contexts associated with the institutionalization of local government professionalism. This study will contribute to the existing theory in this area of research. An assessment of the hypothesis that municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs has an impact on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism will add to the current body of knowledge pertaining to U.S. state differences in professional local government management.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on professional local government management in regional U.S. states, adding to the body of local government and public administration literature pertaining to the understanding of the disparities in professionalism among U.S. states. The research question for this study reflects this purpose: What is the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics? Because the traits of local governments in regional U.S. states are the focus of this study, municipalities represent the units of analysis. The West North Central Midwest region was selected for the sample, including the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, with a total sample of municipalities with populations of 2,500 or more being 774.

To answer the research question, multiple state/municipal characteristics determined to be influential in the nature/occurrence of professional local government management were selected for analysis. Stated in the terms of the operational model: What is the impact of proximity to MPA program on local government professionalism in regional U.S. states while controlling for population, population growth, age of city, city classification, education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, median housing value, percent nonwhite, median age, political orientation, mayoral election, council election, size of council, nature of MPA programs, and state culture? A multi-methods approach was used for this research, including both statistical and comparative

methods. In relation to the conceptual and operational models, the research hypotheses for this study address the potential relationships between the identified independent and control variables and the dependent variable, incorporating the conclusions and associations of the extant literature.

Conceptual Model and Definitions

The research inquiry of this study is to assess the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics, which includes a comparative examination of the nature and contribution to professionalism of university-based MPA programs within the region. The conceptual legitimacy of this relationship is supported by previous research, which suggests that professionalism in local government management may be identified by particular indicators and may be affected by ambient factors and/or characteristics. The conceptual definitions of variables selected for this analysis are based on the theoretical framework of evaluations and assertions found in the literature.

The conceptual definitions of the independent and control variables reflect the findings and results of prior studies. Including White's (1927, p. 282) identification of "recognized means of preparation" as a tenet of professional city management, the educational attainments and training of local government managers have been traditionally associated with professionalism (Gilbert, 1978; Green, 1989; Hansell, 2002; Kline & Blanchard, 1973; Nalbandian, 2005; Newell, 2004; Stene, 1966; Stillman, 1974). Considering that the MPA is the most common graduate degree among practicing U.S.

city managers (ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001), the existence, access, and nature of university-based MPA programs within a state may influence the availability/character of professional management. In addition, university-based MPA programs may offer substantive educational and assistive contributions to the development and enhancement of professional public administration within their geographic regions (Gabris et al., 2010). Therefore, the physical proximity of municipalities to MPA degree-granting universities may impact the institutionalization of professional local government management and thus represents the primary independent variable for this analysis.

The size of a city may be indicative of the level of complexity involved in managing operations, which may influence the propensity for professional governmental structures (Banfield & Wilson, 1963; Boynton & Wright, 1971; Henry, 1971; Slack, 1990). Although the culture of large cities may present obstacles to the reception of professionalism (DeSantis et al., 1992; Peterson, 1981; Watson & Hassett, 2004), the size of a jurisdiction has been found to be a significant factor in the acceptance of professional management in local governments (Gabis, 1964; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Matscheck, 1938; Skidmore, 2001; Wolfinger & Field, 1966). Because population growth may provide a longitudinal perspective of this characteristic, it is also included in the analysis (Nelson, 2011; Schnore & Alford, 1963). The age and classification of the city may likewise be associated with the occurrence of professionalism, as newer cities, such as suburban developments, tend to display higher incidences of council-manager government and reformed structures (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Frederickson et al., 2001; 2004a; Hero, 1986; Kammerer et al., 1962; Sherbenou, 1961). Thus, there is valid reason to include these control variables in the analysis.

The socioeconomic and demographic compositions of jurisdictions comprise the cultural and political disposition of the local environment, which may be influential in the institutionalization of professional local government management. Multiple studies have identified significant associations between the socioeconomic/demographic characteristics of cities and the likelihood of professional management and administrative structures (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Frederickson et al., 2004a; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Schnore & Alford, 1963; Sherbenou, 1961; Simmons & Simmons, 2004; Svava, 1977; Svava & Watson, 2010; Wolfinger & Field, 1966). Specifically, variables indicative of education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, median housing value, percent nonwhite, and median age have been used to represent the socioeconomic and demographic status of jurisdictions and have been found to be significant in relation to the incidence of council-manager government, professional structural attributes, and reform institutions. As such, these control variables are included in the analysis.

The impact of politics on professional local government management has been assessed in various forms, ranging from the political culture of the area/region (Elazar, 1994; Frederickson et al., 2004a) to the influence of national, institutional, and global political forces (Clarke & Gaile, 1997; Wirt, 1985). At state and local levels, assorted legal, cultural, and political sentiments and affiliations may affect the acceptance and success of council-manager governments (DeSantis et al., 1992; Peterson, 1981; Watson & Hassett, 2004), structural arrangements and adaptations (Nelson, 2011; Newell et al., 1989; Renner & DeSantis, 1999), and procedural and organizational operations (Carrell,

1962; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991; Zhang et al., 2010). Thus, the inclusion of control variables in this analysis indicative of these orientations is justified.

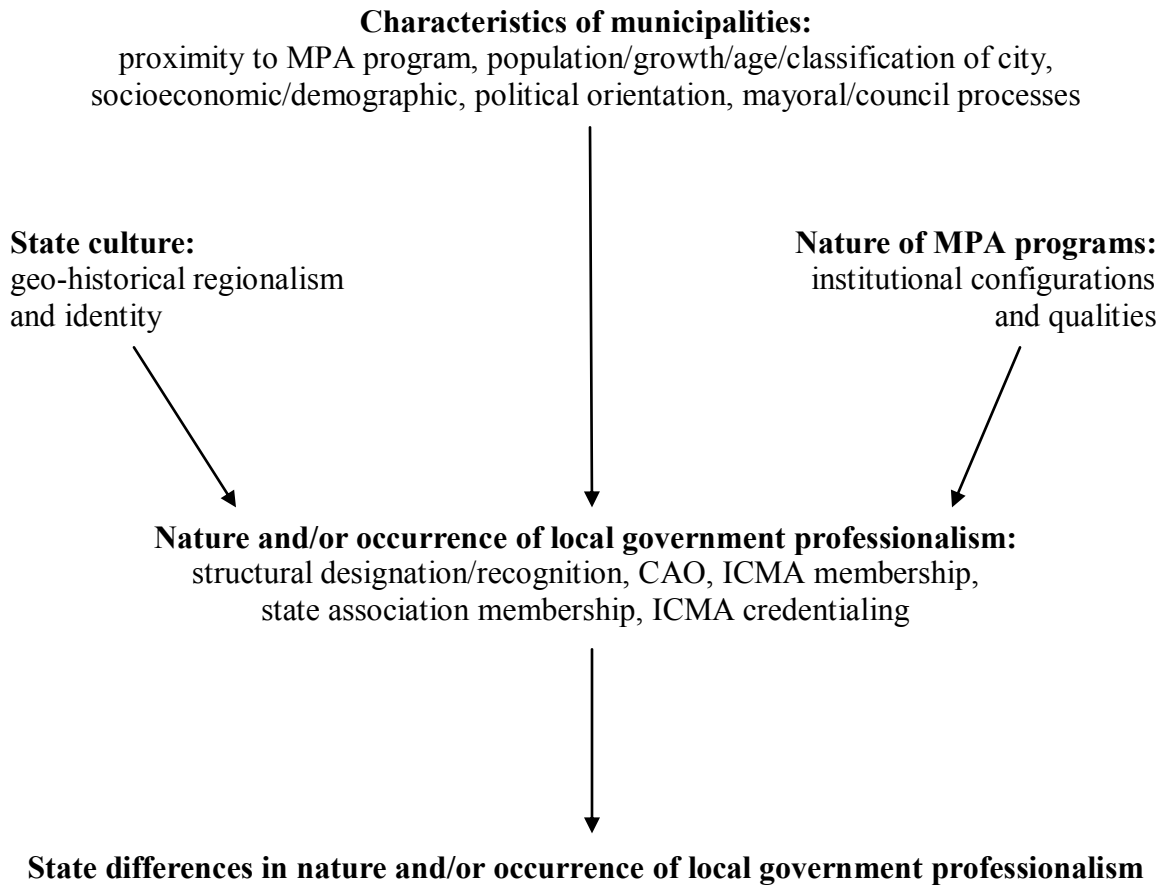
The structural compositions and electoral procedures of local governments have been associated with the actualization of professional local government management. The election processes of mayors and city council members may affect form of government, determine recognition status, and may be related to the reception and practice of professional management (Booth, 1968; ICMA, 2012a; Kammerer et al., 1962; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Mathewson, 1959; Protasel, 1988; Sayre, 1954; Svara, 2003; Wolfinger & Field, 1966). Moreover, the size of the city council may be a determinant in the recognition and operation of professional structures (Abney & Lauth, 1982; Carr & Karuppusamy, 2008; Frederickson & Johnson, 2001; Newell et al., 1989). Given the current trend toward structural adaptation (Frederickson et al., 2004a; 2004b; Renner & DeSantis, 1999), further understanding of these control variables in relation to the nature and/or incidence of professional local government management may provide additional perspectives on these issues.

Professional local government management may likewise be influenced by contextual factors pertaining to historical, cultural, regional, and organizational attributes (Berman, 2003; Elazar, 1994; Ellis, 1993; Kemp, 2003; Koenig & Kise, 1996; Mead, 1997; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Ostrom et al., 1988; Story, 1926; Svara & Watson, 2010). Additionally, prior research has associated specific types of education and training with professional management and administration (Green, 1989; Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Nalbandian, 2005; Newell, 2004; Renner, 2001; Stene, 1966; Svara, 2010). In this way, the nature of university-based MPA programs within regional states,

including institutional configurations and characteristics such as size, curriculum, areas of concentration, and accreditation (Koven et al., 2008), may impact local government professionalism. Hence, the inclusion of control variables representative of state culture and the nature of university-based MPA programs in regional states may identify factors affecting professional local management and provides a differentiation of state-level variances.

The conceptual definition of the dependent variable incorporates the assertions found in the extant literature in relation to the indicators of professionalism in local government management. The form of government provides a basis for structural operations, responsibilities, roles, and duties and determines the recognition of the local government and the status of the CAO (Ammons, 2008; Donaldson, 1973; Fletcher, 1971; ICMA, 2012a; James, 1915; Nalbandian, 1991; Stillman, 1977; Svara, 2001). Given the importance of professional practitioner associations in training and development, the membership and credentialed status of managers likewise represent distinguishable indications of professionalism (Ammons, 1994; Bosworth, 1958; Green, 1989; ICMA, 2012d; 2012e; Kline & Blanchard, 1973; Stillman, 1974; Stone et al., 1940; Streib, 2005). The inclusion of the CAO position has presented an additional indicator of professional management as well, allowing political cities/structures to insert a component of professional administration (Carr & Karuppusamy, 2008; Frederickson & Johnson, 2001; Renner & DeSantis, 1999). Therefore, these indicators of professional local government management, combined to reflect an overall indexical score, serve as the dependent variable indicative of the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual model for this analysis.

Figure 2. Conceptual model



Operational Model and Definitions

The operational model for this study utilizes an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis to test the impact on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism in regional U.S. states of the proximity of municipalities to a university-based MPA program within the state/region while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics. The rationale of this model relates to the theoretical understanding that the institutionalization of professional local government management may be affected by various formative factors. The OLS multiple regression analysis provides a method to isolate the estimated effect on local government professionalism of

municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program while holding constant other control variables (Allison, 1999; Stock & Watson, 2007). Several previous studies have used multiple regression analyses to evaluate statistical associations of local government variables and relationships (Crewson & Fisher, 1997; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Krebs & Pelissero, 2010; Morgan & Pelissero, 1980).

In addition, comparative analysis includes categorical assessment and description of characteristics indicative of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of university-based MPA programs located in the selected regional states, providing a supplemental context for the research question and the interpretation of regression test results. The purpose of utilizing comparative analysis is to classify, describe, and contrast the traits and qualities of university-based MPA programs in the regional states that pertain to educational and assistive contributions to professional local government management and public administration, juxtaposing commonalities and differences in institutional variation and composition (Babbie, 2001; Neuman, 2006; Warwick & Osherson, 1973). Similar comparative methods have been employed in previous related research (Berman, 2003; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Sherbenou, 1961; Svara & Watson, 2010; Traaen, 1991; White, 1927).

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study, the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management, is a *Local government professionalism* indexical score that represents the combined level of professionalism indicators exhibited by a given municipality in 2012. To address issues of exclusivity/correlation, the

dependent variable indicators were weighted through factor analysis. The indicator *Structural designation* is represented by the designated structural configuration of the municipality and the current recognition status of the municipality by ICMA as possessing a governmental structure that is expressive of professional management, being mayor-council not recognized by ICMA (0), mayor-council recognized by ICMA (1), council-manager not recognized by ICMA (2), and council-manager recognized by ICMA (3). This ordinal measure provides for the differences in professionalism characteristics of political and administrative cities, the professional connotation of the council-manager form, and the recognition of professional structural attributes by ICMA.

