LEGISLATIVE PROFESSIONALIZATION and COMMITTEE SYSTEMS:

INSTITUTIONAL VERSUS INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL IMPACT

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LEGISLATIVE PROFESSIONALIZATION and COMMITTEE SYSTEMS:

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Abstract

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The increasing professionalization of parliamentary and legislative institutions has been demonstrated to have a range of impacts on how these political decision making bodies implement their assumed roles and the decisions they make. (Squire, 2006; Squire and Hamm, 2005; Arter, 2000; Patzelt, 1999; Saalfeld, 1997; Moncrief, 1994; and, Mooney, 1994) At the state legislative level in the U.S., this impact has been found to include direct or indirect affects on legislative ambition (Maestas, 2003), electoral success of incumbents (Berry, Berkman and Schneiderman, 2000), citizen contact (Squire, 1993), leadership styles (C. Rosenthal, 1998), legislative efficiency (Squire, 1998) and change within the committee system (Freeman and Hedlund, 1993); however, the nature of this research fails to resolve two nagging questions: Since the professionalization process of parliaments/legislatures is understood to include characteristics at both the institutional and individual member level, is there any variation in impact since the institutional and member nature of the body do not necessarily evolve in tandem? (A. Rosenthal, 1998) Since the process of parliamentary/legislative professionalization occurs over extended periods of time, how consistent is the relationship when considering a several decades long perspective? (Squire, 1992)

Due to the multi-faceted impact of professionalization, research in this field has focused on examining separate areas of concern regarding the legislative process. Hence, this research seeks to evaluate the impact of the two different components of parliamentary/legislative professionalization (institutional versus individual) within one specific area of activity—the committee system—over an extended period of time—ten decades. The data for this research represent 34 different sub-national legislative bodies, within the U.S. political system for the period of 1907 – 1999. Our interest is in understanding the long term impact of both institutional and individual enhancements in the organization’s professionalization upon the committee system and in turn upon the evolving legislative systems. In addition, this research will explore the comparative explanatory ability of legislative institutional and legislative environmental factors on the legislative committee system that has emerged among U.S. state legislatures—specifically the nature of committee specialization.
The evolution of parliamentary and legislative institutions has been a continuing theme in the political science literature for the last three decades. Recent research has generated an impressive set of findings documenting and analyzing how parliaments and legislatures have changed across time. (Squire, 2006; Squire and Hamm, 2005; Norton and Ahmed, 1999; Norton 1996; and Norton and Olson, 1996) A variety of political-environmental as well as internal-organizational factors have been identified as key contributing components; however, in analyzing the organizational evolution of both national and regional legislatures in the U.S., Squire and Hamm (2005) conclude:

Legislative development—the rise of leadership structures, increasingly complicated procedures and rules, the creation of standing committees and the like—is less about modernization and more about the adoption of internal structures and procedures that function to make the organizations more efficient and more responsive to the needs of members and constituents. . . . over time legislatures evolve into more complicated organizations. An important finding of our study is that this process is not time bound to the modern era. (147)

Three explanatory factors for the evolutionary process are identified by Polsby (1968) and Squire and Hamm (2005)—workload, membership size, and stable membership. Important in the analysis of institutional change is the notion that legislative evolution is not unidirectional, but rather can occur in both directions—positive and negative. (Hibbing, 1999)

One of the key concepts orienting much current research regarding parliamentary/legislative evolution is the notion of *professionalization*. In 1975, H. Douglas Price wrote about changes in U.S. legislative bodies at both the national and state levels, characterizing their evolution as resulting in more “professional” governmental institutions. (1975) In explaining this
“professionalization” process, Price described the transformation both in terms of individual legislators as well as the institutions themselves. Individual factors such as membership turnover and stability, member’s time commitment (part-versus full-time) and legislative service becoming a “career” were the differentiating factors for a professionalized legislature. Similarly, organizational structure and process factors like a reduced influence disparity among members, enhanced capability vis-à-vis the executive, greater autonomy from outside influence, and strengthened legislative committees were identified with professionalization.

