

Professionalization, Institutionalization and Committee Service in U.S. State Legislatures

by

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
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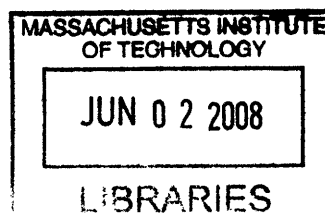
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Legislatures

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between legislative professionalism and institutionalization in the committee systems of six U.S. states. I examine whether increased professionalization, as defined by increases in levels of member salary, legislative staffing, and time in session, causes legislatures to institutionalize in a manner similar to the U.S. Congress. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the use (or lack thereof) of seniority as an automatic procedure for the assignment to, and transfer between, committees.

I find that while it appears that all state legislators value service on committees, legislative professionalization is not an adequate explanatory variable to describe the variation in the institutionalization of committee systems that we see across states in the United States. This finding is especially evident in the analysis of California, the most professionalized state legislature in the U.S.

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I. Introduction

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rather healthy literature looking at state legislatures in the United States. Many scholars were asking important and interesting questions about how state legislatures were operating, what individuals within state legislatures were doing, and what differences existed in legislatures across states. Following along in the behavioralist tradition, this work consisted mainly of interviewing and observing members of one or a few legislatures and reporting the findings regarding member behavior and institutional performance (s.f. Mann 1961, Jewell 1964, Rosenthal 1970, Chaffey 1970, Thurber 1976). There was also a strong push during this time to study and understand how committee systems in state legislatures operated, and what this meant for policy outcomes (Beth and Havard 1961, Robeck 1971, Sokolow and Brandsma 1971, Rosenthal 1973).

During much of the 1980s and 1990s a great deal of scholarly attention regarding legislatures in American politics began to focus on the U.S. Congress. Using new statistical and econometric tools, work over this period of time has expanded our understanding of the U.S. Congress immensely. Yet, the study of state legislatures lagged behind. More recently, however, scholarly attention has begun to shift back towards state legislatures as researchers have started to use the tools of congressional scholars to again ask questions about how state legislatures and their members organize and operate.

In recent years, the great majority of work on state legislatures has been focused on the issue of legislative professionalization. We can briefly define legislative professionalization as a combination of three important factors: member salary,

legislative staffing and resources, and time spent in session. More simply, many define professionalization as the extent to which the legislature emulates Congress, the most professional of all legislatures (Polsby 1975). The more a legislature pays members, provides resources, and spends time in session, the more professionalized is the legislature. Some studies have aimed to measure and index professionalization (Bowman and Kearney 1988; Kurtz 1992; Squire 1992a) while others have attempted to track changes in professionalization over time (King 2000; Mooney 1995), while others still have tried to understand the consequences and outcomes of professionalization (Fiorina 1994, 1997; Squire 1997; Berry, Berkman, and Schneiderman 2000; Meinke and Hasecke 2003). While there is variation as to the amount legislatures have professionalized (Moncrief and Thompson 1992) and debate about exactly what professionalization may entail, the consensus in the literature points toward the fact that most legislatures have professionalized to some extent, and differences in professionalism may drive institutional arrangements and policy outputs. Thus, continuing to gain a better understanding of legislative professionalism is an important endeavor if we wish to better understand the politics of state legislatures.

A concept that is closely related, yet not identical, to professionalization is institutionalization. Polsby's seminal article, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives," published in 1968, set out what he saw as the key components of an institutionalized body, as represented by the U.S. House. Namely, the legislature should be well bounded, internally complex, and utilize universalistic and automatic procedures (1968, 145). When considering state legislatures, many previous studies have tended to treat professionalization and institutionalization as the same concept (Chaffey 1970;

Chaffey and Jewell 1972; Chubb 1988). However, as some have noted (Squire 1992b, 1028; Freeman 1995), there is an important distinction between these two concepts. Although the key characteristics of a professionalized legislature - increased pay, staffing, and time in session - are closely related to some of the characteristics of an institutionalized legislature, such as a stabilized membership with less frequent turnover, professionalization involves characteristics of the legislature and its members while institutionalization refers to how the legislature operates. In essence, while a legislature's level of professionalization will help to define the environment in which members enter office and serve, how they operate and institutionalize their legislature may still vary across states and legislatures depending on these members' goals and desires.

It is within this distinction that this paper will focus its attention. How a legislature operates will always reflect the goals of its members and what members see as the best way to accomplish these goals. Though professionalization levels may contribute a great deal to the way members define their goals, other factors beyond salary, staff, and session time can also of shape the goals of legislators in very different ways, which in turn may push members to structure their legislatures in unique ways. While it is not unreasonable to expect two similarly professionalized legislatures would institutionalize in the same way, it is also not a given. On one hand, it is not hard to imagine that legislators who are paid well and provided the time and resource to successfully pursue legislative activity will enjoy service and structure their environment as to ensure continued service. However, it is also possible that despite the potential benefits from continued service in a professionalized legislature, members would have other goals, such as higher office, which would not lead them to structure the rules and

procedures of the chamber to promote long term service. Thus, while it is reasonable to hypothesize that more professionalized legislatures would have a committee system that has institutionalized in a manner similar to Congress, this assumption or a relationship between professionalization and institutionalization must still be tested.

This thesis will closely examine the institutionalization of one part of six state legislatures, the committee system, in an attempt to further our knowledge regarding the relationship between professionalization and institutionalization in state legislatures. Over the last 100 years, members of Congress (MCs) have institutionalized their committee system in such a way that for the most part seniority is used as an automatic procedure to assign members to committees, to select committee chairmen, and to allow transfers between committees. Members remain on committees as long as they so desire. When they look to transfer to one or more new committees, seniority is often used as a deciding factor (Deering and Smith 1997, 126). This paper tests the hypothesis that more professionalized legislatures should look more like Congress, and thus, should see a similarly institutionalized committee system. That is, we should see more professionalized legislatures exhibit a system in which members value committee service, find some committees more valuable than others, and in which seniority is used as an automatic procedure to assign members to these more valued committees.

Past research has provided us with solid evidence that all state legislatures have experienced some level of professionalization over the last century. Further, there is evidence that many of these legislatures, especially more professionalized bodies, have institutionalized in ways similar to Congress. Specifically, we see evidence that most states tend to display characteristics comparable to Polsby's first two criteria of an

institutionalized legislature - they are well bounded bodies that are internally complex in ways similar to Congress, particularly the most professionalized legislatures (s.f. Squire 1992a; Francis 1985; Freeman 1995). This paper will examine how differences in levels of professionalization across states relate to the third measure of institutionalization, the extent to which legislatures follows universalistic and automatic procedures for decision making in the committee assignment and transfer process. I rely on committee transfer data and an econometric technique developed by Groseclose and Stewart (1998) to estimate committee values, define committee hierarchies, and examine potential explanations for transfer patterns in the lower houses of the California, Michigan, Connecticut, Iowa, and Wyoming legislatures, five states with a great deal of variation in legislative professionalism. These data allow me to address three key questions: First, at the state level, do we observe a committee system in which the value members ascribe to service on committees follows a stable hierarchy with valued and non-valued committees? Second, do state legislatures use seniority as an automatic procedure to assign members to or facilitate transfer between more and less desired committees and chairmanships and if not, what accounts for observed variation? Finally, how does this relationship change across different state legislatures as a function of legislative professionalism and how important (if at all) is professionalization for determining how a legislature's committee system will operate?

I find preliminary evidence to support the claim that most state legislatures do exhibit a stable hierarchy of committees in which the average member finds service on certain committees to be of considerable value while service on others can be bothersome. However, what these hierarchies look like is not identical across states. It

appears that professionalization is not an adequate measure to explain the variation in committee hierarchies across states. Specifically, I show that committee systems in three states with very different levels of professionalization, California, Connecticut, and Wyoming, appear quite similar to each other, while the committee systems in Michigan and Iowa (also dissimilar in professionalization) look like each other, and particularly, appear much more like what we see in Congress than the previous three states.

Examining committee hierarchies and career patterns of committee chairs indicates that of these two groups, utilizing norms of seniority to guide transfers through a hierarchical committee system is more important to legislators in Michigan and Iowa, while something else may be driving transfer patterns in California, Connecticut and Wyoming. Using probit analysis to predict the likelihood a member will transfer off a committee in a given year, I also find that in California, Connecticut, and Wyoming, changes in partisan control and especially changeovers of speakers appear to be important factors, at the expense of seniority. Alternatively, seniority appears to be a much more important factor in Michigan and Iowa. Thus, I conclude that while state legislators, regardless of professionalization, do seem to value committee service and the value members ascribe to service follows stable hierarchies. However, how these hierarchies look, how members are assigned to committees, and the factors that encourage a member to transfer off of committees, are not identical across states. Specifically, I find that professionalization alone is not an adequate explanatory tool as we endeavor to better understand institutionalization in state legislatures. These findings, especially in the case of California, help to support a growing literature that argues that we must consider more

than just levels of professionalization when we think about the institutionalization of state legislatures.