The indicator *CAO* is represented by the current number of chief and assistant executive/administrative officers on the municipal staff. The indicator *ICMA membership* is represented by the current number of full ICMA members on the municipal staff. The indicator *State association membership* is represented by the current number of members of the ICMA-affiliated state professional local government association on the municipal staff. The indicator *ICMA credentialing* is represented by the current number of credentialed officials distinguished by the ICMA voluntary credentialing program on the municipal staff.

Independent and Control Variables

The independent and control variables for this study represent state/municipal characteristics. For the purposes of this study, the primary independent variable *Proximity to MPA program* is defined as the closest distance in miles from a university-based Master of Public Administration/Affairs degree program within the state for a

given municipality in 2012. The justification for assessing the municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program within the state relates to the objective of the study, which is to examine the factors that may contribute to the differences in professional local government management among U.S. states. However, to address regional impact, the closest distance in miles from a university-based MPA program within the region for a given municipality in 2012 is also included in the analysis.

For the purposes of this study, a university-based MPA program is defined as an institution of higher learning of a physical location that awards graduate degrees in public administration/affairs and meets the criteria of Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) membership. The justification for the limitation of NASPAA-member institutions pertains to the distinction of NASPAA as the principal membership association among MPA graduate degree programs. Full NASPAA membership signifies the establishment of curricula contributing to professional graduate education in public administration/affairs, eligibility for NASPAA accreditation, and an adherence to the purposes/mission of the association (NASPAA, 2012). The reason for the limitation of Master of Public Administration/Affairs degree programs relates to the prevalence and stature of the MPA in the local government management profession (Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001).

For the purposes of this study, the control variable *Population* is defined as the population in number of residents of a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Population growth* is defined as the change in population in number of residents since the year 2000 of a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Age of city* is defined as the age in years since the official incorporation of a given municipality in 2012. The variable

City classification is defined as the U.S. Census Bureau statistical definition of a given municipality in 2012, being designated as rural (1), micropolitan statistical area (2), or metropolitan statistical area (3). The ordinal values of the classification variable are based on the likelihood of professional management, with suburban and independent cities with populations between 10,000 and 250,000 having the highest propensity for administrative forms of government (Frederickson et al., 2004a; ICMA, 2011).

For the purposes of this study, the variable *Education level* is defined as the percentage of the population age 25 years and over that have attained a Bachelor's degree or higher in a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Median family income* is defined as the median family income for a given municipality in 2012 dollars. The variable *Rate of homeownership* is defined as the percentage of owner-occupied housing units in a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Median housing value* is defined as the median value of owner-occupied homes in a given municipality in 2012 dollars. The variable *Percent nonwhite* is defined as the percentage of the population in residents that is identified as a race other than white in a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Median age* is defined as the median age in years of the total population in residents of a given municipality in 2012.

For the purposes of this study, the variable *Political orientation* is defined as the political affiliation, Republican (1) or Democrat (0), of the current congressional district representative of a given municipality in 2012. The variable *Mayoral election* is defined as the current election process of the mayor in a given municipality in 2012, by either council selection (1) or direct election (0). The variable *Council election* is defined as the current election process of the city council in a given municipality in 2012, by either at-

large (1) or by district (0). The variable *Size of council* is defined as the current designated number of city council seats for a given municipality in 2012.

For the purposes of this study, the variable *Nature of MPA programs* is defined as the composite value of selected characteristics of university-based MPA degree programs in a given state in 2012. The ordinal attributes of interest include MPA degree (1), MPA degree with local government concentration (2), MPA degree with accreditation (3), and MPA degree with local government concentration and accreditation (4). These measures reflect the importance of NASPAA accreditation status in MPA education.

For the purposes of this study, the variable *State culture* is defined as the prevalence and balance of political subcultures in a given state that are considered to correspond with professionalism in government, including individualistic, moralistic, and traditionalistic. According to Frederickson et al. (2004a), individualistic and moralistic political subcultures are most associated with the administrative tenets of council-manager government, with the traditionalistic subculture tending to be associated with political forms of government. Thus, states possessing the highest prevalence and balance of individualistic and moralistic political subcultures may have a greater propensity for local government professionalism. The ordinal measures of the state culture variable are based on Elazar's (1994) identifications and distributions of the three political subcultures and the related proclivity for professional local government management: Missouri (1), Minnesota (2), North Dakota (3), South Dakota (4), Kansas (5), Iowa (6), and Nebraska (7). Table 1 displays the variables, data definitions, and data sources of the operational model. Descriptive statistics of the variables of the operational model are shown in Appendix A.

Table 1. Variables of the operational model:

$$y_i = b_0 + b_1x_{1i} + b_2x_{2i} + b_3x_{3i} + b_4x_{4i} + b_5x_{5i} + b_6x_{6i} + b_7x_{7i} + b_8x_{8i} + b_9x_{9i} + b_{10}x_{10i} + b_{11}x_{11i} + b_{12}x_{12i} + b_{13}x_{13i} + b_{14}x_{14i} + b_{15}x_{15i} + b_{16}x_{16i} + b_{17}x_{17i} + \mu_i$$

Variable	Data Definition	Source
y_i	Local government professionalism, represented by indexical score of structural designation, CAO, ICMA membership, state association membership, and ICMA credentialing	ICMA, municipalities/websites, state associations/websites, U.S. Census Bureau
x_{1i}	Closest distance in miles from a university-based MPA degree program within the state and region	U.S./state maps/websites, universities/websites
x_{2i}	Population in number of residents	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{3i}	Change in population since 2000	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{4i}	Age in years of city since official incorporation	U.S. Census Bureau, municipalities/websites
x_{5i}	City statistical definition classification: rural, micropolitan, metropolitan	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{6i}	Education level, represented by percent of population with Bachelor's degree or higher	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{7i}	Median family income (2012 dollars)	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{8i}	Rate of homeownership, represented by percent of owner-occupied housing units	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{9i}	Median housing value (2012 dollars)	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{10i}	Percent of population identified as a race other than white	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{11i}	Median age in years of residents	U.S. Census Bureau
x_{12i}	Political affiliation of congressional district representative: Republican or Democrat	U.S./state governments/websites
x_{13i}	Election process of mayor: selection by council or direct election	Municipalities/websites
x_{14i}	Election process of city council: at-large or by district	Municipalities/websites
x_{15i}	Size of city council, represented by number of designated council seats	Municipalities/websites
x_{16i}	Nature of MPA programs: MPA degree, local government concentration, accreditation	Universities/websites, NASPAA
x_{17i}	State culture: individualistic, moralistic, traditionalistic	Elazar (1994)

Research Hypotheses

With regard to the prevalence of the MPA degree among practicing U.S. city managers (ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001) and the role of education in professional development and administration (Green, 1989; Newell, 2004; Slack, 1990; Svara, 2010; White, 1927), municipal proximity/access to university-based MPA programs may influence the potential/availability for professional local government management within regional U.S. states. University-based MPA programs provide academic and practical education pertaining to the topics of public affairs, governmental operation, policy evaluation and implementation, and administration and organizational management, all of which relate to the development and training of competent and skilled professional public administrators and local government managers (Hansell, 2002; Koven et al., 2008; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993). What is more, university-based MPA programs often contribute research assistance and outreach, offer extension education and certifications, and engage in public activities and professional organizations within their geographic areas and regions (Gabris et al., 2010). Therefore, the primary research hypothesis of this analysis is that an increase in the distance of a given municipality from a university-based MPA program within the state/region will have a negative impact on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism.

Null Hypothesis 1: *Proximity to MPA program does not impact Local government professionalism.*

Alternative Hypothesis 1: *Proximity to MPA program negatively impacts Local government professionalism.*

Research suggests that particular socioeconomic and demographic traits of municipalities may positively relate to local government professionalism, as education level, income, homeownership, housing value, and citizen age have been significantly associated with professional and reformed structures (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Nelson, 2011; Sherbenou, 1961; Simmons & Simmons, 2004; Wolfinger & Field, 1966). Political orientation, culture, and electoral processes likewise represent potential determinants in the institutionalization of professional local government management. For instance, Republican/conservative citizens are more likely to favor reformism, individualistic and moralistic subcultures are associated with professionalism in government, and at-large council elections and council selection of the mayor are typically attributes of administrative forms of local government (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Elazar, 1994; Frederickson et al., 2004a; Svara, 1977; Whitaker and DeHoog, 1991).

Although larger population cities often maintain political models of government, suburban/metropolitan characteristics and rate of population growth may signify increased levels of administrative complexity, which correspond with professional structures and adaptations (Frederickson et al., 2001; 2004a; Henry, 1971; Nelson, 2011; Renner & DeSantis, 1999; Schnore & Alford, 1963). In addition, the existence and qualities of university-based MPA programs within the state/region may influence the availability of professional administrators. Therefore, it is hypothesized that an increase in the values of these control variables will have a positive impact on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism.

Null Hypothesis 2: *Population growth, City classification, Education level, Median family income, Rate of homeownership, Median housing value, Median age, Political orientation, Mayoral election, Council election, Nature of MPA programs, and State culture do not impact Local government professionalism.*

Alternative Hypothesis 2: *Population growth, City classification, Education level, Median family income, Rate of homeownership, Median housing value, Median age, Political orientation, Mayoral election, Council election, Nature of MPA programs, and State culture positively impact Local government professionalism.*

Conversely, other municipal attributes may be disadvantageous to the institutionalization of professional local government management. Generally, older and larger cities tend to maintain distinctly political structures of management that reflect the cultural and political heterogeneity of those types of urban areas, which may limit the reception of council-manager/administrative government due to issues of political representation (DeSantis et al., 1992; Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Sayre, 1954; Svara & Watson, 2010; Wolfinger & Field, 1966). The aspect of political representativeness may also be related to the size of the city council and electoral processes, as larger councils are typical in cities with partisan/district elections (Abney & Lauth, 1982; Frederickson & Johnson, 2001).

Increased council size may contribute to manager-council conflict, which could impede the tenure and acceptance of professional managers (Carr & Karuppusamy, 2008; Carrell, 1962; Frederickson & Johnson, 2001; Kammerer et al., 1962; Saltzstein, 1974; Svara, 2002). Demographical heterogeneity may likewise limit the approval of professional and reformed structures, as higher minority population has been associated

with preferences for political forms of government with district/ward elections (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Simmons & Simmons, 2004; Svara, 1977). Therefore, it is hypothesized that an increase in the values of these control variables will have a negative impact on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism.

Null Hypothesis 3: Population, Age of city, Percent nonwhite, and Size of council do not impact Local government professionalism.

Alternative Hypothesis 3: Population, Age of city, Percent nonwhite, and Size of council negatively impact Local government professionalism.

In relation to the research question and primary focus of this study, the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states may also be influenced by the composition and characteristics of MPA programs. As previous research indicates that professionalism in city management involves particular educational attainments and preparatory training for managers (Green, 1989; Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Nalbandian, 2005; Newell, 2004; Renner, 2001; Stene, 1966; Svara, 2010; White, 1927), there is reason to examine the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of MPA programs within the regional states. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, through comparative analysis, the qualities and features of university-based MPA programs may be found to be additionally expressive of the impact of municipal proximity to MPA programs on the nature and/or occurrence of professionalism in local government management.

Research Design

The research design for this study comprises a multi-methods approach. According to Spratt, Walker, and Robinson (2004), a multi-methods design uses multiple yet separate research strategies to supplement findings by diversifying the sources and methods of data collection and analysis. Creswell (2003) and Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, and Perez-Prado (2003) contend that utilizing a combination of methods may add triangulation and complementarity to expand the interpretation and validity of the research, and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009) suggest that multi-methods studies supply an element of inclusiveness in the examination of a particular phenomenon. The main theoretical assumption of applying a multi-methods approach for this study is that a comprehensive evaluation of the effect of university-based MPA programs on local government professionalism requires the identification, compilation, and comparison of various forms of data to achieve complete representation and assessment of the variables of interest. While the primary focus of this study is the statistical analysis, the multi-methods design aims to triangulate the examination of the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states. By supplementing statistical data with comparative analysis, this approach will provide a more complete answer to the research question and understanding of the phenomenon.

The statistical research for this study is observational and cross-sectional; an OLS multiple regression analysis with STATA was used to test the stated hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis, a widely accepted statistical method in the social sciences, isolates the estimated impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable while

holding constant other control variables (Allison, 1999; Babbie, 2001). According to the literature, a range of factors representing cultural, structural, economic, institutional, and political forces may concurrently influence and affect the nature and/or occurrence of professionalism in local government management. As such, assessing the individual impact of a specific contributor necessitates a statistical method capable of distinguishing the predicted variation in the dependent variable while controlling for other factors (Allen, 1997; Eye & Schuster, 1998). In this way, multiple regression analysis provides a suitable technique to identify the separate effects of various regressors on the dependent variable while attempting to mitigate the issues of omitted variable bias (Singh, 2007; Stock & Watson, 2007).

OLS multiple regression analysis generates the best estimated linear predictions of the regression coefficients to minimize the sum of squared difference between the actual value of the dependent variable and the predicted value (Allison, 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Stock & Watson, 2007). OLS estimation relies on the least squares assumptions, which assert that the mean distribution of the error term is zero, the variables are independent and identically distributed across observations, and large outlier values are unlikely (Stock & Watson, 2007, pp. 126-131). However, due to the nature of social science and secondary data, the reliability and extrapolation of the OLS multiple regression analysis may be limited (Babbie, 2001; Neuman, 2006).