The cumulative effect of sub-national legislative research in the U.S. over the past 10-15 years leads to the conclusion that state legislatures differ significantly and that one key to understanding these differences is tied to the concept of professionalization. For example, professionalization either directly or indirectly affects legislative ambition (Maestas, 2003), electoral success of incumbents (Berry, Berkman and Schneiderman, 2000), citizen contact (Squire, 1993), leadership styles (C. Rosenthal, 1998), and legislative efficiency (Squire, 1998). Does professionalization affect internal organization of the legislature, specifically the development of specialization? Evidence exists that committee systems are more likely to change more frequently in more professional legislatures (Freeman and Hedlund, 1993).

Using this finding as a starting point, the intent of this research is to investigate the impact of parliamentary/legislative professionalization trends, identified at both the individual member and institutional levels on one critical component of the legislative organization—the nature of the committee system and to evaluate its effects over an extended period of time. Specifically we utilize a unique data base for 34 U.S. state legislatures (1907-2000) to develop an approach to measuring specialization and to test whether increasing levels of professionalization lead to increased levels of committee specialization.

Since the impact of legislative change on structure, process and personnel is likely to vary depending on the nature of the change, it is important to select a relevant and appropriate
characteristic as the target for impact. Given the importance of the committee system in most contemporary parliaments/legislatures and their long-term existence in the U.S. system, we have selected that as the object of our analysis. The nature of the legislative committee system in terms of the degree to which it embodies and advances the organization’s ability to specialize for the purposes of policy making is the specific character of the committee system we propose to study. Specialization in parliamentary and legislative bodies via a committee system is a theme found throughout political science literature. As Krehbiel notes "... legislative institutions reflect uncertainty in the environment, uncertainty poses policy-making problems for which legislative specialization, and committee systems proved to be useful specialization-of-labor arrangements" (Krehbiel, 1991: 110-111). At the same time, persuasive arguments have shown that research on committee specialization must be grounded on an explicit recognition that organizational- and individual-level investigations are necessary to understand and explain organizational specialization via legislative committees. We adopt Eulau and McCluggage's multi-level conceptual perspective that views committees in terms of three units (levels) of action: "the individual legislators composing the committee, the committee itself (which, then, is both subject and object of analysis), and the legislature" (Eulau and McCluggage, 1985: 397). Their conceptualization is applied in this paper to dimensionalize and analyze the various levels of specialization in legislative committee systems. Consequently, specialization is separately treated as a phenomenon at the chamber level, committee level and individual legislator level. Thus, this research focuses on two key concepts in parliamentary/legislative studies—professionalization and specialization.

WHY PROFESSIONALIZATION?

The consequence from the “re-introduction” of organizational traits as important explanatory factors for understanding parliamentary/legislative systems, personnel and policies with “neo-
institutionalism” was a focus on these “institutional arrangements” as “endogenous” factors that provide a set of rules channeling and constraining what individual political actors can do. (Shepsle, 1979; Shepsle & Weingast, 1982) This focus on rules, however, is not limited to the formal, written constraints associated in the past with a political institution, but, rather includes the informal norms and conventions that are very much a part of institutional life and affect individual behavior. While several different sets of institutional traits have been examined, the most influential formulization has become the concept of legislative professionalization.

Nelson Polsby described professionalization as a means for transforming legislative bodies so as to enhance their capability and ultimately their independent power.