This paper will progress as follows. In the next section I will discuss the existing literature on legislative professionalism and institutionalization in the states. I look at the extent to which legislatures have professionalized since 1960, how these changes vary across states, and what some potential consequences of professionalization may be. Additionally, I review the literature regarding professionalization and its relation to state legislative institutionalization using the criteria laid out by Polsby (1968). I then examine the literature regarding committee service and committee assignments at both the congressional level (briefly) and in the states. More specifically, I review previous studies that show why committee service should be considered valuable to legislators and why this is important for state legislative politics. From there, I discuss previous findings regarding the differences between studying committee assignments at the state and federal levels, paying specific attention to differences in party and leadership structures between the two levels of government. .

The section that follows will provide a description of the data used in this study, an explanation as to why these data were selected, and a discussion of the methodology utilized in this study. Specifically, I will discuss the Groseclose and Stewart method (referred from here on as the Grosewart method) I use to estimate committee values, as well as provide a brief recap of Groseclose and Stewart's (1996, 1998) findings regarding congressional committee values. I will speak to the assumptions necessary to use the Grosewart method, why I believe these assumptions may hold (at least to some degree) at

the state level, and why I believe it is theoretically reasonable to use the method when studying state legislatures.

I will then present a set of hypotheses regarding how we might expect the committee assignment processes in professionalized legislatures to be institutionalized in a manner more similar to Congress than less professionalized legislatures. I also present alternative hypotheses regarding the possibility that committee systems in the states may vary for reasons not related to professionalization. I then present my findings from this initial attempt to examine this particular facet of state legislative politics. I present committee values and hierarchies for the five states included in this study, as well as data examining the extent to which the norm of seniority is used to in selecting chairs of committees. Finally, I present findings regarding the factors that help determine whether a member will transfer off of a committee they are currently sitting on.

In the last section I offer some concluding thoughts regarding my findings on state legislative professionalism and its relationship to legislative institutionalization. Additionally, I propose a number of ways this study can be a stepping stone to future work in the field as we continue to refine our understanding of institutionalization in the states, what drives the process, and how institutionalization fits into the larger picture regarding state legislative politics.

II. Theory

Legislative professionalism

Discussion of professionalization in government and U.S. politics is certainly not a new concept. We can find discussion of professionalization all the way back to the early 20th

century (s.f. Meriam 1937, 1938; Messick 1937). However, specific attention to professionalization in state legislatures really began to take off after reform movements in the 1960s. As populations grew, society diversified, and political issues became more complex, an unwillingness or inability to adequately handle societal issues led citizens and legislators alike to push for reforms that would bring competent legislators to office and provide these men and women with the necessary resources to effectively govern (Miller 1965; Keefe 1966; Mooney 1995).¹

While a variety of slightly different definitions of legislative professionalism have been used over the years (King 1981; Kurtz 1992; Squire 1992a; Thompson and Moncrief 1992), for the most part it can be summed up as the degree to which a state legislature compares to the bench mark of the most professionalized legislature, the U.S. Congress (Polsby 1975). As mentioned above, the more a legislature pays its members, provides members with resources and staffing to legislate, and spends time in session the more professionalized is the legislature (Rosenthal 1986; Weberg 1988; Hammond 1996).

Over the course of the past 50 years nearly all legislatures have experienced at least some amount of professionalization (Pound 1992), however, there still exists a great deal of variation across states. Using the criteria mentioned above, Squire provides an index of state legislative professionalism in the late 1980s. He finds that four legislatures, California, Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts, were clearly far more

¹ In the remainder of this paper I am often forced to refer to “the states” or “state legislatures” as one concept to make explanations more succinct and easy to interpret. However, I am aware of the fact that there is often a great deal of variation within the findings of the studies I report. I make an effort to use qualifying phrases such as “most” or “many,” however, the reader is cautioned to remember the variation that is present across states as they consider previous findings regarding professionalization and institutionalization in the states.

professionalized than other state legislatures at this time. These states all met in unlimited session while paying members well and providing sufficient staffing and resources. At the other end of the spectrum, he finds that legislatures in New Hampshire, Wyoming, Utah, North Dakota, and South Dakota were rather unprofessional. The rest of the state legislatures were clumped somewhere in the middle and could be classified as moderately professionalized (1992a, 71-72).

King extends Squire's analysis to examine changes in professionalization over the period from 1963 – 1994. He finds that although there is some up and down movement in a state's level of professionalism over time, some significant trends are apparent. . First, there appears to be a general trend of increasing professionalization in many states, however, there is upward and downward variation in some states over time. Yet, most states continued to increase member salaries, spending on support staff, and days in session throughout the time period (2000, 333). Second, the hierarchy of professionalization remains very stable over time. That is, the most and least professionalized legislatures tended to remain the most or least professionalized over the time period. Additionally, the most professionalized legislatures tended to continue professionalizing at a greater rate than less professionalized legislatures (2000, 331-332).

However, during the 1990s, many states instituted policy changes that could be considered de-professionalization. By 2000, 15 states had passed laws enacting term limits of between 6-12 years in office (Meinke and Hasecke 2003). Further, some states, such as Colorado and Oklahoma, began placing caps on the number of days legislatures could meet in session, while other states such as California have seen dwindling budgets for legislative staffing in recent years (Squire 1993).

We know what professionalization is and how it has changed over time in the states, but scholars have also done work to determine what drives these changes in professionalization over time. It is important to remember that changes in legislative professionalism can be thought of as a policy output on the part of citizens and state officials as in many cases legislation, referenda, constitutional amendments, and governor approval are required to alter state law in order to facilitate professionalism (Mooney 1995, 48). As such, scholars have identified a set of social and economic factors, institutional characteristics, and geographic and cultural factors as the key components driving changes in professionalization. First, changing social and economic characteristics within a state can lead to changes in professionalization. As populations grow and become more diversified, the need and desire for increased governmental services and legislative output is also likely to grow (Thompson 1986). Thus, citizens will push for changes to provide a more responsive government. Additionally, states with greater economic prosperity are likely to have citizens willing to spend the funds necessary to provide a professionalized legislature (Roeder 1979).

The institutional characteristics of a chamber can also drive changes in professionalization. As mentioned earlier, more professionalized legislatures tend to continue professionalizing as time goes on. Career oriented members who come to a professionalized chamber will work to push for changes to further enhance their time in office (King 2000). Additionally, opportunities to advance either within the chamber or to offices outside, can affect professionalization. Opportunities for career advancement not only attract legislators to the office, but also drive members to turn the office into a full-time, efficient operation that allows them to pursue activities most likely to ensure

future advancement (Mooney 1995). However, too many opportunities for advancement beyond the chamber could have an opposite effect as members may not end up staying in office for very long if they are able to move on quickly (Squire 1988).

Finally, culture and geography can be important factors in determining a state's level of legislative professionalism. As some have noted, states governments tend to follow neighboring states when making policy changes (Walker 1969; Gray 1973; Berry and Berry 1990). This policy diffusion reflects cultural similarities within regions as citizens in neighboring states are more likely to face the same challenges and seek similar solutions to problems. Further, citizens are more likely to have heard about and be willing to adopt new policies that they have seen work in other states in their region. Mooney finds this type of policy diffusion to have an important independent effect on state legislative professionalism. States neighboring a state that has recently become more professionalized are more likely to undergo a process of professionalization of their own (1995, 59-60).

A variety of studies have also noted the possible effects of changes in professionalization. Fiorina (1994, 1999) finds that increased professionalization in state government may have led to an increase in divided government in nonsouthern U.S. states. He argues that as career legislative service became more attractive, it was more attractive to Democratic candidates than Republican candidates as the Republicans tended to have more high paying options outside of government.² Dilger, Krause, and Moffet (1995) find an increase in gubernatorial effectiveness in states with more professionalized legislatures. Maestas (2000) finds more professionalized legislatures

² Though, see Stonecash and Agathangelou (1997) for a response. Stonecash and Agathangelou argue the increase in nonsouthern Democrats in state legislatures was merely a product of a longer term regional partisan realignment, not changes in legislative professionalism.

tend to show increased policy responsiveness as career motivated politicians are more likely to listen to and respond to citizen demands for policy. However, this increased responsiveness does not necessarily equate to public approval as Squire (1993) finds approval ratings to be negatively associated with increased professionalization.

Institutionalization in the states

The professionalization literature provides us with solid evidence that nearly all states have professionalized, some more than others. Yet, before we can examine the relationship between professionalization and institutionalization, we must first review what we know about institutionalization in the states. Polsby (1968) provides the three facets of an institutionalized legislature that he found defined the development of the U.S. Congress in the 20th century: well-boundedness, internal complexity, and universalistic procedures for conducting business. There is a wealth of literature that follows along after Polsby's article detailing the institutionalization of the U.S. House (s.f. Polsby, Gallagher and Rundquist 1969; Price 1975, 1977). What appears to have been the catalyst for the institutionalization of the House lies in changing member goals. As member turnover decreased and average terms of service increased, a transformation of the rules and norms of the House occurred as a response to members', "changing needs and incentives" (Kernell 1977, 671). Though the state legislative literature is not as plentiful as the congressional literature, enough work has been done to find some evidence of these components of institutionalization in state legislatures.