For this research, the purpose of employing OLS multiple regression analysis is to estimate the average effect on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism of changing one variable while holding other variables constant. The multiple regression model provides a method to isolate the effect on local government professionalism of

proximity to MPA program while holding constant other state/municipal characteristic variables (Allison, 1999; Stock & Watson, 2007). The variables selected for analysis include the dependent variable (local government professionalism), the primary independent variable (proximity to MPA program), and the control variables (population, population growth, age of city, city classification, education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, median housing value, percent nonwhite, median age, political orientation, mayoral election, council election, size of council, nature of MPA programs, state culture). To control for regional influence and variation, an OLS multiple regression analysis was performed on a sample of all eligible municipalities from the states of a single selected U.S. region.

In addition, comparative analysis was conducted for the university-based MPA programs within the selected regional U.S. states. Comparative analysis refers to the qualitative and quantitative examination of distinguishable patterns in the commonalities and differentiations across and among units and phenomena (Neuman, 2006; Warwick & Osherson, 1973). The comparative method involves the systematic and descriptive identification and contrast of specific characteristics, processes, and/or generalities of particular entities in an attempt to comprehend and evaluate the transverse similarities and differences relating to social, cultural, and institutional uniqueness and/or resemblance (Babbie, 2001; Neuman, 2006). In qualitative applications, comparative content analysis includes the categorization and/or coding of data, sorting the attributes and themes of units into organized classes to facilitate comparability and interpretation (Berg, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). However, the reliance on secondary data sources may present issues of external/internal criticism and objectivity/reliability, and the nature of

comparative research may elicit concerns of equivalence, the absoluteness/distinctness of units (i.e. states/regions are subparts of nations), and may limit the generalizability of the research (Johnson, 2010; Neuman, 2006; Warwick & Osherson, 1973).

For this study, comparative analysis entails the categorical juxtaposition and qualitative description of features indicative of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of university-based MPA programs in the selected regional U.S. states. The inclusion of comparative research provides contextual and complementary information relating to the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management. The comparative analysis focuses on the attributes and processes of the 19 university-based MPA programs in the selected regional states that pertain to composition, quality, scope, and specialization. In the literature, particular characteristics have been identified as emblematic of the nature and contributions of MPA programs, including institutional arrangement (Baldwin, 1988), internships (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989), admission standards (Gibson, Leavitt, Lombard, & Morris, 2007), core curriculum, number of students, accreditation, number of core faculty, and fields of emphasis (Koven et al., 2008; Newswander & Newswander, 2012; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993; Thai, 1985). For this analysis, the categories of comparison are accreditation, location, departmental status, core curriculum, fields of concentration, requirements of internship/capstone, online availability, size/enrollment, number of core faculty and areas of specialization/status, admission standards/scholarships, additional degrees/certifications, and community outreach/extension research.

Units of Analysis and Sample

According to previous research, the contextual characteristics of regions, states, and local governments may influence the institutionalization of professional local government management within individual jurisdictions. For the purposes of this study, municipalities/cities were selected as the units of analysis because, as states signify legal entities with distinct boundaries, cultures, and statutes, the municipalities/cities within states typify the status of local government traits and structures. In essence, an understanding of professional local government management within U.S. states necessitates an examination of the local jurisdictions in which professional management may occur. The features of municipalities/cities reflect the overall compositional makeup of a state and demarcate the environmental conditions that may affect the institutionalization of local government professionalism. The selection of municipalities/cities as the local government units of analysis is based on the predominant focus of prior research and the recognition/representation of professional forms of local government, which suggest that professional management is most likely to occur in municipal governments as opposed to other forms of local government such as counties (ICMA, 2012b).

Because of the purpose and exploratory nature of this study, the sample selection process for this research was nonrandom and purposive. Purposive sampling refers to the selection of a specific sample of particular types of units of analysis determined by the researcher to be most suitable, relevant, and applicable for the theoretical intent of the analysis (Babbie, 2001; Henry, 2009; Neuman, 2006). For this study, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate to limit the effects of extreme cases and regional

differences, to display multiple situations/settings congruent with the theory and focus of inquiry, and to assess in an exploratory manner the efficacy of the selected research model in relation to the research question and purpose (Babbie, 2001; Creswell, 2003; Henry, 2009). However, the use of purposive sampling may limit the generalization of the research results and may introduce issues of sample selection bias (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Henry, 2009).

For this analysis, the U.S. states of interest were selected from a single region to control for extreme variations in cultural disposition (Elazar, 1994), prevalence/structures of professional local government management (ICMA, 2012b; 2012f), and population, geographical, political, economic, and social differences. As Elazar (1994) avers, “geo-historical location” plays a role in the formational development of systems and institutions, representing a distinguishable regionalism and/or sectionalism (p. 35). This regional characterization epitomizes political subcultures that reflect the background and history of the traditions, beliefs, customs, and values of geographic areas. Political subcultures impact political perceptions, state legislation, local policy priorities, and organizational relationships, thus creating a distinct environment for institutionalization (Berman, 2003; Elazar, 1994).

Based on regional classifications from Elazar (1994) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2012a), the region selected for this research is the West North Central Midwest. The purposes for selecting this particular region for analysis are relative consistency in the structures of local government management; cultural, demographical, and compositional comparability; and geographical, economic, and environmental continuity. The states of the West North Central Midwest are topographically mostly plains and prairie with

agricultural and industrial-based economies, comparable land areas, and relatively rural orientations. What is more, the states of this region exhibit relative similarity in population, distribution/composition, and urbanization, as opposed to other U.S. regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Therefore, because of the exploratory/purposive nature of this analysis and the desire to control for regional variances, the selection of the West North Central Midwest region appears congruent with the research question and theoretical focus of this study.

Seven states comprise the West North Central Midwest region: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. According to ICMA (2012b), the seven states possess the following numbers of professionally recognized jurisdictions: Iowa (106), Kansas (112), Minnesota (166), Missouri (122), Nebraska (52), North Dakota (3), and South Dakota (7). According to ICMA (2012f), the seven states possess the following numbers of credentialed managers: Iowa (24), Kansas (41), Minnesota (39), Missouri (28), Nebraska (16), North Dakota (2), and South Dakota (4). All seven states have both council-manager and general management recognitions, have CAOs with full ICMA membership, and have ICMA-affiliated state associations (ICMA, 2012b). Utilizing the population parameters of the U.S. Census Bureau and ICMA, the units of analysis of the sample include all municipalities in the states of Iowa (n=139), Kansas (n=104), Minnesota (n=228), Missouri (n=211), Nebraska (n=50), North Dakota (n=15), and South Dakota (n=27) with populations of 2,500 or more (N=774). This limitation is to control for variations in form/structure of government in municipalities with populations under 2,500 (i.e. village boards).

Data Collection and Sources

The data for this study are cross-sectional and secondary; to answer the research question, data were collected from multiple sources. Data for the dependent variable, local government professionalism, include structural designation/recognition and the number of CAOs, the number of full ICMA members, the number of state association members, and the number of ICMA credentialed officials on the municipal staff of a given municipality. Data for the dependent variable were obtained from ICMA, municipalities/websites, ICMA-affiliated state associations, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Data for the primary independent variable and control variables include municipal proximity to MPA program, population, population growth, age of city, city classification, education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, median housing value, percent nonwhite, median age, political orientation, mayoral election, council election, size of council, nature of MPA programs, and state culture. Data for the primary independent variable and control variables were acquired from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S./state maps, municipalities/websites, universities/websites, NASPAA, U.S./state governments/websites, and Elazar (1994).

For the comparative analysis, data were collected that are expressive of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of the 19 university-based MPA programs in the selected regional U.S. states. Data for this portion of the study pertain to accreditation, location, departmental status, core curriculum, fields of concentration, requirements of internship/capstone, online availability, size/enrollment, number of core faculty and areas of specialization/status, admission standards/scholarships, additional

degrees/certifications, and community outreach/extension research. Data for the comparative analysis were obtained from universities/websites and NASPAA.

Data Analysis

Data for the dependent, independent, and control variables were collected from the identified sources for the units of analysis in the sample, which include all municipalities in the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota with populations of 2,500 or more. The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and transferred into STATA statistical software for analysis. Factor analysis was used to generate the values of the indexical composite of the dependent variable representing local government professionalism. An OLS multiple regression analysis was selected as the method of verification to test the stated hypotheses. The operational/testing model for the OLS multiple regression analysis is as follows:

$$y_i = b_0 + b_1X_{1i} + b_2X_{2i} + b_3X_{3i} + b_4X_{4i} + b_5X_{5i} + b_6X_{6i} + b_7X_{7i} + b_8X_{8i} + b_9X_{9i} + b_{10}X_{10i} + b_{11}X_{11i} + b_{12}X_{12i} + b_{13}X_{13i} + b_{14}X_{14i} + b_{15}X_{15i} + b_{16}X_{16i} + b_{17}X_{17i} + \mu_i$$

The multiple regression analysis was conducted with t-statistic, F-statistic, SER, and R² assessments to determine the statistical significance of coefficients and the goodness of fit of the model. Following the regression analysis, the results were subjected to diagnostic tests to evaluate the potential for omitted variable bias and/or violations of the OLS regression assumptions, including robustness tests for potential nonlinearity. Diagnostic tests consisted of checks for outliers, the normality of residuals, the heteroskedasticity of residuals, multicollinearity, semi-log specification, and model specification. The results of the multiple regression analysis were interpreted and

described within the context of the stated hypotheses and research question, the comparative analysis, the theoretical literature, and previous research findings.

Data for the comparative analysis were collected from the identified sources pertaining to the 19 university-based MPA programs in the selected states of the West North Central Midwest region: Drake University, Hamline University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Missouri State University, Park University, Saint Louis University, University of Kansas, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Missouri-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Saint Louis, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of North Dakota, University of South Dakota, Upper Iowa University, Walden University, and Wichita State University (2012). Information from the data sources was arranged, coded, and classified in relation to the categories of comparison. Data were interpreted and presented in a descriptive account that explicates the characteristics/features indicative of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of university-based MPA programs within the context of the stated hypotheses and research question.

Limits of Methodology

In relation to internal validity and reliability, it is assumed that the data collected from the identified sources are accurate and are correctly representative of the variables of interest and states/municipalities selected for analysis and that the data collection methods employed by the identified sources were legitimate and valid. To address issues of quality control, data were crosschecked with other dependable sources if available to

ensure accuracy and reliability. It is assumed that the testing model does not suffer from endogeneity/reverse causality given the fixed nature of the primary independent variable. In addition, it is assumed that the testing model does not suffer from multicollinearity, simultaneous causality, and/or omitted variable bias.

Pertaining to external validity, the generalization of the results of this study to other populations may be limited because the sample was not randomly selected, as it was purposively restricted to municipalities in the West North Central Midwest regional states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota with populations of 2,500 or more. Correspondingly, the generalization of the analysis to other populations may be limited due to inherent differences in population characteristics, environments, and settings. Moreover, the generalization of the results may be limited due to the temporal element, specificity, and cross-sectional nature of the data, as the data utilized in this analysis are only indicative of the characteristics of the variables of interest of the selected sample region, states, municipalities, and MPA programs at the time of data collection.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on professional local government management in regional U.S. states. Specifically, what is the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics? To answer the research question, data were collected from the identified sources in relation to the sample of all municipalities in the West North Central Midwest regional states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota with populations of 2,500 or more. In addition, data were obtained pertaining to the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of the 19 university-based MPA degree programs in the selected regional U.S. states.

Because of the multi-methods approach employed for this study, the analysis of the research data involved both quantitative and qualitative applications. For the statistical analysis, an OLS multiple regression model with STATA was used to test the stated hypotheses. For the comparative analysis, data were arranged, coded, and classified in relation to the categories/criteria of comparison and are presented in a descriptive account. The utilization of multi-methods allows for statistical tests of associational significance among the variables of interest as well as the comparison and discussion of qualitative information relating to the potential impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management. In this way, the multi-methods approach of this study

provides for complete and comprehensive analysis of the data, adding triangulation and supplemental context for the research question.

The analysis of the data is as follows. First, the statistical analysis includes the results and findings of the OLS multiple regression analyses of the variables of interest for the sample municipalities (N=774) and an evaluation of the stated research hypotheses. The presentation of the statistical analysis also entails a discussion of the measures of fit of the regression model and diagnostic tests. Next, the comparative analysis involves description and systematic juxtaposition of the 19 university-based MPA programs of the West North Central Midwest region to provide an appropriate context for the statistical data and research question.

Professionalism and Proximity to MPA Programs: A Statistical Analysis

Based on the literature, the acceptance and/or existence of professional local government management may be strengthened or weakened by distinctive factors and characteristics of the ambient environment, such as city size (Frederickson et al., 2004a), the electoral processes of the mayor and council (Lineberry & Fowler, 1967), cultural/political dispositions (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002), and socioeconomic indicators (Schnore & Alford, 1963). Given the disparities in professional recognitions among the U.S. states (ICMA, 2012b), the identification of further contributors to the formation and institutionalization of local government professionalism may offer additional insight to the understanding of this phenomenon. Considering the importance of education in professional development (White, 1927), the prevalence of the MPA degree among practicing city managers (ICMA, 2009), and the role of MPA programs in the facilitation

of professional administration (Gabris et al., 2010), the proximity/access of municipalities to university-based MPA programs may impact the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management. Therefore, utilizing context as a distinguishable arena for identifying the effect of particular characteristics on local institutions (Elazar, 1994), the impact of proximity to MPA program on local government professionalism in regional U.S. states was assessed while controlling for other state/municipal control variables determined to be influential in the incidence of professional local management.