What is at stake for these legislatures has been a movement toward professionalization of the legislatures’ capacity to deliberate, oversee, and legislate. This has meant a shift of emphasis away from the representational values of legislators as amateur citizens embedded in their local communities. It has more and more demanded their frequent attendance at the state capitol, and while decreasing the salience of local preference, it has increased the significance of legislative structure. This has for some state legislatures followed by a few decades a pathway very much like the road trod by Congress. (1975:297)

Using data from the California Assembly and reflecting on much prior research concerned with the “institutionalization” of parliaments and legislatures, Peverill Squire set the stage for much of the subsequent work using the professionalization scheme in operationally defining the concept and creating a new robust measure. Regarding definition, Squire noted that a professionalized legislature has “... higher member remuneration levels, staff support and facilities, and service time demands. Legislatures deemed professional are those which meet in unlimited sessions, pay their members well and provide superior staff resources and facilities. Essentially, such a body offers potential and current members incentives sufficient to consider service as a career.” (1992b: 1028) As parliaments and legislative bodies professionalize, the members tend to re-shape the organization structurally and procedurally and with regard to
relationships with other governmental components thereby becoming more assertive and powerful in policy making.

Regarding measurement, Squire accepted the widely acknowledged definition and formulation of a transformed U.S. Congress (Polsby, 1968), as the essence of an institutionalized/professionalized legislature and proceeded to formulate a new measurement approach. Squire developed a measure of professionalization that used Congress as the “baseline” against which state legislatures would be compared. Using the work of the state legislative reform movement and that of John Grumm and Alan Rosenthal, Squire proposed using legislator remuneration, staff members per legislator and total days in legislative session as indicators of professionalization. “The measure calculated is designed to show how closely a state legislature approximates the professional characteristics of Congress.” (1992a:71) In addition, he provided data indicating the level of professionalization for all U.S. states and reported that “... increased professionalization levels are not related to greater membership diversity, except that a higher proportion of blacks serve in professionalized legislatures.” (1992a: 76) Considerable consensus has come to exist regarding how professionalization of U.S. state legislatures is defined and measured. In addition, Squire’s measurement has been extended back in time to the 1960’s as well as forward into the 21st Century. (King, 2000; and Martarano, 2006)

At the same time, a highly regarded observer of state legislatures—Alan Rosenthal—has suggested that legislative professionalization be differentiated between the legislature as an organization and the legislator as an individual. (1996) He argued that “institutional professionalism” is separate and distinct from what is taking place at the individual level—legislator professionalism. Organizational characteristics like full-time legislative scheduling, size and nature of staffs, the availability of information, and legislative facilities create the institutional setting within which legislators operate and should be kept analytically
differentiated. Similarly, legislators themselves can become more “professional” in how they go about their activity within the organization—amount of time spent on legislative tasks, self-identity with a legislative/public servant occupation, reliance on non-legislative employment, and future political ambitions—somewhat independent on what is transpiring at the chamber level. While the two are obviously related, Rosenthal provides case-level information indicating they are not synonymous—not all legislators in a professionalized legislature describe themselves in professional terms and some legislators in less professionalized bodies describe themselves in professional terms. Rosenthal proposes two separate, four-fold typologies for distinguishing professionalized legislatures (large versus small staff and heavy versus light legislative schedule) from professionalized legislators (full-time versus part-time service and long-term service versus short term service). (1996: 174 – 6)

In this research we will examine the relationship between the level of professionalization in a legislative organization differentiating between organizational indicators and individual in order to assess their relative impact over a ten decade evolution of sub-national legislatures in the U.S.

**WHY SPECIALIZATION?**

Before we proceed to examining the causes of committee specialization, we need to establish why specialization is important. Stated succinctly, the main theoretical question is: "What are the consequences of legislative specialization via committees?" The existing cross-national literature (LaPalombara, 1974; Lees and Shaw, 1979; Norton, 1990; Olson and Mezey, 1991) shows that specialization of committee systems is probably a necessary but not sufficient condition to assure a strong presence for parliaments in a political system. Specifically, some suggest that higher levels of committee specialization are a prerequisite for strong parliaments. Without it, legislatures have a much more difficult time playing a significant policy making or oversight role (Mezey, 1979).
To the extent that committees are empowered to act on behalf of a legislative chamber (e.g., to collect evidence through hearings and formulate solutions), they assume extraordinary standing. Kim and Patterson (1988) point out that “Evidently, the norm of specialization is universal in legislatures. It serves as a common principle for organizing legislative activities in both developed and developing societies. Specialization is an organizational imperative, especially in a collective body like parliament, because individual members possess neither enough information nor technical expertise to make intelligent decisions on all relevant issues” (1988: 393). As Muir demonstrates in his study of the California Legislature, “legislative specialists, by choice and by necessity, were the workhorses of the legislature” (Muir, 1982: 87). Krehbiel makes the explicit link between specialization and a system of committees: "... legislative institutions reflect uncertainty in the environment, uncertainty poses policy-making problems for which legislative specialization, and committee systems proved to be useful specialization-of-labor arrangements" (Krehbiel, 1991:110-111).