As I briefly discussed above, there is solid evidence that state legislatures, and especially more professionalized legislatures, meet the first of Polsby's conditions for an

institutionalized body. Polsby cites lower rates of member turnover, longer periods of service for continuing members, and a lengthy period of apprenticeship on the way to leadership positions as examples of an institutionalized legislature that is well-bounded from the outside.

There is a good deal of evidence that member turnover has decreased while retention rates have increased in nearly all states. Over the course of the 20th century, turnover rates in state legislatures have declined steadily, approaching what can be called stable membership towards the end of the century (Rosenthal 1974; Shin and Jackson 1979; Niemi and Winsky 1987; Squire 1988c). In fact, by the late 1980s the average membership turnover rate for all states was below 20 percent (Loomis 1990). Similarly, retention rates and terms of service have steadily grown over the last century (Luttberg 1992; Moncrief et al. 1992; Opheim 1994). As Ray (1974, 109) documents, by the late 1960s between 70 and 80 percent of state legislators sought reelection each election year. A rising incumbency advantage in most states brought many of these members back to office (s.f. Jewell and Breaux 1988; Weber, Tucker, and Brace 1991; Holbrook and Tidmarch 1991). Further, the average tenure of members also increased substantially over this period. At the turn of the century the average prior service of members in state legislatures was only .3 terms. By 1970 this number had risen to 2.2 (Ray 1974, 109-110). This gradual decrease in turnover and increase in member retention continued through the 80s and early 90s as well (Squire 1988; Moncrief 1999)

The most obvious explanation for these changes in turnover and retention rates can be explained by the increases in professionalization I have already discussed. Better pay and resources combined with increased time to successfully legislate made careers in

state politics more attractive to ambitious and career driven individuals in much the same way as these changes made service in the U.S. House more attractive in the past.

However, there is also another component to these changes in state legislatures.

Different legislators can hold vary different ideas about their current office and its position in their long term career goals.

Schlesinger (1966) discusses this fact in his study on political ambition in U.S. politics. Specifically, he defines three types of ambition that can define how politicians might act in office. First, discrete ambition defines politicians who only look to hold their elected office for a legally specified term. These individuals tend to withdraw from public life and return to their careers in the private sector after their time in office is up. Static ambition describes individuals who hope to retain their current position beyond one term of service; however, they do not hope to move on to other offices later in their career. Legislators with static ambition are likely to act in ways that please the constituencies that elected them and will continue to elect them to office. Finally, progressive ambition classifies politicians who look to use their current office as a stepping stone to higher office in the future. These individuals are likely to stay in office longer than those with discrete ambitions; however, when the opportunity for advancement presents itself they will often make the move. Further, these members find themselves responding to two separate constituencies, the constituency that elected them to their current office, as well as the potential constituency that is needed for election to their next office (1966, 10-11). Thus, members in different legislators with different types of ambition may act in ways that are quite different from each other. For example, advancement opportunities both within and outside of the state legislature can affect the

amount of time members spend in office and how they operate while in office. Specifically, we might expect members in states with a great deal of opportunity for advancement to higher office to act differently than members in states with few opportunities (Squire 1988a, 67). Though congressmen may also have their eyes on career advancement, there are typically many more offices available for the state legislator to move onto while House members are basically limited to the Senate, a governorship, or the presidency. This slightly different career focus for members of state legislators may lead them to act in slightly different ways while in office than their counterparts in Congress.

Finally, we must deal with the last piece of a well-bounded legislature, a leadership structure in which leaders are recruited from within the organization and typically serve a lengthy period of apprenticeship in the legislature before ascending to their position of leadership where many end their political careers. Though we don't typically find speakers or party leaders serving over 25 years in a state legislature before assuming leadership roles as Polsby found in the House (1968: 149), there is evidence that Speakers and party leaders in many state legislatures are serving longer periods of apprenticeship before their terms of leadership. However, unlike in the House, leaders in state legislatures often use their position as a spring board to other political pursuits.

Leadership patterns appear to be more closely tied to professionalization than the general career trends of the rank and file members discussed above, so it is harder to generalize about all states. However, there is evidence that, at least in more professionalized legislatures, speakers and party leaders are spending a greater amount of time in office before beginning their term in the leadership, as well as spending more

time serving as leaders once selected. Chaffey and Jewell show that by 1970, speakers in more professionalized legislatures tended to have between 6 to 8 sessions of experience (typically 12-16 years) before taking the speakership, while floor leaders averaged between 5 and 6 sessions of experience. Leaders in less professionalized legislatures served between 3 and 5 sessions for Speakers and 2 to 3 sessions for floor leaders (1972: 1282). Additionally, Squire (1992) finds that speakers served progressively longer terms in most states over the period from 1907-1987. Freeman finds that for all states combined, the average time speakers spent in office before their election grew from just over 4 years in 1975 to nearly 8 years in 1991 (1995: 369). Lastly, in all state legislatures there appears to be a growing apprenticeship pattern, though this pattern is different across states. Simon (1987) interviewed 99 elected legislative leaders in 1987 and found that 46 had served as an assistant leader and 44 had served as a committee chair prior to their election to the leadership. Though Simon's study only covered one year (1987), Freeman's (1995) research covering 1975-1991 supported her findings. She finds that though there is variation in what type of apprenticeship leaders are expected to serve, most state's leaders tend to follow a particular career path to the leadership. The type of apprenticeship leaders serve, typically assistant leadership positions or committee chairs, tends to be a function of the relative number of available positions of both types. States with more assistant leadership positions tend to have speakers who served as an assistant leader before election while states with more committee chairs available elect speakers with chairmanship experience.

The second of Polsby's criteria for an institutionalized legislature is internal complexity. He argues this is seen in legislatures in which there exists, "a division of

labor in which roles are specified and there are widely shared expectations about the performance of roles” (1968: 145). He specifically points to three factors: an autonomous and important standing committee system, specialized roles to assist party leadership, and the existence of services to members in the form of general and committee staffing resources (153). First, in a number of interview based studies, state legislators overwhelmingly cite committees as the loci for important legislative decision making (Uslaner and Webb 1977, Hamm 1980). Additionally, in surveying senior members of many state legislatures in 1993, Moncrief, Thompson and Kurtz (1996) find that legislators felt the influence of committees and committee chairs had increased over the previous 15 years (see also Francis 1989). Although committees may be important bases of power in the states, as I will discuss more in a moment, how members are assigned to committees, often at the sole discretion of the speaker, may threaten the extent to which we can call them autonomous.

Although there has not been a great deal of attention in the literature comparing the selection and operation of floor leaders and whips in state legislatures, most states do specifically designate formal positions for assistant leaders to support the speaker. As I discussed above, in many cases these assistant leadership positions are in fact required stepping stones on the way to a speakership. Additionally, these assistant leadership positions are created to operate separate from committee chairmanships (Simon 1987; Freeman 1995). Additionally, as I discussed above, we have seen evidence of increased resources for members, in the form of staffing and services, in most states since 1960 (King 2000).

Committees and seniority in the states

Polsby's final measure of an institutionalized legislature is the use of automatic procedures to conduct internal business. While he discusses the use of automatic procedures for other decisions than committee assignments, such as the scheduling of legislation, the majority of his attention is focused on the extent to which seniority is used as an automatic mechanism to assign members to committees, facilitate transfers between committees, and select committee leaders. As this piece of institutionalization is the focus of this thesis, I will spend a little more time discussing it than the previous factors.

I will first briefly discuss the literature regarding committee assignments in Congress. Specifically, I address why and how Congressmen value committee service. If members did not value service on committees, or at least some specific committees, how they were assigned and whether or not an automatic procedure was used might not be an important detail. Thus, understanding the main reasons members should value service on committees will be useful before we begin to examine the assignment process. In this section I will briefly review the literature regarding member goals, committee service, and the intersection of the two. I will then compare these findings regarding committee service in Congress to what we currently know about state legislators and committees before beginning my analysis.

To understand whether members view service on committees as a valuable use of time and resources, we must first understand how committee service fits into the overall goal structure of Congressmen. While there has been an enormous amount of work done to define the goals of MCs, for the most part we can define four basic member goals:

reelection, constituency service, policy goals, and prestige within the chamber (s.f. Fenno 1973, Rhode and Shepsle 1973, Deering and Smith 1997). Mayhew (1977) goes so far as to assert reelection as the only goal with the other three goals simply tools to achieve reelection. With these basic goals defined, it is easy to see how committee service, specifically committee service on important committees, would be a valuable thing for members of a legislature. Although committee service does come with opportunity costs, for example, any time spent working on committee business could be time spent on other activities such as campaigning or constituency contact, committee service does lend itself to three important activities described in Mayhew's work - constituency casework, credit claiming, and position taking. Further, as Fenno points out, different committees can help members achieve policy goals as well as gain prestige within the chamber. Thus, we see that the ability to obtain membership on certain committees can be a very valuable tool for MCs seeking to accomplish their goals.