The model employed for the statistical test of the research question was an OLS multiple regression analysis. Data for the dependent, independent, and control variables were collected from the identified sources for the units of analysis in the sample, which include all municipalities in the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota with populations of 2,500 or more (N=774). The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and transferred into STATA statistical software for analysis. The testing model for the OLS multiple regression analysis is as follows:

$$y_i = b_0 + b_1X_{1i} + b_2X_{2i} + b_3X_{3i} + b_4X_{4i} + b_5X_{5i} + b_6X_{6i} + b_7X_{7i} + b_8X_{8i} + b_9X_{9i} + b_{10}X_{10i} + b_{11}X_{11i} + b_{12}X_{12i} + b_{13}X_{13i} + b_{14}X_{14i} + b_{15}X_{15i} + b_{16}X_{16i} + b_{17}X_{17i} + \mu_i$$

Stated in the terms of the operational model: What is the impact of proximity to MPA program on local government professionalism in regional U.S. states while controlling for population, population growth, age of city, city classification, education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, median housing value, percent nonwhite, median age, political orientation, mayoral election, council election, size of council, nature of MPA programs, and state culture?

The primary independent variable *Proximity to MPA program* is defined as the closest distance in miles from a university-based Master of Public Administration/Affairs degree program within the state for a given municipality in 2012. However, due to the regional delineation and context of the study, an additional multiple regression analysis was performed to address the potential for regional impact with an independent variable indicative of the closest distance in miles from a university-based MPA program within the region for a given municipality in 2012. What is more, the inclusion of two state-level variables, the nature of MPA programs and state culture, required separate regression analyses for each independent variable.

The dependent variable *Local government professionalism* represents an indexical composite score of characteristics selected to be indicative of the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in the sample municipalities. The indexical composite included the structural designation/recognition of the municipal government and the number of CAOs, full ICMA members, state association members, and ICMA credentialed officials on the municipal staff of a given municipality in 2012. To address issues of exclusivity/correlation, the dependent variable indicators were weighted through factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

According to Schilderink (1977), factor analysis refers to the process by which “to determine the quantitative relations between variables where the relations are due to separate conditioning factors or general causal factors” (p. 63). The purpose of factor analysis is to control for the issue of “shared variance” among variables that may be

susceptible to “measurement overlap” due to the nature of the data being measured (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 249). As Babbie (2001) suggests, factor analysis is used for the “generation of artificial dimensions that correlate highly with several of the real variables and that are independent of one another” (p. 449). For this study, to control for the potential covariance among the indexical indicators of the dependent variable, a factor analysis was conducted using STATA to generate the values representing local government professionalism.

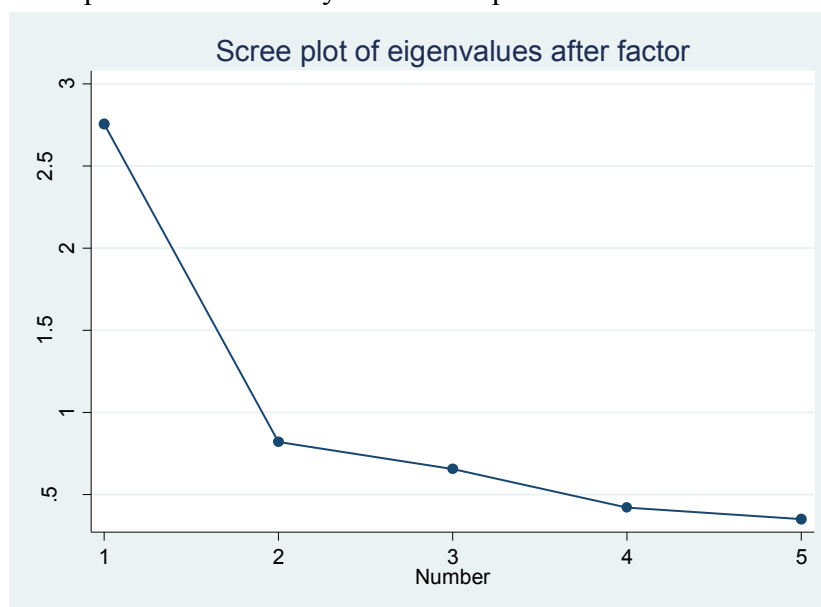
Factor analysis was performed to determine the “underlying structure” (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 265) for measures on the following five indicators: Structural designation (*govt*), CAO (*cao*), ICMA membership (*icma*), State association membership (*state*), and ICMA credentialing (*credent*). A principal component factor was the method used for the analysis. The initial results of the factor analysis are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Factor analysis using principal component factors

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	2.75525	1.93644	0.5511	0.5511
Factor2	0.81881	0.16329	0.1638	0.7148
Factor3	0.65551	0.23544	0.1311	0.8459
Factor4	0.42008	0.06973	0.0840	0.9299
Factor5	0.35035	.	0.0701	1.0000

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(10) = 1176.44$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Applying Kaiser’s Rule, Factor 1 was retained because it is the only component with an eigenvalue >1 and thus accounts for the majority of the total variability among the indicators. The scree plot likewise indicated that the eigenvalue of Factor 1 was the only component high in magnitude before the “bend” in the line (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 250). The scree plot for the factor analysis is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. Scree plot for factor analysis of the dependent variable

Therefore, due to the results of the principal component factor analysis and the scree plot, Factor 1 was retained for rotation. An orthogonal varimax rotation was used for Factor 1 to produce a “loading matrix” of the indicators (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 254). The results of the varimax rotation are shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3. Varimax rotation of Factor 1 for factor analysis

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	2.75525	.	0.5511	0.5511

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(10) = 1176.44$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Variable	Factor1	Uniqueness
govt	0.6387	0.5921
cao	0.7948	0.3683
icma	0.8537	0.2711
state	0.8050	0.3520
credent	0.5821	0.6612

After rotation, Factor 1 accounted for 55.11 percent of the total variance in the original indicators (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). As such, based on the results of the factor analysis and criteria of eigenvalue, variance, and scree plot, Factor 1 was retained to generate the values for the dependent variable indicative of local government professionalism for the sample municipalities. Figure 3.4 exhibits the scoring coefficients for the regression method based on the varimax rotated component.

Figure 3.4. Scoring coefficients for Factor 1

Variable	Factor1
govt	0.23179
cao	0.28847
icma	0.30986
state	0.29216
credent	0.21126

OLS Multiple Regression Analysis

The OLS multiple regression analyses were performed in STATA using the testing model, with the independent variables (b_1x_{1i}) proximity to MPA program in the state and proximity to MPA program in the region. Due to the inclusion of two state-level variables, the nature of MPA programs and state culture, separate analyses were conducted for each independent variable. The regression analyses involved t-statistic, F-statistic, SER, and R^2 assessments to determine the statistical significance of coefficients and the goodness of fit of the model. Because the results of diagnostic tests indicated the heteroskedasticity of residuals, robust standard errors were used with all regression models. Table 2 displays the results for proximity to MPA program in the state; Table 3 displays the results for proximity to MPA program in the region.

Table 2. Regression models for proximity to MPA in state (Robust SE)

Regressors	Coefficients	Coefficients
<i>Proximity to MPA State</i>	-.002*** (.000)	-.002*** (.000)
<i>Population</i>	3.27E-07 (2.22E-06)	4.61E-07 (2.22E-06)
<i>Population Growth</i>	5.35E-05** (2.02E-05)	5.38E-05** (2.01E-05)
<i>Age of City</i>	.002* (.001)	.002* (.001)
<i>City Classification</i>	.137** (.045)	.141** (.045)
<i>Education Level</i>	.025*** (.005)	.024*** (.005)
<i>Median Family Income</i>	4.70E-06 (5.09E-06)	3.16E-06 (5.11E-06)
<i>Rate of Homeownership</i>	-.012** (.004)	-.012** (.004)
<i>Median Housing Value</i>	-1.92E-06* (9.62E-07)	-1.38E-06 (1.03E-06)
<i>Percent Nonwhite</i>	.005 (.003)	.005 (.003)
<i>Median Age</i>	.009 (.007)	.008 (.007)
<i>Political Orientation</i>	-.112 (.073)	-.131 (.072)
<i>Mayoral Election</i>	.880*** (.115)	.829*** (.114)
<i>Council Election</i>	-.121 (.085)	-.095 (.082)
<i>Size of Council</i>	-.004 (.026)	-.008 (.025)
<i>Nature of MPA Programs</i>	-.011 (.007)	- -
<i>State Culture</i>	- -	.036 (.018)
<i>Intercept</i>	-.524 (.447)	-.654 (.432)
<i>F-Statistic</i>	15.14***	15.25***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.286	.287
<i>SER</i>	.845	.844
<i>N=774</i>		

Significant at the 5%* 1%** or .1%*** level

Table 3. Regression models for proximity to MPA in region (Robust SE)

Regressors	Coefficients	Coefficients
<i>Proximity to MPA Region</i>	-.002*** (.000)	-.002*** (.000)
<i>Population</i>	3.71E-07 (2.21E-06)	4.69E-07 (2.21E-06)
<i>Population Growth</i>	5.14E-05** (2.01E-05)	5.43E-05** (2.01E-05)
<i>Age of City</i>	.002* (.001)	.002* (.001)
<i>City Classification</i>	.147*** (.045)	.151*** (.044)
<i>Education Level</i>	.025*** (.005)	.024*** (.005)
<i>Median Family Income</i>	4.40E-06 (5.07E-06)	2.97E-06 (5.11E-06)
<i>Rate of Homeownership</i>	-.012** (.004)	-.012** (.004)
<i>Median Housing Value</i>	-1.82E-06 (9.61E-07)	-1.32E-06 (1.04E-06)
<i>Percent Nonwhite</i>	.005 (.003)	.005 (.003)
<i>Median Age</i>	.009 (.007)	.008 (.007)
<i>Political Orientation</i>	-.112 (.074)	-.127 (.073)
<i>Mayoral Election</i>	.879*** (.115)	.836*** (.114)
<i>Council Election</i>	-.118 (.085)	-.098 (.082)
<i>Size of Council</i>	-.006 (.025)	-.009 (.025)
<i>Nature of MPA Programs</i>	-.009 (.007)	- -
<i>State Culture</i>	- -	.032 (.018)
<i>Intercept</i>	-.606 (.443)	-.709 (.429)
<i>F-Statistic</i>	14.62***	14.74***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.282	.284
<i>SER</i>	.847	.846
<i>N=774</i>		

Significant at the 5%* 1%** or .1%*** level

The results of the OLS multiple regression analyses exhibit a negative association between proximity to MPA program and local government professionalism, suggesting that the nature/occurrence of professional local government management decreases as the distance in miles from a university-based MPA program of a given sample municipality within the state or region increases. Specifically, on average holding other variables constant, for every one unit change in proximity to MPA program in a given municipality there is a -.002 change in local government professionalism. With the range of the dependent variable being -1.35 to 5.32, the estimated coefficients indicate that the sample municipality with the furthest distance from a university-based MPA program of 471.7 miles may experience approximately a one unit decrease in local government professionalism. The estimated coefficients of the proximity to MPA program variables, both in the state and region, were found to be statistically significant at the .001 level.

The consistency of the results within both models demonstrates a potential association between the geographical distances of sample municipalities from university-based MPA programs and the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism. The empirical evidence provides support for alternative hypothesis 1. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 that proximity to MPA program does not impact local government professionalism may be rejected.

Most notably, in relation to the purpose and research question of this study, the statistical significance of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program within the state suggests that this characteristic may be identified as an additional factor of the disparities/differences in the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in the selected regional U.S. states. This finding may provide tentative

support for the theoretical assumptions of this study that municipal proximity/access to university-based MPA programs impacts local government professionalism through the provision of the MPA degree, education and training, research assistance, extension outreach and certifications, and public and professional support networks and engagement. Furthermore, this finding may also corroborate the implication that university-based MPA programs contribute to the development and availability of professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence, in particular given that municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program was statistically significant within both the state and regional analyses. Thus, it may be proposed that, in the context of the selected regional U.S. states, the accessibility and dispersion of university-based MPA programs within a state affects the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management.

In relation to the literature, the results of this analysis may offer support for the findings of prior studies. First, the association between municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program and the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism may lend to the role of public service education and learning institutions in the development of professional local government management (Childs, 1965; Kline & Blanchard, 1973; Nalbandian, 2005; Newell, 2004; Ridley & Nolting, 1934; Stene, 1966; Stillman, 1974). This includes the possible geographic sphere of influence of MPA programs on professional public administration (Gabris et al., 2010; Koven et al., 2008; Mirabella & Wish, 2001; Poister & Ingraham, 1991). Second, the results of this analysis may supplement extant literature that distinguishes the MPA degree as an integral component of professional management in local government (Grode & Holzer, 1975;

Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001) by demonstrating a further potential connection between the MPA and professionalism. Third, the demarcation of an additional characteristic of states/municipalities that may impact the institutionalization of professional local government management within various contexts contributes understanding to this area of study (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Frederickson et al., 2004a; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Mouritzen & Svava, 2002; Nelson, 2011) and to the differences in local government professionalism among U.S. states and regions (ICMA, 2012b). Because the effect of municipal proximity/access to university-based MPA programs has not been amply examined within the existing literature, the results of this analysis add to the knowledge and future study of the factors affecting the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management within U.S. states, regions, and other jurisdictional settings.