Scholars typically assume that committees make a difference in the policy-making process at both the state and national levels and that much of this impact is attributed to the specialization in policy making due to these organizational subunits (See Francis, 1989; Fenno, 1973; Rosenthal, 1974). This importance has been reaffirmed by state-level studies where legislators reported that the locus of the “most significant decisions” in legislative bodies was frequently committees. Wayne Francis, in a prominent 99-chamber study, found that committees were considered important in the decision-making process in 81 of the 99 state legislative chambers (Francis, 1989: 44).

In undertaking a study of committees at the state legislative level, several theoretical possibilities present themselves, including distributional, informational, and partisan (e.g., Shepsle and Weingast, 1987; Francis, 1989; Krehbiel, 1991; Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1990; Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Our orientation falls closer to the
view expressed by Krehbiel’s informational theory. We work in this paper from the perspective that committees are powerful and effective in a legislature due in large part to the extent that they have a monopoly on information, and not so much because they monopolize agenda power.

OPERATIONALIZING COMMITTEE SPECIALIZATION

To understand and explain organizational specialization via legislative committees, organizational- and individual-level investigations are necessary. In this research project we utilize a multi-level conceptual perspective that views committees in terms of three units (levels) of action: "the individual legislators composing the committee, the committee itself (which, then, is both subject and object of analysis), and the legislature" (Eulau and McCluggage, 1985: 397). We use this conceptualization to dimensionalize and analyze the various levels of specialization in legislative systems. Consequently, specialization is separately treated as a phenomenon at the chamber, committee, and individual legislator levels.

Chamber Perspective on Committee Specialization

In discussing the use of standing committees, we first wish to focus on the legislative chamber perspective on specialization. We are not interested in the use of the “Committee of Whole” procedure. Rather, we wish to determine the level of specialization at the legislative chamber level as reflected in the attributes of its standing committee system—the “policy-based” committees that review, revise and forward legislation to the chamber floor. From this perspective, we focus on three legislative level traits: (1) the permanence of committees in the legislature; (2) the number of standing committees and subcommittees; and (3) the total number of committee positions.

Permanence of Committees: Standing Versus Ad Hoc: At the outset, a crucial distinction must be made between standing and ad hoc or temporary committees. For our purposes, the distinction is between those committees that exist for the duration of a particular legislative session, typically two years, versus those instances in which a group of legislators is brought
together to scrutinize one bill or one specific issue, and then disbanded. We assume that organizational specialization is enhanced when legislatures have a greater preponderance of the longer-standing committees, although it may be the case that there is a mixture of the two types at any point in time (Shaw, 1979: 380).

**Number of Committees.** When specialization takes place via a committee system, another related major goal can also be achieved: an efficient division of labor. Organizational theorists argue that organizational specialization can be indicated by the number of sub-units within an organization (Gerwin, 1981; Jennergan, 1981). The challenge is to create a system whereby every member does not have to study and deal in detail with every bill nor one in which a separate committee is created for every bill. Modern committee systems have evolved to balance off these conflicting extremes, by providing an opportunity to "bundle together" proposed legislation dealing with similar topics for review by a single committee concentrating its efforts on an inter-related set of legislative topics. However, a key question is whether changes in the number of committees in legislatures over time represent an increase or decrease in specialization?