Thus, it is no surprise Groseclose and Stewart (1998; 1999) provide evidence that members ascribe value to committee service in a well defined hierarchy. Specifically, members prefer service on certain committees that are particularly useful to them. The promise of future service on some of these most valued committees is often enough to encourage members to put in service on less valued committees as they wait to work their way up to the top slots. Additional evidence that members value service on committees is the fact that in order to obtain valued committee seats, we observe members partaking in activities, such as fund raising for party members or voting with the party on tough issues, that they otherwise might not pursue (Leighton and Lopez 2002, Heberlig 2003, Kanthak 2004).

It is clear that committee service, and specifically service on certain committees, is valuable to members of Congress. Yet, should we also expect this trend to carry over to members of state legislatures? If we determine that state legislators strive to achieve the same goals as MCs then the answer is yes. While assuming that state legislators have the exact same goals as members of Congress is probably not correct, it is safe to assume that many state legislators hope to accomplish at least some of these same goals.

Although the literature in this area is still underdeveloped, there does appear to be a fair amount of evidence to support the notion that state legislators should value committee service in a manner similar to Congressmen. First, state legislators looking for places to claim credit or stake out a positive voting record in an effort to secure reelection should be attracted to committee service on relevant committees. For example, a number of studies have noticed a rising incumbency advantage in state legislative races (Jewell and Breaux 1988, Breaux 1990, Snyder and Ansolobehere 2004). Some portion of this incumbency advantage can be traced to service on committees and committee leadership positions (Holbrook and Tidmarch 1990, 1993). Additionally, beyond reelection to the same office, members can use their record of service on committees as part of their strategy to move on to higher office (Berkman 1993, 1994; Berkman and Eisenstein 1999) Thus, state legislators with reelection and long term career goals should certainly value committee service.

In addition to helping members in their quest for reelection, committee service in the states can also be important to members hoping to take an active role in shaping policy outcomes. As I mentioned earlier, previous studies have found many members identify committees as the most important and influential arena for determining policy

outcomes. Further, the importance of committees is perceived to be growing over time (Uslaner and Webb 1977, Hamm 1980; Moncrief, Thompson and Kurtz 1996). If many key decisions are being made in committees and committees are influential within the legislature, committee service on relevant committees should be very attractive to members seeking to have an active role in shaping policy decisions in issue areas of interest.

Finally, there is some evidence showing that committee service can be an important factor as members look to advance to leadership positions within the legislature as well as to other offices beyond the legislature (Rosenthal 1996, Jewell and Patterson 1986). Working hard and establishing a track record on committees, especially important committees, can distinguish members in the eyes of party leaders as well as their peers in the rank and file. Members can display intelligence, hard work, party loyalty, or any other number of characteristics necessary to move up to prestigious leadership positions as their career progresses. Therefore, committee service can also help members to achieve prestige within and beyond the legislature.

Thus we see that even at the state level, members of all types should value service on committees as time spent on committees can be a key component in helping legislators to accomplish their goals, whether they are policy, prestige, or reelection goals. However, while we may be confident that legislators should value committee service, it is still not clear how this relates to what we should expect regarding institutionalization, specifically regarding the institutionalization of a seniority system to assign members to committees.

Much of the literature seems to guide us to use professionalization as the key difference across legislatures that should account for variation in patterns of institutionalization. However, for each of the three member goals I just mentioned, we could conceive of ways in which members of similarly professionalized legislatures would look to institutionalize the committee system in different ways. For example, we can think of members from similar legislatures of varied types of political ambition, one with static and the other with progressive ambition. While both would be focused on election oriented goals, they might desire a different set of rules for committee assignments. Both members operate in a professionalized legislature in which they are well compensated and they have the resources and time to attack their legislative goals. Further, these resources provide the members with many of the tools they need to seek election. However, on one hand, members who hope to remain in the same legislature for many years might prefer a committee assignment process that relies strictly on seniority. A seniority system will enable them to pay their dues early in their career on less valued committees before obtaining desired committee positions as their career progresses as well as allow them to remain on preferred committees as long as they so desire. On the other hand, a member interested in election to a higher office might favor a different method for committee assignment. As this legislator is not likely to be around for the long term, she might look to party leaders or the speaker to reward members with valuable committee assignments based on other criteria, such as party voting or fund raising. In this situation and under the right circumstances, these ambitious members can quickly obtain the committee assignments that will enable them to achieve their goal or reelection to a higher office.³ This slight distinction regarding reelection goals of

³ Squire (1988b) makes this point with his example of the California and New York legislatures. He notes

members illustrates the potential to see rather different institutional outcomes even when member goals are somewhat similar.

Thus, we see that despite a healthy literature tracking changes in legislative professionalism and institutionalization, we still have work to do in order to better understand how members in different types of legislatures are likely to organize their institution. Again, I return to the questions in this area that this paper will attempt to address. First, I am interested in how members in different state legislatures value committee service and how state legislative committee hierarchies compare to the committee system in Congress. Second, how important is seniority as an automatic and institutionalized method for assignment to committees and chairmanships? Related to this, if seniority is not an automatic trigger for committee assignments and transfers, what other factors can explain transfer patterns? Finally, I hope to discover how these findings compare across states and whether professionalization is an adequate concept to explain any variation we might find.

III. Methodology

With the theory as to legislator's goals with regards to committee service laid out, we can now move to discussion of how this paper hopes to address the key questions. First, to understand how members of state legislators value committee service, we must have a way to estimate committee values to construct committee hierarchies. To measure "committee value," I rely on an econometric technique developed by Groseclose and Stewart (1998; Stewart and Groseclose 1999) that uses transfers between committees to

the difference between California, where many members are more upwardly mobile and thus desire a more centralized set of rules for distributing legislative powers, and New York, where members tend to stay in the same office for longer periods and prefer a seniority based system.

estimate cardinal values of committee service for particular committees.⁴ The technique rests on the premise that members of a legislature have a veto over whether they relinquish one committee assignment in return for another. Thus, when we observe a member giving up an assignment on Committee A in order to acquire an appointment on Committee B, we assume that this is evidence that *at least that member* values serving on Committee B more than serving on Committee A.⁵ Furthermore, when we observe a member give up seats on Committees C and D in order to acquire a single seat on Committee E, this is evidence that this member values serving on Committee E more than he values the combined benefits of serving on both Committees C and D. In addition, when a member relinquishes a seat on Committee F and receives no other as compensation, this is evidence that the member regards service on Committee F as burdensome because the costs in time and effort of attending to committee business exceed the policy and tangible benefits to serving on the committee. The Grosewart method uses statements regarding the probabilities of transfers from one (or more) committee to another (rather than the reverse) to construct a likelihood function to describe observed transfer data and estimate values for each committee (Groseclose and Stewart 1998, Stewart and Groseclose 1999).⁶

A unique and useful outcome of the Grosewart method is its ability to assign a cardinal value to each committee. For example, a committee with a Grosewart value of 3

⁴ The Grosewart method improves on two previous methods, the net-transfer ratio (Bullock and Sprague 1969) and the Committee Dominance method (Munger 1988). As discussed below, the Grosewart method's ability to assign cardinal values as well as provide a statistical goodness of fit test makes it the most desirable method.

⁵ This "value" can summed up as the range of benefits service on the committee provides to the member. These benefits can range from intangibles such as making a difference in a specific policy area of interest to tangibles such as benefits to fundraising or possible future career goals.

⁶ A more formal discussion of the Grosewart method and coding procedures is presented in Groseclose and Stewart (1998).

is over twice as valuable to the average legislator as a committee with a value of 1.46. Further, the Grosewart method is able to identify “burden committees,” or committees for which the average legislator would prefer no assignment than assignment to the burden committee. These burden committees take on negative values. Finally, the Grosewart method provides goodness of fit measures with known statistical properties.

Groseclose and Stewart’s (1998) main finding regarding the value of committee assignments in Congress during the post-Vietnam War era, the finding that this paper will compare to state legislatures, was that a few select committees were overwhelmingly more valuable than the majority of other committees whose values were clumped together.⁷ Specifically, power and prestige committees (Fenno 1973) such as Rules and Ways and Means were two or more times more valuable than the majority of other committees. The remaining majority of roughly equally valued committees tended to be policy or constituency based committees such as Education and the Workforce and Veterans’ Affairs. These findings indicate that most members of Congress have significant preferences to serve on power and prestige committees, while at the same time have varying preferences over policy and constituency committees depending on their own situations.