However, in the analysis, the estimated coefficient of the variable representing city classification, which is defined as the U.S. Census Bureau statistical definition of the sample municipalities being rural (1), micropolitan (2), or metropolitan (3), was also found to be statistically significant at the .005 and .001 levels in both the state and regional regression models respectively. This result indicates that the statistical definition of a given sample municipality may be positively associated with local government professionalism. This finding does coincide with previous research that reveals an increased likelihood of professional management in suburban and independent cities with populations between 10,000 and 250,000 (Frederickson et al., 2004a; ICMA, 2011), but, in relation to this study, may likewise demonstrate a possible association between municipal proximity and city classification. The results of the comparative

analysis confirm that approximately 90 percent of the university-based MPA programs included in this study are located in metropolitan areas, which may suggest a presupposed incidence of local government professionalism (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Wolfinger & Field, 1966).

Correspondingly, the estimated coefficient of the variable for population growth, which is defined as the change in population since the year 2000 in the sample municipalities, was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level in both models. This result indicates that an increase in municipal population, which may be most likely to happen in suburban/metropolitan areas, may also be positively related to the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism. Again, this finding is concomitant with prior research that displays a connection between city growth and professional/administrative governmental structures (Nelson, 2011; Schnore & Alford, 1963). Although the statistical significance of city classification and population growth was consistent with the conclusions of previous studies and alternative hypothesis 2, it may imply a connection with the measurement of proximity. Nevertheless, considering the lack of evidence indicating statistical multicollinearity between these variables in diagnostic tests and the possibility of a reciprocal effect, the significance of city classification and population growth, though noteworthy in relation to the research model, does not necessarily diminish the significance of municipal proximity to a MPA program.

The estimated coefficient of the variable for age of city, which is defined as the age in years since the official incorporation of the sample municipalities, was found to be statistically significant at the .05 level in both regression models. This result indicates

that the increased age of a municipality is positively associated with the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism. However, this finding appears to be contradictory to alternative hypothesis 3 and previous research that supports the connection between decreased city age and the likelihood of administrative forms of government (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Frederickson et al., 2001; 2004a). Although the positive association of age of city with professional management was contrary to extant suppositions, it may lend further substantiation to the significance of proximity to MPA program. In effect, for the sample municipalities, a more brief tenure of incorporation, which is more likely in suburban/metropolitan jurisdictions, may not necessarily translate to a higher propensity for professional local government management.

The estimated coefficient of the variable for mayoral election, which is defined as the current election process of the mayor in the sample municipalities as being selected by the council (1) or directly elected (0), was found to be statistically significant at the .001 level in both regression models and was considerable in the magnitude of effect. This result indicates that the appointment of the mayor by the city council, which is most practiced in council-manager forms of government, is positively associated with the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism. This finding is consistent with the notions of prior studies that the electoral processes of the mayor may symbolize the tendency and structural dynamic for professional local government management (Booth, 1968; Kammerer et al., 1962; Protasel, 1988; Svara & Watson, 2010; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991) and supports alternative hypothesis 2.

The estimated coefficients of the control variables for education level, rate of homeownership, and median housing value were found to be statistically significant at

the .001, .005, and .05 levels respectively. These results parallel findings from previous research that acknowledge relationships between administrative/reformed governmental attributes and socioeconomic characteristics of municipalities (Schnore & Alford, 1963; Sherbenou, 1961; Simmons & Simmons, 2004; Svara, 1977). However, due to the high probability of multicollinearity among the socioeconomic variables utilized in this analysis as determined by the regression diagnostic tests, the interpretation of the significance of these variables was limited.

Pertaining to the goodness of fit of the regression model, the significance of the F-statistic at the .001 level indicates the joint significance of the selected regressors and supports the assertion that at least one of the independent variables has a significant impact in relation to the model and the dependent variable (Stock & Watson, 2007). The adjusted R^2 suggests that approximately 28 percent of the variance in local government professionalism for a given sample municipality is explained by the independent variables. Although the adjusted R^2 is relatively low, this measure denotes some apparent strength in the goodness/fitness of the regression model as the adjusted R^2 value is well within the acceptable range and does not display an extreme value at the high or low end of the scale (0-1) that may be indicative of potential model weaknesses (Stock & Watson, 2007). In addition, the SER of the regression analysis is .845, which, as this value is relatively low, signifies that the average residual of the regression model is comparatively diminutive and substantiates a goodness of fit between the OLS estimate of the multiple regression line and the data. Because of the relatively large sample used for the analysis ($N=774$), a degrees-of-freedom adjustment was deemed inconsequential

(Stock & Watson, 2007). Thus, based on the results of these measures, it may be concluded that the overall goodness of fit of the regression model is relatively robust.

The regression diagnostic tests also corroborated the findings of the analyses and the internal validity of the testing model. Tests for the normality and heteroskedasticity of residuals showed that the residuals were not normally distributed and that the residuals were heteroskedastic. As such, the use of robust standard errors and the adjusted R^2 was implemented to control for these issues. Tests for model specification affirmed that there was likely no omitted variable bias within the multiple regression models. In addition, the overall results of the diagnostic tests appeared to support the confirmation of the least squares assumptions (Stock & Watson, 2007).

However, tests for nonlinearity revealed the possibility of a nonlinear relationship between the independent variable proximity to MPA program and the dependent variable local government professionalism. To address this concern, a semi-log specification model was utilized to assess the potential effect of nonlinearity. Specifically, a linear-log regression model was devised using the natural logarithm of the independent variables proximity to MPA program in the state and proximity to MPA program in the region (Stock & Watson, 2007). The results of the linear-log multiple regression analyses yielded consistent findings with the linear OLS regression model, as the estimated coefficients for (ln)proximity to MPA program in the state and (ln)proximity to MPA program in the region displayed a negative association with local government professionalism and were significant at the .001 level. Linear-log analyses of other significant control variables produced similar results. Therefore, the robustness of the

regression model was confirmed and the potential effects of nonlinearity were considered negligible.

The diagnostic tests for multicollinearity suggested potential correlation among several of the control variables. In particular, the control variables for socioeconomic characteristics of the sample municipalities, including education level, median family income, rate of homeownership, and median housing value, demonstrated possible multicollinearity. Hence, the interpretation of the coefficients of these variables in relation to statistical significance was limited. Alternatively, among the other variables used in the regression model, including the primary independent and dependent variables, there were no significant correlations in the multicollinearity tests.

University-Based MPA Programs and Professionalism: A Comparative Analysis

According to Elazar (1994), the sectionalism and geo-historical location of individual regions creates a unique cultural setting, which is reflected in local organizations and institutions. Within this context, institutions such as professionalism and universities may display the penchants and persuasions of the regional subcultures and ethos. In the examination of the impact of municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states, the qualities and features of MPA programs may be additionally expressive of the influence of these educational institutions in relation to local government professionalism within their geographic areas (Gabris et al., 2010). Previous research confirms that the MPA represents the most relevant and prevalent graduate degree among practicing U.S. city managers/administrators (Grode & Holzer, 1975;

Hansell, 2002; ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001) and that MPA programs and graduate education may facilitate professional public service (Denhardt, 2001; Koven et al., 2008; Mirabella & Wish, 2001; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993). Moreover, MPA program faculty and students are often involved in research, engagement, and outreach within their community and regional areas, which may promote professional development, activities, and awareness. Therefore, in supplement to the research question, statistical findings, and purpose of this study, there is reason for further investigation of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of the university-based MPA programs utilized in this analysis.

There are 19 university-based MPA programs located in the seven states of the West North Central Midwest region: Drake University, Hamline University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Missouri State University, Park University, Saint Louis University, University of Kansas, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Missouri-Kansas City, University of Missouri-Saint Louis, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of North Dakota, University of South Dakota, Upper Iowa University, Walden University, and Wichita State University (2012). Based on institutional features used in previous research, the MPA programs were evaluated by criteria determined to be indicative of quality, character, focus, and composition. Specifically, comparative analysis categories included accreditation, location, departmental status, core curriculum, fields of concentration, requirements of internship/capstone, online availability, size/enrollment, number of core faculty and areas of specialization/status, admission standards/scholarships, additional degrees/certifications, and community

outreach/extension research. For the purposes of this study, a university-based MPA program is defined as an institution of higher learning of a physical location that awards graduate degrees in public administration/affairs and meets the criteria of NASPAA membership.

Comparative Analysis

Within the parameters of the criteria for comparison, the 19 university-based MPA programs within the selected region exhibit a few common core features as well as a wide range of institutional distinctions and variations. Pertaining to accreditation, 13 of the 19 programs (68 percent) maintain current accredited status from NASPAA, demonstrating that a majority of the regional MPA programs meet the eligibility, values, focus, course of study, mission, and performance standards required for the designation (NASPAA, 2013). Considering that only 172 programs retain NASPAA accreditation, approximately 60 percent of member institutions, this demarcation implies a recognized measure of peer review and an acknowledgement of institutional quality and consistency in program operations (NASPAA, 2013). Of the seven states, Missouri (5) and Kansas (3) possess the most NASPAA accredited programs, with all other states having only one accredited program. The MPA programs that do not maintain NASPAA accreditation are Drake University, Hamline University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Park University, Upper Iowa University, and Walden University. Other accreditations currently sustained by MPA programs within the region include the Higher Learning Commission and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Only two of the 19 university-based MPA programs are not located in metropolitan cities: University of South Dakota in the micropolitan city of Vermillion and the University of Upper Iowa in the rural city of Fayette. Of the cities in the region containing MPA programs, 12 have populations over 100,000, and the mean population of all 19 cities is 186,186. As such, approximately 90 percent of the selected MPA programs in the region are located in high population metropolitan urban centers and, in most cases, in cities with the highest populations in their respective states. In relation to geographic location within the states, most of the 19 MPA-granting universities are not centrally located, with the exceptions of Drake University and Iowa State University. Regarding geographic location within the region, all of the 19 MPA-granting universities are located in the central and eastern portions of the West North Central Midwest; however, there is relatively equal dispersion of the universities from north to south within the region (see Appendix B).

A comparison of the departmental status of the regional university-based MPA programs indicates a distribution of discipline affiliations, with eight programs (42 percent) situated within public administration/affairs departments or schools, seven programs (37 percent) in political science departments, and four programs (21 percent) in business departments. However, only five of the MPA program departments (26 percent) are sited within colleges of public administration/affairs, while seven departments (37 percent) are in colleges of arts and sciences, five departments (26 percent) are in colleges of business, and two departments (11 percent) are in colleges of arts/humanities. The variation in departmental status of the MPA programs within the universities suggests

some potential differences in pedagogical approach as well as the framework and atmosphere of departmental influence, focus/mission, research, and curriculum.

The number of required graduate credit hours for completion of the MPA degree is relatively consistent among the 19 programs, with a mean of 39.9 and a median and mode of 39. Required courses of the core curricula also display a level of uniformity; almost all of the programs generally include core courses relating to topical areas in introduction to public administration, leadership/management, organizational theory/behavior, budgeting and economics/finance, policy evaluation/analysis, human resources/personnel management, research methods, and ethics. Other core curriculum courses offered in the programs are public problems and solutions, resource allocation, public governance, public decision-making, administrative law, strategic planning, politics of administration, and information technology. The relative similarities in the required credit hours and core curricula of the 19 programs may likely be attributed to NASPAA standards as well as the universal academic guidelines for the public administration discipline. However, the absence and/or adaptation of fundamental core courses, most notably in those programs of business and political science departments, indicate potential differences in function, scope, and subject.

Conversely, the fields of concentration among the 19 university-based MPA programs vary considerably. Only seven programs (37 percent) offer an emphasis in local government, with concentration courses covering topics in municipal administration, geographic information systems (GIS), planning, policy, budgeting/economic development, human resources/personnel, intergovernmental management, administrative law, ethics, urban politics/affairs, leadership/management,

community organization/development, service delivery, and professional development. However, within the alternative available fields of concentration, seven other programs do provide a state and local government related course, and multiple programs offer course topics similar to the local government concentrations such as budgeting, policy, personnel management, leadership, ethics, administrative law, city planning, urban affairs, collective bargaining, service delivery, and intergovernmental relations. The other most common fields of concentration among the programs include nonprofit management, public policy, public management, healthcare, budgeting, administration/government, human resources/personnel, emergency/security management, and global/international administration. The wide variety of fields of concentration among the MPA programs may denote distinctions in regional demand and institutional personality (Gabris et al., 2010), which may suggest differentiations in the purposes and applications of the MPA degree.

In addition to the core curriculum and field of concentration courses, 13 of the university-based MPA programs (68 percent) require the completion of a capstone project and/or seminar, while only six programs (32 percent) provide the option and/or requisite of comprehensive examinations. The fulfillment of an internship is mandatory for nine (47 percent) of the programs and is optional for six (32 percent) of the programs. As the participation in internships may contribute to regional engagement and professional development, the requirement of an internship may signify a measure of geographic influence and/or outreach. This difference among the programs may further specify divergences in institutional objectives, degree applications, and curriculum variations.