**Number of Committee Positions.** A final component of organizational specialization is the total number of committee positions available for members to fill in a parliament or legislature. Expansion and contraction of the total number of positions are tools which the appointing authority could use to structure the committee system and, in turn, the degree of specialization to their liking. Variability exists across countries and across regions or states within countries in the extent to which parliamentary and legislative leaders can manipulate the total number of positions that are available to the membership. The greatest flexibility exists when no requirements exist as to the number of assignments per member. More restrictive situations exist when rules or laws may mandate the maximum number of committees on which a member may serve. In this case, an upper bound exists, but the appointing authority can usually alter the total
number of positions below the ceiling. Another option is to require a minimum number of assignments per member, but not any maximum. Obviously, the most restrictive situation in terms of altering the total number of positions available occurs when the rules state that members may have a specific number of committee (e.g., one) assignments and only that number of assignments per member.

**Committee Perspective on Specialization**

Specialization may also be evaluated at the committee level. Four important indicators of committee specialization at this level are the diversity of issues handled, committees paralleling executive departments, the average size of committees, and the frequency of subcommittee use.

**Committee Jurisdiction and Diversity of Issues Handled:** A key aspect of committee specialization is the nature of the committee's purview. The diversity of subject matter topics covered by a committee has important implications for the operation of that committee. To the degree that a broad range of topics comes under a committee's purview, that committee’s level of specialization may be retarded. ii (Francis, 1989: 33).

As a first attempt to deal with the issue of jurisdictional boundaries, legislatures could have the issues to be dealt with by each committee formalized in the chamber rules. Of course, if similar subject matter is the province of more than one committee and if referral to multiple committees is the norm, then some of the advantages of specialization are mitigated (Young and Cooper, 1994). Still, the operating assumption is that the probability of a narrower range of issues coming before a committee is greater in chambers without this type of rule.

Another key aspect is the extent to which jurisdictions are stable over several legislative sessions rather than changing with the whims of the controlling faction in each legislative session. In an earlier study of 36 state legislative chambers from 1971-1986, we used the percentage of committee names carried from one session to the next as the measure of jurisdictional continuity (Hamm and Hedlund, 1994). Tremendous differences existed among
these legislatures, with a substantial percentage exhibiting no change in committee names across legislative sessions. At the other extreme, in five legislative chambers, there was less than 50 percent committee-name similarity across a two year period. The research question is: How stable were the committee jurisdictions across the first nine decades of the twentieth century?

**Jurisdiction Parallels Government Departments:** One common explanation for the development of strong specialized committee systems focuses on the extent to which committee jurisdiction parallels that of the various government departments. Olson and Mezey (1991) provide a concise summary of the argument:

When committee systems are organized in such a fashion that each administrative agency has a specific committee that legislates in and oversees its policy area, committees are more likely to become sources of expertise for the legislature and the activities of the bureaucracy are likely to be subjected to more careful scrutiny ( Olson and Mezey, 1991: 15)

**Committee Size:** To the extent that committees increase in size, the difficulties of deliberation and decision-making may begin to approach those associated with the large size of the parent chamber, resulting in reduced levels of specialization (Hedlund, Powers and Lingren, 1986: 6). Survey research by Wayne Francis indicates that U.S. state legislators adjust the optimal size of committees based upon two major criteria. Specifically,

. . . the optimality estimate in large chambers is about eleven, whereas it is closer to seven in smaller chambers. . . . In large chambers that experience high subcommittee use the optimal committee size estimate moves upward to between twelve and thirteen--as opposed to approximately nine where there is low subcommittee use. In small chambers (80 or less), however, the use of subcommittees seems to make very little difference in the response patterns (Francis, 1989: 114-115).