As we begin to think about the Grosewart method in the context of state legislatures we must examine its assumptions with respect to the states. The key assumption of the Grosewart method – that members have a veto over giving up a committee seat for another - can immediately be called into question as we move from the Congressional level of analysis to state legislatures. However, a brief examination of the main differences in committee assignment and transfer procedures between Congress

⁷ These findings were supported with expanded data in Edwards and Stewart (2006).

and state legislatures and how this should relate to the estimation of committee values will provide some theoretical basis for why the Grosewart method may still be appropriate at the state level.

The first main difference between Congress and most state legislatures is the amount of power wielded by the speaker and party leadership in the states, specifically the discretion they have in deciding which members are assigned to which committees. In Congress both the majority and minority parties use a committee on committees to decide which of their members will serve on each committee. In the majority of states a committee of this type does not exist. Rather, for the most part, committee assignments are made exclusively by the majority party leadership, or most commonly, the Speaker or President of the chamber (Hedlund 1989). However, majority party leadership, in many cases, is likely to consult with minority party leadership regarding the assignments of minority party members (Hedlund and Patterson 1992). Though, this consultation does not always equate to cooperation (Chaffey 1970).

State legislatures also display a different pattern regarding transfers between committees. A much higher level of turnover between sessions creates more opportunities for continuing members to move to new committees than in the U.S. Congress where membership is more stable across sessions as well as between committees. However, in contrast to the U.S. Congress, when state legislators attempt to move between committees, state legislative leaders appear to be less likely to accommodate transfer requests mainly on the basis of the seniority of the members placing requests (Jewell and Patterson 1986).

The fact that party leaders have nearly autonomous control over committee assignments and seniority does not appear to be a driving force in accommodating transfer requests might cause us to worry that the main assumption of the Grosewart method is not reasonable for state legislatures. However, as long as members are not forced to relinquish their seat on a committee when they do not want to, the Grosewart assumption will not be violated. Hedlund (1992) shows that in the vast majority of cases state legislative leaders will accommodate member requests for initial committee assignments and transfers between committees in order to assist members to achieve their career and policy goals. Further, Hedlund finds that it is very rare for continuing members to be removed from a committee they served on in the previous term if that member requests the assignment again. Thus, although committee assignments in the states rely on party leadership to a much greater degree than in Congress, the fact that members are not usually removed from committees against their will allows us to proceed in our quest to estimate state committee values using the Grosewart method. However, it is clear that party leadership will be more important in the transfer portion of the committee assignment process in states than in Congress.

In addition to using the Grosewart method to estimate committee values, we would also like to know how important seniority is in determining transfers between committees and in assigning committee chairmanships. Though data to better understand committee assignments and their reliance on seniority is not available to this study, I rely on data regarding the average seniority of members serving as committee chairs to see if members need to serve on a committee or in the chamber for a long period of time before

ascending to the chair of a committee. I also examine the amount a legislature violates seniority in naming new committee chairs.

Finally, to get a better idea of what factors are important determinates of whether or not a member will transfer off of a committee in a given year, I rely on probit regression analysis. Specifically, I analyze how likely committee seniority, partisan changes, speaker changes, and the value of the current committee a member is serving on, are to effect a member's decision on whether to transfer off of a committee.

IV. Data and Hypotheses

This paper utilizes transfer data from four states, Michigan, Connecticut, Iowa, and Wyoming, during the period between 1985 and 2007. Additionally, I have transfer data from California going back through 1967. There is an increased level of difficulty involved in studying state legislatures in comparison with the U.S. Congress as you must considered the rules, norms, and structures of 50 different, sometimes quite different, legislative bodies. However, as we have reason to believe that levels of legislative professionalization should be important determinates of institutional structure, the states chosen for analysis in this paper were selected based on their position in King's (2000) adaptation of Squire's (1992) index of legislative professionalism. Using King's professionalization scores I divided the states into four groups and randomly selected one state from each group. The states I chose can be placed into the following four basic categories: very professionalized (Mich.), mostly professionalized (Conn.), somewhat professionalized (Iowa), and not professionalized (Wyo.). Though similarly professionalized legislatures may not be identical, it is reasonable to expect legislatures

should be more like other similarly professionalized legislatures than legislatures with a significantly different level of professionalization. Thus, selecting one state from each of these categories for this initial exploration of state committee values will allow us to exploit this apparent variation. In addition to these states, I also chose to collect and analyze data from California. California was the second most professionalized legislature in the early 1960s, but from 1970 it consistently ranked as the most professionalized legislature with an index between 15 and 20 percent higher than the second most professionalized legislature and by the 1990s California was approaching a level of professionalization very similar to Congress. It was for this reason I decided I should include California as it is the state most likely to have a committee system that looks like Congress, if professionalization is indeed the most important factor for explaining institutionalization.

The transfer data used in this analysis was acquired from a combination of two sources. First, for more recent years, I used each state legislature's official website to obtain copies of legislative journals or records. For earlier years I also relied on printed copies of state legislative guides or chamber journals. To begin, a roster of all members of each state's House of Representatives was collected. This included member names, party affiliation, district, and seniority in the chamber. The rosters were then used to compile another database detailing each member's membership and seniority on committees in each session, as well as whether or not the member had transferred onto or off of the committee. This committee membership file was used to construct the transfer database used to estimate the committee values and examine seniority trends. Additional information documenting the number of open seats (as vacated by retiring members) in a

session along with dummy variables for partisan turnover and changes in the speaker was also gathered to conduct the probit regression analysis that examines what factors influence whether or not a member transfers off of a committee in a given session.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the five states used in this study. While time constraints limited data collection for this study, future work will be well served to include more years (at least back to the 1960s) and more states.

[Table 1 about here]

With an understanding of the context in which state legislatures make committee assignments, as well as a frame for comparing across states – professionalization – we can make some hypotheses for how committee service might be valued in the states. Although it is becoming clear that professionalization and institutionalization are not the same thing, as it is not yet clear exactly how to define every possible member goal this paper will test against the null hypothesis that, in essence, the two are the same thing. That is, I will suppose that legislatures that are able to pay their members, provide resources to members, and allow ample time in session to members will be the legislatures most likely to exhibit a committee system that looks like and has institutionalized like Congress. However, as the example I discussed above illustrates, member goals such as long term career ambitions, which can vary across similarly professionalized legislatures, could lead to significantly different institutional imperatives in two legislatures that look very similar in terms of member salary, resources, and days in session. In this case we could see an entirely different situation in which legislatures

that are quite different in the way they provide for their members would institutionalize in similar ways if their members had similar goals. Yet, *a priori*, it is quite difficult to attempt to lay out all the possible goals members of different state legislatures could hold that would affect how the chamber institutionalized. As such, I will leave this task to future researchers and stick to the more straight forward task of testing the hypothesis that professionalization should lead to institutionalization along the same lines as we observe in Congress.

The first test I will conduct concerns committee values and hierarchies. As the literature seems to show that committee service should an important tool for legislators to pursue a wide variety of legislative and professional goals, we should expect the committee values to indicate that, on the whole, committee service is valued by members in all states, regardless of professionalization. Thus, in each state I expect to find a number of committees with values that are positive and significantly different than zero. Regarding how the committee hierarchies should look, due to the increased benefits of service in terms of salary, resources, and time in session, I expect the more professionalized legislatures to have long serving, career oriented members who push for a committee system that rewards seniority. As such, these legislatures should exhibit a committee hierarchy in which a few very highly desired committees are clearly the most valuable and are committees long serving members will strive to obtain membership on. Like Congress, these professionalized legislatures should also have a number of similarly but positively valued committees that serve specific needs of specific members. I expect the less professionalized legislatures to show a much less stable committee hierarchy. Members of less professionalized legislatures are not likely to stay in office for a great

deal of time and are less likely to have their sights on future office. As such, they may not be as likely to gravitate towards similar committees. Instead members will self-select onto specific committees that may cater to regional interests or personal interests. On net, however, there will not be a funneling of members to a few very highly desired committees.

Next, I examine seniority in relation to the selection, retention, and transfers of committee chairs. Again, as more professionalized legislatures are more likely to have long tenured careerist members, I expect seniority to be a much more important factor in determining the selection of committee chairs. Members will wish to have predictable patterns that guide their career in the legislature, and as such, they will not create a system in which party leadership is able to have a great deal of control over their career paths. Instead they will push for the institutionalization of a seniority system to structure committee service. Therefore, we should see chairmen in professionalized legislatures who serve relatively longer terms in the chamber as well as on a specific committee before being elevated to the chair than members in less professionalized legislatures. Similarly, professional legislators should serve lengthier terms as chair than their counterparts in less professionalized legislatures. Finally, we should see fewer instances of seniority violations (the most senior member of a committee being passed over by a less senior member for an open chairmanship or a sitting committee chair being demoted while still on the committee) in the selection and retention of chairman.