The online availability, distance education locations, and size/enrollment of MPA programs may likewise demonstrate an additional level of state/regional presence and accessibility. Currently, 11 of the programs (58 percent) supply courses online, although several have limited/sporadic availability, with five of those programs (26 percent) offering the entire degree online and two of those programs (11 percent) existing in an exclusively online format. In addition, nine programs (47 percent) have distance education/campus locations within the regional area. Of the programs reporting their MPA enrollment size, the mean number of active students is 91 and the median is 69 with a range of approximately 26 to 200. In this way, it would appear that some disparities exist among the MPA programs in the extent of state/regional presence and degree accessibility.

Of the 19 university-based programs that designate core MPA faculty, the mean number of core faculty is 7.8, with a median and mode of six; the lowest number of core MPA faculty is four, and the highest number is 16. Faculty members of the departments and/or colleges range from 15 to over 100, which include adjunct and interdepartmental faculty contributors and coordinators. Regarding the professorial status of core faculty, 14 programs (74 percent) possess a majority of associate/full professors. The number and professorial status of core faculty may be representative of the academic quality and/or prowess of the MPA program. However, among the programs, especially those in political science and business departments, the designated dedication of core faculty to the MPA appears to be inconsistent and, in some cases, limited.

Similarly, the areas of faculty specialization/research interests may indicate educational focus and expertise. Pertaining to the field of local government, the notable

areas of specialization of faculty among the 19 MPA programs include local government management, state and local government/finance, metropolitan governance, urban service delivery, community engagement/development, urban politics/culture, public/social entrepreneurship, e-government, city planning, local government consolidation, contracting and privatization, local government structure, and professionalism. Other related areas of specialization of faculty are public policy, public safety, leadership, local/regional politics, citizen participation, executive management, economic development, administrative ethics, GIS, intergovernmental relations, and performance measurement. Overall, however, the areas of faculty specialization vary extensively among the MPA programs, suggesting a broad range of pedagogical expertise, course availability, degree focus, and institutional research.

The admission standards/criteria of the MPA may also signify the quality and/or integrity of the programs. Of the 19 university-based MPA programs in the region, 11 (58 percent) require a 3.0 minimum undergraduate grade point average (GPA) or higher and a current resume, 15 (79 percent) call for at least two letters of recommendation and a personal statement/writing sample, and nine (47 percent) necessitate the submission of a Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score or comparable standardized test score. Furthermore, the availability of scholarships promoting study in the field of local government for applicants may demonstrate the contribution of the program to professional management development. Currently, seven programs (37 percent) advertise scholarship/fellowship opportunities specific to the area of local government for MPA students. Donating organizations include the South Dakota Municipal League, the Nebraska City/County Management Association, University of Missouri-Saint Louis

Local Government Partnership, the Minnesota City/County Management Association, the Economic Development Association of Minnesota, the Wichita State University Fellowship, the University of Kansas Graduate Scholarships, and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Fellowship. Overall, the admission standards for the MPA programs vary in stringency yet require similar criteria, and the availability of local government scholarships appears consistent with the existence of a local government field of concentration.

In combination with the MPA degree, nine of the regional programs (47 percent) offer the option of joint degrees, comprising MPA/Juris Doctorate, MPA/Doctorate in pharmacy, MPA/Master of business administration, MPA/Master of regional planning, MPA/Master of information assurance, MPA/Master of social work, and MPA/Master of public health. Other graduate degrees supplied by the departments/colleges relating to local government management include Masters in finance, public policy, urban planning, urban affairs/studies, and a PhD/doctorate in public administration/affairs. All of the 19 university-based MPA programs within the region provide certifications, which may be indicative of a contribution to professional development. Certificate programs with relation to local government management are public management/certified public manager, city/county management and administration, public policy, leadership, economic development, public works, public administration, human resources management, emergency management, public finance, and government management. However, the availability and local government specificity of these certificates vary considerably among the regional institutions.

The scope of institutional community outreach/extension research may represent an important component of the potential geographic/regional influence of university-based MPA programs, as this typically involves professional training and development, educational seminars and workshops, the funding and dissemination of research, and interaction with community and regional organizations. All of the 19 programs and universities in the region support and/or coordinate some form of community outreach/extension research. Notable projects/aspects are faculty research, journal publication, university extension, consultation, regional and national distance education, ASPA and other MPA student organizations, internship partnerships, MPA advisory councils, and collaboration with professional associations such as the state ICMA affiliates, municipal clerk and finance officer associations, community organizations, and regional public and private enterprises.

An additional facet of community outreach/extension research is the educational and professional services of university research centers and partnerships. As shown in Table 4, among the 19 university-based MPA programs in the region, there are a number of affiliated research entities with a local government focus as well as related organizations that contribute to professional development/public affairs research at local, regional, and national government levels.

In all, it appears that the extent of local government specificity in community outreach/extension research varies among the MPA programs and generally corresponds with colleges/departments of public administration/affairs and the provision of a local government field of concentration. In this regard, a few programs, including the University of Kansas, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of South Dakota, and

Wichita State University, exhibit a heightened attention to local government through certifications, training/education opportunities, research entities and organizations, and interaction with professional practitioner associations.

Table 4. University-based community outreach/extension research entities

<i>Local Government</i>	<i>Professional Development/Public Affairs</i>
Minnesota State-Mankato Urban and Regional Studies Institute	Drake Center for Professional Studies
University of Kansas-CH2M Hill Partnership	Hamline Center for Public Administration and Leadership
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities State and Local Policy Program	Iowa State University Center for Women and Politics
University of Missouri-Columbia Community Policy Analysis Center	Kansas State University Organization of Political Science
University of Missouri-Kansas City L.P. Cookingham Institute of Public Affairs	Missouri State University Center for Public Policy Research
University of Missouri-Saint Louis Local Government Partnership	Park Center for Leadership
University of South Dakota W.O. Farber Center for Civic Leadership	Saint Louis University School for Professional Studies
Upper Iowa University E-Center	University of Nebraska-Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research
Wichita State Center for Urban Studies	University of North Dakota Bureau of Governmental Affairs
	Walden Service Network

To address the purpose of this study and research question, the 19 university-based MPA programs in the region were also compared by state. The evaluative criteria for the MPA programs were synthesized to provide further understanding of the nature and contribution to local government professionalism within the state context. Table 5 displays a summary of these findings, including an assessment and comparison of program characteristics specific to the institutional contribution to professional local government management.

The state of Iowa contains three university-based MPA programs, which are located in the central and northeastern regions of the state, and only one (Iowa State

Table 5. Comparison of university-based MPA programs by state

Evaluation Criteria	States						
	Iowa	Kansas	Minnesota	Missouri	Nebraska	N. Dakota	S. Dakota
<i>Number of Programs</i>	3	3	4	6	1	1	1
<i>NASPAA Accredited Programs</i>	1	3	1	5	1	1	1
<i>Metropolitan Location</i>	2	3	4	6	1	1	0
<i>Public Administration Department</i>	0	2	2	4	1	0	0
<i>Local Government Concentration</i>	0	1	1	3	1	0	1
<i>Require Internship</i>	0	2	1	4	0	1	1
<i>Require Capstone</i>	2	1	4	3	1	1	1
<i>Size/Enrollment Range</i>	40-175	40-90	39-50	26-193	200	60	68
<i>Core Curriculum</i>	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
<i>Online Availability</i>	Low	Low	High	Moderate	High	High	Low
<i>Faculty Characteristics</i>	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
<i>Admission Standards</i>	Low	Moderate	Low	High	High	Moderate	High
<i>Local Government Scholarships</i>	Low	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	High
<i>Local Government Certificates</i>	Low	High	Low	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
<i>Local Government Outreach</i>	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate

University) maintains current NASPAA accreditation and one (Upper Iowa University) is located in a nonmetropolitan city. The sizes of the programs in Iowa range from 40 to 175 students. All three programs are situated within either political science or business departments/colleges, and only Upper Iowa University, through an exclusively online format, offers online availability of the degree and/or courses. None of the Iowa MPA programs provides a field of concentration in local government or requires an internship for completion of the degree, and only Iowa State University possesses a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. Regarding admission standards, only Iowa State University necessitates the submission of a GRE score, and only Drake University distinguishes the requirement of a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA. Among the MPA programs in Iowa, the availability/extent of local government scholarships, certificates, and outreach is limited.

Dispersed throughout the eastern portion of the state, Kansas possesses three university-based MPA programs, all of which are currently NASPAA accredited. The programs in Kansas range in sizes from 40 to 90 students, with the University of Kansas and Wichita State University located in departments/colleges of public administration/affairs and Kansas State University housed in political science. All three programs maintain a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. Only the University of Kansas offers a field of concentration in local government, has online availability of courses, and, along with Kansas State University, requires an internship for completion of the degree. While all three programs require a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA, only the University of Kansas necessitates the submission of a GRE score for admission. The MPA programs in Kansas display a high availability/extent of

local government scholarships, certificates, and outreach, particularly the University of Kansas and Wichita State University.

The state of Minnesota includes four university-based MPA programs, which are located in the southern and southeastern part of the state. Currently, only one program (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities) maintains NASPAA accreditation. Of those reporting enrollment, the average size of the MPA programs is approximately 45 students, with two programs, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and Walden University, situated in public administration/affairs departments/colleges, Minnesota State University-Mankato in political science, and Hamline University in business. Only Walden University offers a field of concentration in local government, only Hamline University requires an internship for completion of the degree, and only Minnesota State University-Mankato and University of Minnesota-Twin Cities have a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. In relation to online availability, Hamline University, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and Walden University all offer the complete degree online, with Walden in an exclusively online format. Pertaining to admission standards, no programs identify the submission of a GRE score, and only Minnesota State University-Mankato necessitates a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA. Minnesota State University-Mankato and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities provide local government scholarships, certificates, and outreach.

Dispersed throughout the entire state, Missouri contains six university-based MPA programs, five of which are currently NASPAA accredited with the exception of Park University. The sizes of the programs range from 26 to 193 students and the mean enrollment is 92 students, with Park University, Saint Louis University, University of

Missouri-Columbia, and University of Missouri-Kansas City housed in departments/colleges of public administration/affairs and with Missouri State University and University of Missouri-Saint Louis in political science. Three of the six programs offer a field of concentration in local government (Missouri State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and University of Missouri-Saint Louis), and four require an internship for completion of the degree (Missouri State University, Saint Louis University, University of Missouri-Columbia, and University of Missouri-Saint Louis). Only Park University does not possess a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. However, Park University does offer the complete degree online, and the University of Missouri-Columbia and University of Missouri-Kansas City have online courses available. Four of the programs necessitate a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA (Missouri State University, Park University, University of Missouri-Columbia, and University of Missouri-Saint Louis) and GRE score (Missouri State University, Saint Louis University, University of Missouri-Columbia, and University of Missouri-Kansas City) for admission. The overall availability/extent of local government scholarships, certificates, and outreach among the Missouri programs is moderate, with Missouri State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and University of Missouri-Saint Louis as the most active.

The state of Nebraska possesses only one university-based MPA program, the University of Nebraska-Omaha, which is located on the eastern border of the state and is NASPAA accredited. Situated within the School of Public Administration, the University of Nebraska-Omaha maintains a relatively large program with approximately 200 students enrolled. Participation in an internship is optional, and the MPA program

does offer a field of concentration in local government, does have an online option for the complete degree, and does have a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. In addition, the program requires both a GRE score and a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA for admission. The University of Nebraska-Omaha provides a relatively high extent of local government outreach, with local government scholarships and certificates available.

The one university-based MPA program in the state of North Dakota, the University of North Dakota, is located on the eastern border of the state and is NASPAA accredited. The program has an enrollment of approximately 60 students, is within the political science department, and does require an internship for completion of the degree. The University of North Dakota does have an online option for the complete MPA degree, but does not have a field of concentration in local government or a majority of faculty designated as associate/full professor status. For admission, the program does necessitate a GRE score, and applicants must possess a 2.75 minimum undergraduate GPA. The availability/extent of local government scholarships, certificates, and outreach is limited.

The University of South Dakota represents the lone university-based MPA program in the state of South Dakota, which is located in the southeastern region of the state in a nonmetropolitan city and is NASPAA accredited. The MPA program, maintaining an approximate enrollment of 68 students, resides within the political science department and does offer courses online. The program requires an internship for completion of the degree, has a local government field of concentration, and designates a majority of faculty as associate/full professor status. Admission criteria for the

University of South Dakota program include a 3.0 minimum undergraduate GPA and a GRE score. There is a moderate extent of local government outreach, and local government scholarships and certificates are available.

It was hypothesized that, through comparative analysis, the qualities and features of university-based MPA programs may be found to be additionally expressive of the impact of municipal proximity on the nature and/or occurrence of professionalism in local government management. Overall, the 19 university-based MPA programs within the seven states of the West North Central Midwest region display relative commonalities in areas such as metropolitan location, accreditation, core curriculum, community outreach/extension research, additional degrees/certifications, and admission standards, with some variations by program. However, notable differentiations in characteristics such as departmental status, size/enrollment, online availability, fields of concentration, number of core faculty and areas of specialization/status, and requirements of internship/capstone may be indicative of diverging effects in relation to institutional purpose, degree focus, and regional disposition.