Lastly, to better get at the separation between automatic and particularistic procedures in assigning members I also utilize probit regression analysis to examine factors that influence when members are most likely to transfer off of a committee. The

independent variables I examine are committee seniority, the number of open committee seats vacated by retired or defeated members, partisan turnover, a change in the speakership, and the estimated value of the committee a member is transferring off of.

The open seats and committee value variables can be seen as control variables. We should expect that with an increased number of open seats members of any legislature are more likely to relinquish their spot on a committee as it is more likely that an available spot on the committee they desire has opened up. Alternatively, members who sit on a highly valued committee are less likely to give up their seat as there are likely only a few committees they would rather serve on.

After controlling for these two variables, the other three will allow us to get at what drives transfers in a state, automatic procedures governed by a seniority system or particularistic criteria determined by party leaders and the speaker, which could be anything from voting records to party fund raising to personal friendships. Again, I expect seniority to be more important in the professionalized legislatures than the party and speaker variables. In the professionalized legislatures we are more likely to see members who are skilled and experienced enough to realize they would like to insulate themselves from the whims of changing leaders. Therefore, they should develop rules and procedures that protect them from these types of changes. If this is the case, we should expect to see a significant negative value on the seniority coefficient for professional states. As long as they are protected by seniority rules, once a member arrives on a committee they highly value they will stay on until they retire. In this case we would never classify them as transferring off the committee. Similarly, since seniority should protect members from partisan swings and changes in leaders, these two

coefficients should have a smaller and possibly insignificant effect in professional legislatures. I expect to see the reverse in the less professionalized legislatures. As members are not in office for a great deal of time and they may be less interested in getting to certain highly valued committees, they might not push for a strict seniority system. In this situation, they are more likely to have their committee service influenced by changes in partisan control or turnover of the speaker.⁸ Therefore, I expect to see positive and significant coefficients for these two variables while the seniority variable is less important than with the more professionalized legislatures.

V. Analysis

Our first task in analyzing the data is to examine the results regarding committee values and committee hierarchies. Tables 2-6 present the Grosewart values for the five states included in this study, presented in order of the most to least professionalized: California, Michigan, Connecticut, Iowa, and Wyoming, respectively. Before examining these results, let me take a moment to discuss what these values actually mean using Wyoming as example. Appropriations is a highly valued committee with a value of 1.11, while Agriculture, Public Lands, and Water Resources is rather lowly valued at .33. As mentioned above, these scores are cardinal. That is, a seat on Appropriations is approximately three and a third times more valuable to the average member of the Wyoming legislature than a seat on Agriculture. Further, as these values are z-scores, we can also convert these values to probabilities using the cumulative normal curve. A z-

⁸ Obviously, any partisan changeover also comes with a new speaker. Thus, these two variables are fairly correlated. However, I ran three specifications, one with both variables included, and two with only one of the two variables included. Results were very robust across all three specifications. I include both in the model I report as they both seem to have an independent effect on transfer patterns in states for which they are important.

score of 1.11, for Appropriations for example, converts to a probability value of just under 0.87 while the z-score on Agriculture, 0.33, converts to 0.62. This can be interpreted to say that roughly 88 percent of members of the Wyoming legislature during the period examined would accept an assignment to Appropriations if offered as long as they did not have to give up another assignment, while only 62 percent would do the same with an offer of a seat on Agriculture.

[Table 2 about here]

With an understanding of the committee values we can now proceed to examination of the first hypothesis this paper will test, that legislators in all states should ascribe some value to committee service, regardless of professionalization. The results, for the most part, confirm this hypothesis. In four of the five states, with the exception of Iowa, at least half of the committees are of positive non-zero value to the average member of a respective legislature. Additionally, only one state, Michigan, has any statistically negative committee values, or burden committees. Iowa appears to be the only outlier in this study. We observe only three committees on which the average Iowa legislator ascribes committee service a statistically significant amount of value. Why these legislators do not appear to find much value in committee service is not quite clear, however, as I will discuss in a moment Iowa still displays what we can consider a hierarchy.

The second hypothesis I use these committee data to test involves committee hierarchies and levels of professionalization. I predicted that the more professionalized

legislatures would exhibit hierarchies that most resembled Congress – a few very highly valued committees, a number of roughly equal low to moderately valued committees, and perhaps a couple of burden committees. If increased professionalization leads to a committee hierarchy like Congress, this is evidence to support the notion that professionalization leads to an institutionalization that uses seniority as a key piece of the committee assignment and transfer process as long tenured members are more likely to move up to very highly valued committees and then remain on them until retirement or defeat while younger members serve apprenticeships on less popular committees.

[Table 3 about here]

However, I find that, interestingly enough, professionalization does not appear to be a good indicator for predicting how these state hierarchies will appear. Our two professionalized legislatures, for example, exhibit two different hierarchies. California, if professionalization equated to an institutionalized seniority system, should be the state with a hierarchy most like Congress. However, rather than a few very highly valued and sought after committees dominating the hierarchy, here we see that most committees are clumped right in the same range (16 committees within the range of .18- .40). With the exception of Business and Professions (.72), it is virtually impossible to distinguish between most of the California committees. Michigan, on the other hand, displays a hierarchy that is nearly identical to what we expected from a professionalized legislature. Michigan appears to have three “power” committees, Appropriations, Commerce, and Judiciary, which are all one and a half to two times more valuable to the average

Michigan legislator than any other committee. Below these power committees, we see a number of roughly equally positively valued constituency based committees such as Veterans' Affairs, Education, and Health Policy.

[Table 4 about here]

The less professionalized legislatures also display an interesting pattern. Connecticut and Wyoming exhibit hierarchies that look more like California's with a number of similarly valued committees, while Iowa's hierarchy is somewhat similar to Michigan's with a few dominant power committees and a number of other equally valued committees. As I discussed above, Iowa is somewhat perplexing as only three of its committees have statistically non-zero values. Yet, when we consider the hierarchy, it is still very similar to what we might expect from a legislature that is institutionalized along norms of seniority. Members may not care for service on the lower committees and bounce around between them while they wait for a chance to move up to one of the big three. This shuffling between committees as members wait out a desired spot would tend to push Grosewart scores for all committees involved towards zero. Yet, once members do get to one of the top committees they stay there until they leave the chamber.

As we search for an explanation to explain these patterns, we must once again consider varying member goals and ambition. Squire (1992b), drawing on Schlesinger's (1966) theory, presents one possible explanation in his study regarding career opportunity structures as a key part of defining member goals in state legislatures. He uses California, New York, and Connecticut as examples of three different types of goal

structures and how they may contribute to very different patterns of institutionalism. He notes that members of the California Assembly tend to have a great number of potential offices to run for after they leave the legislature. With one state senate seat for every two members as well as 53 congressional districts and a number of important posts elsewhere in the state government, members of the California Assembly may be constantly looking for ways to move up. This goal drives them to desire rules that allow them to quickly gain power and influence to help drive their campaigns for future office, which translates into a system in which party leaders dole out important roles to ambitious members who have proven their mettle.

[Table 5 about here]

On the other hand, Squire finds New York to be a professionalized legislature without as many opportunities for career advancement. Thus, members in this legislature are more likely to make service in the House their last career move as a politician. He finds these legislators prefer to insulate themselves from the party leaderships and instead rely on a more strict seniority system for determining assignments and transfers. Could this be why we see hierarchies in Iowa resemble Michigan's, because their members' long term career paths are more similar? The data in this study is insufficient to answer this question, and this is just one of many possible member goals that could cross over between dissimilarly professionalized legislatures. Future work in this field will need to rigorously test more possible explanations to explain this variation. For now, I must simply conclude that we can reject the null hypothesis that increased professionalization

will always lead to a committee hierarchy that looks like other professionalized legislatures as well as Congress.

[Table 6 about here]

The committee hierarchies for the five states examined here did not follow along with professionalization as expected. Neither does the relationship between seniority and committee chairman. However, we do see more evidence that dissimilarly professionalized legislatures may in fact institutionalize in similar ways. Table 7 presents average values of committee and chamber seniority of committee chairs as well as the average number of times we see chairs leave a committee they chair for another or be passed up for a chairmanship on a committee for which they are the most senior member. A similar trend to that which we saw in the hierarchies pops out again.

As with the committee value data, we see here that Michigan and Iowa look somewhat similar while California, Connecticut, and Wyoming group together. First, Michigan and Iowa both seem to require a longer time in office as well as on a committee before obtaining a chairmanship. The other three states appear to allow members to serve as chairs somewhat earlier in their tenure. An average member of the Michigan House will have nearly an entire year more of chamber and committee experience than the average chair from Connecticut or Wyoming. This appears to be more evidence that seniority is a more important factor for the committee assignment process in Michigan and Iowa than in our other states.

[Table 7 about here]

These results hold somewhat when looking at the number of chairs who transfer off of their committee or whose seniority on a committee is violated. Both Michigan and Iowa again seem to be seniority based systems as members are less likely to leave a committee once they receive a chairmanship and they are less likely to be passed over for a chair than members in California, Connecticut and Wyoming. Again, the limitations of the data for this study prevent me from further testing why two legislatures seem to value seniority more than others, however, this does provide even more evidence that we cannot simply generalize that professionalization will lead to similar results across states.

Finally, to get closer to the relationship between committee transfers and seniority in the states, table 8 presents probit results testing the factors that determine whether a member will transfer off of a committee in a given year or not. For this model, transfers are coded as 1 if a member served on a committee in the legislative session immediately preceding but the member does not continue on the committee in the current session even though she continues to serve in the legislature. This variable was coded 0 otherwise. I tested this variable against five independent variables.

The first two of these variables, available committee seats and committee seniority, do not help us get to the heart of the debate regarding institutionalization, however they are control variables that must be included in the model specification. As expected, the number of available committee seats was always related with increased probabilities of a member transferring off their current committee. Utilizing the z-table we can see that if we hold other variables constant, an increase of 10 available seats in

Connecticut, for example, would translate into an approximately 1 percent increase (an increase of .03 to the total z-score) in the probability of a member transferring off of their committee. In years in which more committee seats are available, there is a higher probability that a member will find a committee slot that she prefers to the one she is currently on. Alternatively, the Grosewart value of the committee the member is currently serving is an important factor for decreasing the probability that a member will transfer off of a committee in all states. All else equal, a California legislator on Agriculture (committee value of .34) is about 10 percent less likely to transfer off the committee than a member on Governmental Organization (value of .18).⁹ Not surprisingly, members are not likely to transfer off valuable committees, and as members get to more valuable committees the probability that a more attractive assignment will present itself decreases.

[Table 8 about here]

Now we come to the variables that should give us a better handle on the interplay between the use of automatic or particularistic procedures in committee assignment processes. On one hand, we have a variable that measures a member's committee seniority. If this variable proves to be important in explaining the probability of a transfer it gives us evidence that seniority may be a significant part of the committee assignment and transfer process. Basically, it indicates that senior members who do not

⁹ We might worry about colinearity between the transfer off variable and the committee value as the transfer data is used to construct the values. However, the committee value scores are constructed not just with an eye to transfers off of committees, but by looking at where members transfer from and where they transfer to. Thus, the transfer off is only part of the equation that creates the committee value variable. The two variables are only slightly correlated with a correlation coefficient of -.13 in California, for example.

want to give up certain committee assignments are not being forced to do so by party leaders or the speaker. On the other hand, if we find the party turnover or speaker change variables to be more important, we have evidence that as new parties or leaders come to power they are able to move members around in the committee system without being hamstrung by considerations of seniority. Obviously the data used here do not provide us with enough information to definitively state that one procedure or the other is dominant in a state, however, they do give us an early indication of whether or not we should expect to see one method dominate a state's committee assignment procedures.

As with the committee hierarchies, the results of this probit analysis are mixed and do not follow our initial assumptions regarding professionalization. Though I predicted that we should see members in more professionalized legislatures push for a more automatic method of assigning members to committees, while less professionalized legislatures' processes would be more likely to be influenced by party leaders or the speaker, we again find that professionalization levels may not be the way to look at this relationship across states. Once more we see California, the most professionalized state legislature, goes against my expectations. While each additional year of committee service, all else held constant, only decreases the probability a member will not transfer off of a committee by about 3 percent. A change in party or the speaker, however, increases the probability of a transfer by about 11 percent. Michigan, our second most professionalized legislature, seems to operate in reverse fashion to California. In Michigan it is seniority that seems to be the most important variable, with one extra year on a committee decreasing the probability of a transfer by over 9 percent, while a new speaker only increases this probability by about 3 percent.

As we look at the less professionalized legislatures we also see that Connecticut and Wyoming continue to look more like California, while Iowa once again somewhat resembles Michigan. In Connecticut and Wyoming we do not see seniority having much of an effect on the probability of a transfer, in fact, in Connecticut we see the only instance of a positive coefficient on seniority (though very small). In contrast, both the party turnover and speaker change variables appear to be very important factors in determining the probability of a transfer in both of these states, increasing this probability by between 15 and 23 percent, all else equal. While seniority does not trump party or speaker changes in Iowa, it does seem to be as important as these other two factors.

The patterns I identify in this section seem to provide solid evidence that levels of professionalization do not necessarily define legislative institutionalization. The fact that I see evidence of dissimilarly professionalized legislatures with similar institutional traits tells us that something else must be there. It is especially striking that California's committee system does not appear to operate in a similar manner to Congress. As California is the most professionalized state, by a wide margin, it is the case that should most resemble the patterns we see in Congress. The fact that it does not is perhaps the most important evidence that we must move beyond professionalization. It is possible that member ambitions and career patterns, as discussed above, are more important drivers of institutional change. Alternatively, the results I see in Michigan and Iowa could be the product of some regional similarities that encourage members to act in similar ways and thus institutionalize in similar ways. In the next section I will discuss a few possible avenues for future research to continue discover and define these many possible explanations of institutional imperatives. But, it does seem clear that something

or many things beyond professionalization levels is/are important factors in determining how a legislature will institutionalize and what rules and procedures we will observe.

VI. Conclusions and Future Research

Despite a rich literature defining, documenting changes in, and predicting outcomes of legislative professionalism and institutionalism, we are still early in our understandings of the true nature of the relationship between these two connected yet unique concepts. This thesis takes a first cut at utilizing committee transfer data and econometric techniques to analyze this relationship in state legislatures. As such, any conclusions are bound to be tentative and exploratory in nature. While the results of this study are far from overwhelming, they do point out some patterns to consider as research in this area continues and scholars attempt to categorize and refine our understanding of the many factors that go into determining how a legislature will institutionalize beyond simple measures of professionalization.

This paper begins to examine how members of different state legislatures value service on committees and what factors go into determining how members obtain desired assignments as well as transfer between assignments. After confirming that state legislatures do indeed appear to value service on committees, I examine the interplay between levels of professionalization in legislatures and how these legislatures define the rules and procedures that govern the committee assignment process – do certain types of legislatures rely on automatic procedures such as a seniority system while others rely on more particularistic measures? Further, does professionalism define this grouping?

Despite an expectation for similarly professionalized legislatures to institutionalize in similar ways, specifically with more professionalized legislatures tending to look more like Congress in the way they value committee service as well as utilize a strong seniority system similar to Congress, I find that professionalization does not appear to be a good predictor for how legislatures will institutionalize. Rather, I see that states with dissimilar levels of professionalization can look more like each other than other similarly professionalized legislatures. I show that states like California, Connecticut, and Wyoming, appear to be less likely to rely on a strict seniority system in making decisions regarding the committee system. This is quite striking as California represents the U.S.'s most professionalized state legislature while Wyoming is the least professionalized. Conversely, Michigan and Iowa appear to use seniority to guide committee transfer patterns and assignments to a much greater degree than the previous three states. Thus, I find that while I may not definitively reject the null hypothesis that professionalization is the key to understanding how legislatures will institutionalize, I certainly find strong evidence that we need to look beyond professionalization if we want to truly understand the dynamics that govern our state legislatures.

While this paper does succeed in finding some apparent patterns, the results in this paper are anything but definitive and much work in this field is still necessary. First, although the evidence I present here suggests that member goals in dissimilar legislatures may be lining up and driving patterns of institutionalization, the data I rely on does not allow me to begin to test alternative hypotheses. As research continues there are a number of data that would be useful to gather and test. Obtaining data on member committee requests a la Shepsle (1978) would allow us get a better handle on whether

members are getting assignments that they want and what members are forced to settle for something less than they hoped for in the committee system. Additionally, collecting more data on member behavior would be profitable. This would include collecting data on roll call votes, fund raising and campaign donations, and other member activities that could continue to shed light on the way in which members get assigned to committees and what types of procedures are being used to do this. This type of analysis would be especially useful for further understanding the relationship between a seniority driven system of assignment and a system that grants more leeway to parties and leadership. We can specifically nail down whether certain member behaviors are likely to lead to important committee assignments or whether other factors drive the process. Finally, data on member career patterns, both before and after their time in the lower chamber, would allow us to test expectations regarding varying types of ambitious politicians across states.

Future research in this area will also be well advised to include a much greater amount of data. Time constraints limited the data collection for this project to only 10 sessions for four states. Additional data covering at least back through the 1960s for all states would allow this research to make much more accurate and precise predictions. Obtaining data for more states will also allow us to get a better handle on the relationship between legislative professionalization, committee transfer patterns, and institutionalization as we can compare results between more similarly professionalized legislatures. It could be by chance that the states I analyze in this study are atypical of the majority of the 50 state legislatures.

In addition to increased data, future work on state committee assignments can ask slightly different, yet interesting questions. For example, while this project attempted to compare state legislative patterns with respect to legislative professionalization using the U.S. Congress as a benchmark, future work could instead focus on looking at individual states comparing results across eras as member goals and desires change over time.