In particular, the discrepancies in local government specificity and the disparities of program features evident when compared at individual and state levels may suggest divergences in institutional nature and the contribution to local government professionalism. Only seven of the MPA programs offer a local government field of concentration and local government scholarship/fellowship opportunities, and the focus on local government in certifications, faculty specializations, and community outreach/extension research varies considerably between programs. A comparison of the university-based MPA programs by state displayed further differences in institutional

characteristics, including features specific to the contribution to professional local government management. Potentially, these programmatic distinctions may manifest in the nature/occurrence of professionalism, implying that municipal proximity to MPA programs with a more developed attention to local government may translate to a higher propensity for professional management. For instance, as shown in Table 6, a comparison of percentages of ICMA-member CAOs of ICMA-recognized municipalities with MPA degrees from university-based programs within the state and region (ICMA, 2012b) appears to support this assertion, as states containing MPA programs with local government specialties, such as Kansas, have a higher proportion of professional CAOs with MPAs from within the state. This may also lend to the geographic impact of MPA-granting institutions. Essentially, despite contrasts in composition and local government specificity, the qualities and features of the university-based MPA programs, in combination with the statistical significance of the effect of municipal proximity on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism, may be expressive of the contribution of the regional MPA programs to professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence.

Table 6. Percentages of ICMA-member CAOs of recognized municipalities with MPAs

<i>States</i>	MPA from program within the state	MPA from program within the region
Iowa	20% (12)	36% (22)
Kansas	46% (33)	54% (39)
Minnesota	16% (16)	23% (23)
Missouri	24% (17)	37% (26)
Nebraska	20% (6)	30% (9)
N. Dakota	0% (0)	0% (0)
S. Dakota	20% (1)	40% (2)

Chapter V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this study was to add to the body of local government and public administration literature pertaining to the understanding of the disparities in the institutionalization of professionalism in local government management among U.S. states through an investigation of further potential factors that may contribute to its existence. Building on the conclusions and assertions of prior research, the question of inquiry for this analysis was: What is the impact of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states while controlling for other state/municipal characteristics? The primary research hypothesis was that an increase in the distance of a given municipality from a university-based MPA program within the state/region would have a negative impact on the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism.

Employing a multi-methods approach, an OLS multiple regression analysis was performed using a sample of all municipalities in the states of the West North Central Midwest region, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, with populations of 2,500 or more. In addition, a comparative analysis was conducted on the nature and contribution to local government professionalism of the 19 university-based MPA programs located within the region. The results of the statistical analysis exhibited a negative association between proximity to MPA program and local government professionalism, suggesting that the nature/occurrence of professional local government management decreases as the distance in miles from a university-based MPA program of a given sample municipality within the state or region increases. The

comparative analysis revealed that the 19 university-based MPA programs within the region display notable differences in local government specificity and institutional composition, particularly when compared between states. Despite these programmatic variations, the findings lead to the conclusion that the accessibility and dispersion of university-based MPA programs within a state may affect the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism. The following includes a discussion of the research findings within the contexts of this study and the extant literature, the implications of this study in relation to the understanding and future research of professional local government management and public administration, and the main conclusions that may be derived from this analysis.

Discussion and Findings

The results of the OLS multiple regression analyses indicated that, within the sample, the proximity/accessibility of a municipality to a university-based MPA program was negatively associated with the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism in both the individual states and the region. Pertaining to the purpose of the study, which was to examine the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on professional local government management in regional U.S. states, this finding suggests that the distance in miles of municipalities from university-based MPA programs may influence the level and/or likelihood of the professional management traits of the associated municipal governments. Specifically, an objective of this research was to distinguish potential factors that may be contributing to the disparities in local government professionalism among U.S. states. The statistical significance of the

proximity to MPA program variable within the state provides evidence that the accessibility and dispersion of MPA programs may affect the existence and nature of professional local government management in the state setting. The statistical significance of the proximity to MPA program variable within the region may additionally support the notion that university-based MPA programs contribute to professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence.

The comparative analysis of the 19 university-based MPA programs in the region revealed both similarities and differences in institutional purposes, features, and structures. In particular, when compared by states, contrasts in the evaluation criteria among the programs signified varying natures and contributions to local government professionalism. In areas specific to local government, such as fields of concentration, scholarships, certificates, and outreach, observable divergences in availability and extent between the programs were perceptible. Other attributes of the MPA programs likewise denoted dissimilarities when compared at the individual and state levels, including departmental status, internship/capstone requirements, size/enrollment, number of core faculty and areas of specialization/status, and online availability. Although there were relative commonalities in areas such as accreditation, metropolitan location, and core curriculum, the general finding was that the programs possessed several differing qualities and scopes pertaining to composition and local government specificity, especially when compared by state.

With these differences among the regional MPA programs, the results of the statistical analysis indicated that the distance in miles of a municipality from a university-based MPA program had a significant association with the nature and/or occurrence of

local government professionalism within the sample states. This may imply that municipal proximity to MPA programs with a more developed attention to local government may translate to a higher propensity for professional management. However, the state-level variable representing the nature of MPA programs, which included gradations for the MPA degree, local government concentration, and accreditation, was not found to be statistically significant in either the state or regional analysis. The other state-level variable, representing state culture, was also found to be statistically insignificant in both analyses, which may suggest that general differences in state political subcultures did not affect local government professionalism in the sample municipalities.

Pertaining to the research findings, the statistical significance of the impact of proximity of a sample municipality to a university-based MPA program within the state on the nature/occurrence of professional local government management provides support for an additional factor that may be affecting disparities in local government professionalism among U.S. states. This also implies that, despite institutional differences in configuration and specificity, MPA degree programs may contribute to professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence, given that municipal proximity to MPA program in the region was also found to be significantly associated with local government professionalism. While the purposive nature of the sample may limit the generalizability of the results, the findings of this study present a foundation for the relationship between the accessibility of MPA programs and several key indicators of professional administration in municipalities, lending to the role of MPA-granting institutions in the field of professional local government management.

A contextual setting of this analysis was the concept of regionalism (Elazar, 1994), in which differences in political culture among states and geographical regions may create distinct environments for institutionalization that embody particular traditions, histories, beliefs, customs, and expectations. This sectionalism within the United States, as Elazar (1994) notes, demarcates the geographical character of various political subcultures among regional populations that influence governmental systems, social ideals, and societal institutions. For example, previous research suggests that MPA programs tend to reflect regional predilections and practices (Gabris et al., 2010), thus generally institutionalizing the cultural needs and demands of the area. In relation to this study, the concept of regionalism provided a basis for the selection of the sample but also pertained to differences between states in the nature and/or occurrence of the institutionalization of professional local government management. The findings of this analysis support the notion that state dissimilarities in local government professionalism may be affected by the accessibility, composition, and dispersion of university-based MPA programs within the state, which symbolize a manifestation of regional/sectional culture, demands, and preferences.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism in regional U.S. states. In this analysis, local government professionalism, the dependent variable, was defined by specific indicators representing governmental structural designation/recognition, the appointment/employment of CAOs, membership in ICMA, membership in ICMA-affiliated state associations, and the attainment of ICMA credentialing. This indexical composite was meant to portray the level of

institutionalized professional local government management of sample municipalities in the selected regional U.S. states, taking into account multiple indications of professionalism derived from the literature. The statistical significance of municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program in the state, the primary independent variable, provides evidence of an additional state/municipal characteristic that may impact the institutionalization of professionalism in local government management in a state setting, thus potentially leading to the differences in local government professionalism that are observed among U.S. states.

Regarding the extant literature, an objective of this study was to add to the knowledge of state/municipal features that influence the incidence and disparity of professional local government management in state and regional contexts. Because prior research on this topic is relatively limited and dated and because the impact of municipal proximity/access to MPA programs has not been amply examined, an intention of this study was to address this gap in the literature by providing further analysis in this area. Professionalism in local government management has been defined within the literature as exemplifying several distinct properties. While government structures that involve the appointment/employment of CAOs, namely the council-manager plan, have been distinguished as an indication of professional management (Ammons, 2008; James, 1914; Nalbandian, 1991; Renner, 2001; Svava, 1999a), other attributes have likewise been associated with the professional designation. Specifically, education and technical training/credentialing (Childs, 1965; Green, 1989; Hansell, 2002; Slack, 1990; White, 1927), adherence to standardized and ethical practices (Cooper & Gulick, 1984; Kline & Blanchard, 1973; Menzel, 1995), and membership in professional associations (Ammons,

1994; Ridley & Nolting, 1934; Stillman, 1974) have also been identified as indicators of professional local government management. The indexical composite measure of local government professionalism utilized in this study reflected these assertions and may provide a potential framework for future research in this area that moves beyond the traditional dichotomy of council-manager/mayor-council structural distinctions of the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management.

The findings of previous research substantiate a number of factors that may affect local government professionalism. Within this stream of literature, studies suggest that state statutes (Berman, 2003; Ostrom et al., 1988), structural adaptation (Frederickson & Johnson, 2001; Nelson & Svara, 2012), political representation and politics (Banfield & Wilson, 1963; Box, 1993), city size (DeSantis et al., 1992; Watson & Hassett, 2004), and external forces (Clarke & Gaile, 1997; Skidmore, 2001; Wirt, 1985) may influence professional local government management. Moreover, specific situations and relationships have revealed other contributing factors, such as socioeconomic composition and demographics (Schnore & Alford, 1963; Simmons & Simmons, 2004), population size and city classification (Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Wolfinger & Field, 1966), political affiliation and electoral structures (Berman & Merrill, 1976; Kammerer et al., 1962; Zhang et al., 2010), and cultural/state setting (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Nelson, 2011). This analysis incorporated control variables representing these factors to distinguish the effect of municipal proximity to MPA programs on local government professionalism within the contexts of prior research. The finding of this study of the statistically significant association between the proximity of a municipality to a university-based MPA program and professional local government management adds to

this body of knowledge by identifying an additional factor/characteristic that may affect local government professionalism at a municipal, state, and regional level.

The findings of this analysis may provide further evidence to support the role of MPA degree programs in the fields of professional local government management and public administration. Previous research confirms that the MPA represents the most common educational attainment among practicing U.S. local government managers (ICMA, 2009; Renner, 2001) and a necessary component of the future matriculation of professionals in the local government field (Svara, 2010). A basis for this study was the supposition that university-based MPA programs likewise contribute to the development and enhancement of professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence through education, engagement, and outreach (Gabris et al., 2010; Koven et al., 2008; Mirabella & Wish, 2001; Poister & Ingraham, 1991). In this analysis, the statistical significance of the association between municipal proximity/access to MPA programs and local government professionalism within the state and region suggests that the accessibility and dispersion of MPA-granting institutions may affect the propensity for professional local government management. Although the regional programs differed in composition and local government specificity, this finding may signify a geographic influence of university-based MPA programs on professional public administration, which is congruent with claims of prior research.

In sum, the findings of the statistical and comparative analyses of this study contribute to the understanding of differences in the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management among regional U.S. states through an examination of particular state/municipal characteristics. Expressly, the distance in miles

from a university-based MPA program of a given sample municipality within the state and region was found to negatively affect local government professionalism. In addition, the MPA programs within the region, while possessing a few relative similarities, displayed notable differences in institutional composition and focus on local government, particularly when compared by state. However, with these programmatic variations, the results of the statistical and comparative analyses suggest that university-based MPA programs may contribute to professional public administration within a geographic sphere of influence. Building on the conclusions of extant research, the findings of this study add to the knowledge of the factors that may impact the disparities in the institutionalization of professional local government management in regional and state settings.

Implications and Future Research

Based on the findings of this analysis and the contexts and assertions of the literature, several implications may be discerned in relation to the future study and understanding of professional local government management, institutional differences among the U.S. states, and the role of university-based MPA programs in administrative professionalization. As displayed through the methods of previous research, the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism may be evaluated by a range of measures, incorporating various indications of professional practices and structures. However, it has also been demonstrated that the institutionalization of professional local government management may be resultant of ambient influential factors, which lends to future considerations of the definitions and situational conditions of local government

professionalism. Unquestionably, disparities in the recognition and actualization of professional management in local government exist among the U.S. states; while the reasons for this may be manifold, there is purpose for continued attention to this phenomenon. The findings of this study support an association between municipal proximity to MPA programs and local government professionalism, yet there is still much to learn about the impact of higher education and academic training on the proliferation of professional public administration.

The conclusions of previous research have demonstrated that several varying factors may affect the realization of professional local government management, comprising an array of structural, political/legislative, demographic/socioeconomic, procedural, organizational, and cultural characteristics. Yet, inconsistencies in the measures and results of studies in this area suggest a need for further investigation. In many cases, the primary indicator of professional management in municipalities has been structural configuration, taking into account aspects such as legalized form (council-manager or mayor-council) and/or qualities of reformed or unreformed governmental models. However, these dichotomous classifications may be inherently limited in scope, failing to reflect adaptations in organizational arrangement and the individual professional merits of city managers and staff (Carr & Karuppusamy, 2008; Frederickson et al., 2004a; Nelson & Svara, 2010). While multiple factors have been distinguished as influential in the institutionalization of professional local government management, conflicting results imply an incomplete understanding of contributors. For instance, the statistical analysis of this study exhibited negligible effects of population size, political orientation, median age, race, council election process, and size of council on local

government professionalism, all of which were found to be significantly associated with professional forms of local government management in prior research.

For future study, it may be useful to expand the definitions of professionalism in local government management to include other descriptive indicators. As ICMA represents the premier professional association in local government, recognitions of the professionalism of individual managers used by ICMA that extend beyond structure, namely associational membership and credentialing, may provide more accurate measures of professional institutionalization. The growing span of functions and duties performed by professional city managers and the increasingly blurred boundaries between administration and policy/politics signal the importance of individual professional development and the need to broaden the interpretations of the professional connotation in city administration. This may also incorporate further indicators of individual professionalism, such as educational degrees, specific areas of training or expertise, years of experience, certifications, and level of authority.

There is likewise purpose for additional research pertaining to the factors that contribute to professionalism. ICMA and other domestic and international organizations, such as the National Municipal League and the United Nations, continue to advocate for the expansion of professionalism at local levels, noting the mounting complexity of urban operations, the benefits of increased administrative efficiency and acumen in government, and the adherence to ethical standards and behavior. In this way, further comprehension and confirmation of the factors and attributes that impact the institutionalization of professional local government management are needed. Specifically, additional factors should be explored, such as municipal proximity to MPA programs and other potential

contributors not previously identified. There is also reason to maintain further study of those factors that have been determined to be influential in prior research to corroborate the effects of these contextual characteristics and to demarcate changes and/or evolutions in the institutional nature of professional local government management and the ambient features that may assist and/or impede its existence.

A main goal of this research was to further the understanding of the differences among U.S. states in relation to professional local government management. Using ICMA criteria as a basis for comparison, a foundation for this study was the apparent disparities in local government professionalism between states, particularly in regional settings. According to ICMA (2012b; 2012f), comparisons of states, both individually and by region, reveal disproportions of jurisdictional recognition, CAO membership, and credentialed managers. Moreover, research for this analysis confirmed similar inconsistencies in ICMA-affiliated state association membership in the states of the West North Central Midwest region. A variety of state attributes may be contributing to these dissimilarities, and previous studies have demonstrated these effects on professional institutionalization at local levels, including state statutes, per capita income, and population growth (Hero, 1986; Nelson, 2011) among others. However, research that directly addresses state differences in local government professionalism is limited, and, as this analysis has shown, there may be additional factors influencing this phenomenon that have yet to be identified, which substantiates further study in this area.

This analysis exhibited a negative association between municipal proximity to a university-based MPA program and the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in the regional U.S. states, of which the accessibility,

dispersion, and composition of MPA programs varied. Based on these findings, the number, location, and scope of MPA programs within a state could affect the availability of professional public administrators and the proclivity for the institutionalization of professional management in local jurisdictions. The significance of other control variables in this analysis may likewise suggest differing state/municipal characteristics that could be influential in this regard. The population growth of municipalities and the classification of cities as rural, micropolitan, or metropolitan were found to be positively associated with local government professionalism in the regional states. These findings may indicate an urban/rural distinction of professional local government management, which is congruent with prior research assertions that professionalism is most common in cities of suburban/metropolitan orientations with growing populations (Dye & Macmanus, 1976; Schnore & Alford, 1963). In other words, states possessing higher rates of urbanization may be more likely to experience elevated levels of professional management in local governments. There may also be a legislative component, as appointment of the mayor in cities was positively associated with professionalism. This may imply that variations in state and municipal statutes pertaining to local government structures and procedures could provide for further differences.

Political culture represents an important aspect in the examination of state differences. The concept of regionalism or sectionalism, a foundational premise of this study, refers to the cultural environment of a locale that embodies the sentiments, histories, and personalities of the populace, which affects political perceptions, legislation, policy priorities, and organizations. Institutions within this context, such as professional local government management and universities, likewise reflect the effects

of regional disposition. The comparative analysis of regional university-based MPA programs in this study displayed contrasts in nature and composition among MPA-granting institutions, especially when compared by state. In addition, the very existence of a MPA program within a state may be indicative of elements of political culture such as regional demand and institutional preference (Gabris et al., 2010). The finding of this study that municipal proximity to MPA programs impacts the nature/occurrence of local government professionalism suggests that there may be additional components of political culture contributing to state differences in the institutionalization of professional local government management. The influence of political culture on policy and politics within state and regional settings has been extensively examined by Elazar (1994) and others, yet the effects of political culture on professional public administration warrant further attention.

Future research on differences in professional local government management among U.S. states should expand on existing knowledge. While many studies have investigated local government professionalism in a municipal context, these findings could provide for further state comparisons. Aspects of political culture and regionalism that could be contributing to state differences in professional institutions, such as urbanization/urbanism, history, and public policies/statutes, need further exploration, particularly emphasizing the relationship between political culture and public administration. Although the state culture variable in this analysis was not significantly associated with local government professionalism, improved measures of political culture may be needed. What is more, a broader spread of comparison may generate additional comprehension and generalization. The analytical framework utilized in this analysis

may be applied in other regional settings as well as on a national scale to include comparisons of all U.S. states. Expressly, further study of the impact of university-based MPA programs on professional local government management in states should be pursued.

Within the public administration literature, the role of MPA programs in education and professionalization has been researched from various perspectives, including characteristics of degrees and universities, outreach and engagement, and outcomes and effects. Pertaining to professional local government management, the MPA maintains a prominent status as a developmental educational attainment and a critical factor in the continued growth and advancement of the local government management profession (Hansell, 2002; Svara, 2010). A premise for this analysis was the perceived geographic influence of MPA-granting institutions on professional public administration through education, research, and community engagement, which appeared to be supported by the comparative analysis and the statistical significance of municipal proximity to MPA programs in both the state and region. However, given the importance placed on the MPA degree in the field of public administration, there is cause for further attention to how and why MPA programs may be affecting professionalization and what actions could be undertaken to enhance their spheres of influence.

The results of the comparative analysis of the 19 university-based MPA programs within the region showed that individual institutions implement MPA education through differing means and approaches. Despite these dissimilarities, the standards and processes of the MPA programs included in this study could indicate institutional factors that contribute to a geographic influence on professional public administration, such as

accreditation, range of community outreach/extension research, and curriculum. For example, university coordination through internships and scholarships with state-level professional local government practitioner associations, such as the city/county managers association or the municipal league, could prompt interest among MPA students and faculty and lead to future affiliation with these organizations. The NASPAA accreditation and membership of MPA programs could likewise be influential, as these distinctions may promote more awareness and appeal. Program features such as enrollment, online availability, and faculty specializations and publications may represent differing modes for the expanded delivery and/or reach of MPA programs within their state or region. Future study should focus on the attributes of these connections, exploring further the impact of program characteristics and approaches, the extent and nature of partnerships and associations, and the channels of geographic influence.

The findings of this study demonstrated the effects of proximity to university-based MPA programs on professionalism in local government management, which may be intensified by the local government specificity of the MPA-granting institutions. The comparative analysis revealed substantive differences in the contributions to local government professionalism of the regional programs, particularly when compared by state. These comparisons distinguished certain states, such as Kansas and Nebraska, as possessing MPA programs with a more developed attention to local government, which is corroborated by the graduate school rankings of those programs (University of Kansas and University of Nebraska-Omaha) in the area of city management and urban policy (U.S. News & World Report, 2012). In this regard, municipalities that are located further distances from university-based MPA programs with a local government orientation may

face special challenges in the nature/occurrence of professionalism, placing emphasized importance on membership and development opportunities through professional associations such as ICMA. For instance, the Great Open Spaces City Management Association (GOSCMA) functions as the ICMA state affiliate organization for the states of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, a region of limited access to university services. This may also relate to the expanded delivery and/or reach of MPA programs, including ways to extend their geographic influence to municipalities in remote and/or underserved locations.

While this study displayed a negative association between municipal proximity to MPA programs and local government professionalism, this finding raises additional prospects by which to examine this relationship. For this analysis, distance in miles of a municipality from a university-based MPA program was used as a proxy for accessibility, yet there may be other measures to assess the geographic influence on professional local government management. Potential alternatives may include the number of CAOs with MPA degrees, the state retention rates of MPA program graduates, and/or municipal affiliations with MPA programs through internships and civic groups. This may also apply to further study of other MPA program characteristics, including specific research contributions and related grants of faculty and students, career outcomes of graduates, and recruitment procedures used by MPA programs and universities. Because this study was limited to university-based MPA programs defined as institutions of higher learning of a physical location that award graduate degrees in public administration/affairs and meet the criteria for NASPAA membership, there may be reason to include other types of educational programs in future research. The proliferation of internet-based degree

programs offered in an exclusively online format should be considered as well as other non-NASPA member schools and alternative master degree programs related to local government and public administration, such as urban studies, public policy, public management, and business administration. Most importantly, the continued study of connections between MPA programs and professionalization will benefit both the local government management profession and the field of public administration.

Conclusion

This study aimed to address the differences in local government management among U.S. states by examining the relationship between university-based MPA programs and professionalism in a regional context. The premises from prior research that the disparities in the institutionalization of professional local government management observed among the U.S. states may be attributed to certain formative factors provided a foundation for this analysis. As such, this study assessed the impact of the proximity of municipalities to MPA programs in the seven states of the West North Central Midwest region on the nature and/or occurrence of local government professionalism. Based on the findings, three main conclusions may be presented.

First, the results of the OLS multiple regression analyses displayed a negative association between proximity to MPA programs and local government professionalism, providing support for the primary research hypothesis. This suggests that the nature/occurrence of professional local government management decreases as the distance in miles from a university-based MPA program of a given sample municipality within the state or region increases, while holding constant other control variables

determined to be influential in the incidence of local government professionalism. The significance of this finding pertains to the identification of an additional factor that may contribute to the differences and/or disparities in the institutionalization of professional local government management observed among the U.S. states.

Second, using criteria derived from the literature, the comparative analysis of the 19 university-based MPA programs within the region revealed a few general commonalities as well as several notable differences. Specifically, contrasts in composition and local government specificity, including characteristics such as departmental status, fields of concentration, requirement of internship, online availability, faculty specializations, scholarships, certificates, and outreach, indicated program divergences especially when compared by state. Despite these differences in nature and contribution to local government professionalism of the MPA programs, the comparative and statistical findings support an association between municipal proximity to university-based MPA programs and the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management within the states and the region.

Third, the comparative analysis and the statistical significance of the impact of municipal proximity to MPA programs on local government professionalism in both the state and region may provide evidence of a geographic sphere of influence of university-based MPA programs on professional public administration. Within the West North Central Midwest, the physical distance of a municipality from a MPA-granting institution appears to be associated with the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management. A comparison of MPA program characteristics likewise supported this association. These findings may lend to the proposition that university-

based MPA programs may offer substantive educational and assistive contributions to the development, enhancement, and utilization of professional public administration within their geographic regions.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of particular state/municipal characteristics on the nature and/or occurrence of professional local government management in regional U.S. states. The intention of this research was to add to the body of local government and public administration literature pertaining to the understanding of geographical disparities in local government professionalism through an investigation of further potential factors that may contribute to its existence. The conclusions of this analysis will assist in broadening the comprehension of the differences in the institutionalization of professional local government management among U.S. states.

As this study has shown, the features of states and municipalities can influence institutions such as professionalism, displaying the effects of situational settings and political cultures on local governmental and administrative systems. However, the increasing complexity of urban governance and the growing need for professional acumen in city operations provide cause for additional research in this area. In particular, the importance placed on the MPA degree in the field of local government management supplies an impetus for the continued examination of the role of MPA education, programs, and applications. Moving forward, the reasons for variations in local government professionalism among U.S. states still require further consideration, and a better understanding of the basis for these differences may advance the future study of professional local government management and public administration.

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Appendix A

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES

OF THE OPERATIONAL MODEL

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
proxmpast	774	78.32687	82.13114	0	471.7
proxmpareg	774	70.39199	75.58494	0	454.3
pop	774	17205.66	39115.87	2501	454876
growth	774	1280.16	3560.003	-29380	29441
agecity	774	122.1615	38.92526	4	226
class	774	2.308786	.8505384	1	3
educ	774	25.59186	13.79046	3.4	88.2
faminc	774	63815.23	22458.43	24825	250000
homeown	774	70.06047	11.63767	28.2	100
housval	774	147641.3	94142.11	39600	864100
nonwhit	774	13.50594	14.27227	.2	98.4
medage	774	37.1376	5.460987	22.2	55.6
political	774	.7118863	.4531771	0	1
mayor	774	.1098191	.3128663	0	1
council	774	.4392765	.4966199	0	1
counsize	774	5.70155	1.945592	2	28
mpa	774	9.939276	5.813192	3	19
stcult	774	3.260982	2.1319	1	7
govt	774	1.44832	1.314381	0	3
cao	774	1.042636	.6266949	0	3
icma	774	.5994832	.7174049	0	4
state	774	.873385	.930712	0	9
credent	774	.1485788	.383882	0	2
profmgmt	774	8.28e-10	1	-1.350204	5.321032

Appendix B

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF UNIVERSITY-BASED MPA PROGRAMS IN THE WEST NORTH CENTRAL MIDWEST REGION