Regardless of what track future research goes down, we must attempt to define what types of membership goals would lead to the types of institutional patterns I identify in this study. If nothing else, the results in this paper are a nice starting point as well as a point of comparison for future research. The committee data collected here may also be very useful as we move on to address these slightly different questions. By combining the lessons learned in this preliminary study with continued data collection and analysis effort, our understanding of state legislative politics, professionalization, and institutionalization can be greatly enhanced.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics - State legislatures

State	Years included	Size of legislature	Professionalization index score¹⁰
California	1967-2007	80	0.9
Michigan	1985-2007	110	0.503
Connecticut	1985-2007	151	0.315
Iowa	1985-2007	100	0.238
Wyoming	1985-2007	60	0.074

State	Number of committees	Average committee size	Average number of transactions per session¹¹
California	28	11.15	72.95
Michigan	23	15.62	89.39
Connecticut	25	21.98	106.63
Iowa	16	21.27	78.86
Wyoming	13	9.05	48.61

¹⁰ See King (2000) for a complete listing of scores. The maximum value was California at .900, the minimum was Wyoming at .074, and the mean value for all states was 0.26.

¹¹ Here I think of a transaction as any time a member comes on to or leaves a committee. Thus, a transaction could involve a member gaining one or more committee assignments and giving up none, giving up one or more committee assignments and gaining none, or leaving one or more committees to obtain one or more new assignments. For example, in California in 2007 there were 71 transactions, of which 33 involved members gaining assignments only, 7 where the member only gave up assignments, and 31 instances where a member gave up one or more assignments while gaining one or more assignments

Table 2: California Assembly Committee Values, 1967-2007

Committee	Coefficient	Std Error	Rank
Business and Professions	0.72	0.28	1
Judiciary	0.40	0.11	2
Commerce and Public Utilities	0.39	0.10	3
Agriculture	0.34	0.10	4
Public Safety	0.33	0.14	5
Banking and Finance	0.29	0.12	6
Ways and Means	0.27	0.10	7
Criminal Procedure	0.25	0.17	8
Energy and Natural Resources	0.25	0.09	8
Finance and Insurance	0.25	0.08	8
Health	0.24	0.09	11
Appropriations	0.24	0.12	11
Transportation	0.22	0.08	13
Revenue and Taxation	0.18	0.09	14
Rules	0.18	0.10	14
Governmental Organization	0.18	0.08	14
Higher Education	0.18	0.14	14
Economic Development and Planning	0.17	0.16	18
Elections, Reapportionment, and Constitutional Amendments	0.14	0.09	19
Water, Parks, and Wildlife	0.14	0.09	19
Public Employees and Retirement	0.13	0.09	21
Budget	0.12	0.11	22
Aging and Long Term Care	0.12	0.14	22
Education	0.11	0.09	24
Local Government	0.09	0.09	25
Constitutional Amendments	0.07	0.30	26
Housing and Community Development	0.07	0.09	26
Labor and Employment	0.07	0.09	26
Human Services	0.04	0.11	29
Consumer Protection and Toxic Materials	-0.07	0.14	30
Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials	-0.07	0.11	30
N	1459		
LLF	-902.11		

Table 3: Michigan House Committee Values, 1985-2007

Committee	Coefficient	Std. Error	Rank
Appropriations	1.70	0.29	1
Commerce	1.28	0.42	2
Judiciary	1.27	0.29	3
Land Use and Environment	0.79	0.28	4
Veterans' Affairs and Homeland Security	0.71	0.31	5
Senior Health, Security, and Retirement	0.69	0.33	6
House Oversight	0.66	0.35	7
Education	0.64	0.29	8
Regulatory Reform	0.57	0.29	9
Family and Children Services	0.53	0.30	10
Higher Education	0.51	0.21	11
House Television and Oversight	0.45	0.36	12
Health Policy	0.42	0.24	13
Insurance and Financial Services	0.41	0.23	14
Energy and Technology	0.38	0.25	15
Conservation and Outdoor Recreation	0.32	0.27	16
Tax Policy	0.28	0.26	17
Transportation	0.23	0.21	18
Local Government and Urban Policy	0.19	0.24	19
Employment Relations, Training, and Safety	0.04	0.33	20
Agriculture and Resource Management	-0.03	0.32	21
Criminal Law and Corrections	-0.53	0.28	22
Gaming and Casino Oversight	-0.93	0.47	23
N	549		
LLF	-203.78		

Table 4: Connecticut House Committee Values, 1997-2006

Committee	Coefficient	Std. Error	Rank
Judiciary	1.02	0.25	1
Legislative Management	0.81	0.30	2
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding	0.75	0.20	3
Regulation Review Executive and Legislative	0.58	0.22	4
Nominations	0.56	0.23	5
Public Health	0.55	0.22	6
Labor and Public Employees	0.53	0.25	7
Banks	0.46	0.19	8
Transportation	0.46	0.21	9
General Law	0.45	0.22	10
Appropriations	0.44	0.17	11
Program Review and Investigations	0.44	0.26	12
Energy and Technology	0.43	0.26	13
Insurance and Real Estate	0.42	0.27	14
Environment	0.41	0.23	15
Commerce	0.40	0.15	16
Government Administration and Elections	0.33	0.18	17
Housing	0.32	0.22	18
Education	0.25	0.20	19
Internship	0.22	0.29	20
Public Safety	0.03	0.21	21
Planning and Development	-0.01	0.20	22
Human Services	-0.01	0.22	23
Children	-0.05	0.31	24
Aging	-0.12	0.21	25
N	818		
LLF	-472.67		

Table 5: Iowa House Committee Values, 1985-2007

Committee	Coefficient	Std. Error	Rank
Labor and Industrial			
Relations	0.71	0.23	1
Ways and Means	0.51	0.25	2
Judiciary	0.27	0.15	3
Human Resources	0.10	0.15	4
Commerce and			
Regulation	0.10	0.15	5
Transportation	0.07	0.15	6
Economic			
Development	0.04	0.13	7
Ethics	0.02	0.14	8
State Government	0.02	0.14	9
Administration and			
Rules	0.01	0.18	10
Agriculture	-0.05	0.17	11
Environmental			
Protection	-0.06	0.15	12
Local Government	-0.06	0.15	13
Natural Resources	-0.07	0.14	14
Education	-0.08	0.14	15
Appropriations	-0.10	0.14	16
<hr/>			
N	907		
LLF	-312.54		

Table 6: Wyoming House Committee Values, 1985-2007

Committee	Coefficient	Std. Error	Rank
Appropriations	1.11	0.40	1
Management			
Council	1.03	0.48	2
Rules and			
Procedures	1.00	0.38	3
Transportation and			
Highways	0.85	0.31	4
Education	0.79	0.29	5
Revenue	0.65	0.30	6
Corporations,			
Elections, and			
Political			
Subdivisions	0.64	0.31	7
Labor, Health, and			
Social Services	0.51	0.28	8
Travel, Recreation,			
Wildlife, and			
Cultural Resources	0.49	0.26	9
Minerals, Business,			
and Economic			
Development	0.42	0.29	10
Judiciary	0.37	0.30	11
Agriculture, Public			
Lands, and Water			
Resources	0.33	0.26	12
Journal	-0.19	0.43	13
N	294		
LLF	-156.58		

Table 7: Seniority and chairmanships in five states

State	Average chamber seniority of chairs	Average committee seniority of chairs	Average number of chairs who transfer per session	Average violations of chair seniority per session
California	3.51	2.07	11.25	5.35
Michigan	4.87	2.74	5.18	3.6
Connecticut	3.12	1.91	11.63	8.3
Iowa	3.92	2.54	3.19	3.7
Wyoming	2.98	1.88	2.45	1.4

Table 8: Probit estimate regarding member transfers off committees in five states

	California		Michigan	
	Coeff.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	Std. Err.
Committee seniority	-0.07	0.01	-0.21	0.07
Open seats	0.002	0.0007	0.005	0.002
Party change	0.31	0.06	0.18	0.07
Speaker change	0.38	0.06	0.11	0.05
Value of current assignment	-1.26	0.18	-1.37	0.23
Constant	0.31	0.07	0.28	0.09
N	3909		2473	
Log likelihood	-2605.45		-1468.49	

	Connecticut		Iowa	
	Coeff.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	Std. Err.
Committee seniority	0.08	0.03	-0.21	0.08
Open seats	0.003	0.004	0.002	0.0002
Party change	0.25	0.11	0.19	0.1
Speaker change	0.31	0.08	0.21	0.09
Value of current assignment	-0.94	0.23	-1.74	0.5
Constant	0.42	0.12	0.44	0.18
N	2932		1341	
Log likelihood	-1639.74		-1076.79	

	Wyoming	
	Coeff.	Std. Err.
Committee seniority	-0.1	0.03
Open seats	0.005	0.05
Party change	0.14	0.07
Speaker change	0.19	0.07
Value of current assignment	-1.96	0.21
N	945	
Log likelihood	-764.87	