A common lament among those who studied U.S. state legislatures during the early decades of this century was that the average size was too large for effective decision making (e.g., Reinsch, 1907; Luce, 1922). Winslow in his 1931 study found that the average size of committees in state legislatures was 12.8, or larger than that predicted by Francis' findings about
the optimal size for committees in legislatures. Thus, even in sub-national legislative bodies in the U.S. there are problems with achieving the optimal size for effective decision making by committees. The research question becomes whether committees at the U.S. state level approximate an optimal level or if the trend is toward larger committee size.

**Subcommittee Use** Another device sometimes used to produce specialization in legislatures has been the institutionalization of a more elaborate system of subcommittees. The implications of this trend in terms of heightened specialization, decentralization, and access to decision-making have been documented at the congressional level, however, very little is known about this trend among the states (Jewell and Patterson, 1986:156; Keefe and Ogul, 1985: 151 - 153). Different estimates exist on the frequency with which subcommittees are used. Employing survey data, Francis and Riddlesperger estimated that subcommittees were used in about two-thirds of the chambers, being more prevalent in the lower chambers than in the state senates (1982: 459). In a 1988 survey, subcommittees were listed as being used in 51 state legislative chambers: 22 state senates and 29 state houses (American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries, 1988: 62, 64). Hedlund, Powers and Lingren (1986), relying on official state legislative publications, not counting ad hoc and non-listed subcommittees, demonstrated an increase in subcommittee use among their sample of 36 chambers from 1971-1986.

Where are subcommittees most likely to be utilized? Research from current studies indicates that frequency of subcommittee use and committee reliance upon subcommittee reports is at least partially a function of the average committee size: the larger the committee size, the greater subcommittees are used and their reports relied upon (Francis and Riddlesperger, 1982: 46; Francis, 1989: 137).

**Legislator Perspective on Specialization**

The third and final level for analyzing specialization displayed by committees focuses on the individual legislators who comprise these smaller decision making groups. The legislative
organization and the committees may be structured to facilitate specialization, but without a concomitant development of activities and opportunities that foster individual specialization for committee members, the outcomes may be less than expected. Three indicators are used to evaluate the extent that members specialize in their committee activities:

(1) Number of committee assignments;

(2) Continuity of committee membership; and

(3) An informed membership.

**Number of Committee Assignments:** A starting point is the observation that "... the fewer the committee memberships per legislator, the more rational the division of labor ... The casualties of multiple membership are specialization and expertise" (Rosenthal, 1974: 46). In the U.S., several scholars voiced the opinion that state legislators had too many committee assignments during the early part of this century (Reinsch, 1907:164; Luce, 1922:127). Analysis by Winslow (1931) indicates that in the state senates, the range in committee membership size was from a low of 1.5 in the Wisconsin Senate to a high of 18.5 positions per member in the Illinois Senate. In the lower houses the boundaries were from a low of 1.3 in the New Hampshire House to a high of 9.2 positions in the Tennessee House (1931: 45). Political observers during this period were hard pressed to justify that individual committee assignments in this upper range contributed to effectiveness, efficiency and specialization in decision making.

A different type of problem occurs for legislatures when some members are not assigned to any permanent committee. For example, in the Swedish Riksdag, "... there are more members (349) than standing committee places (16 X 17 = 272), and junior parliamentarians must often content themselves during their first term with the status of deputy or alternate member of one or more of the standing committees" (Arter, 1990: 128). As another example, "... as many as 321 of the 521 members of the Indian Lok Sabha were not, as of July 1971, members of any of the committees" (Kashyap, 1979: 301).
The research question is: Is there a tendency at various levels of government for legislators to become more specialized by having fewer committee assignments?

**Time Spent on Committee Work:** An argument could be made that a reduction in the number of committee assignments and an increase in continuity of membership are pre-conditions for legislator specialization in committees. Another key component, however, involves the commitment legislators make to the process of committee deliberations. If legislators fail to attend committee meetings, or appear only for a few "visible" issues, then the level of specialization has not necessarily been enhanced. While it is possible to identify certain behavioral measures of participation in committees in the U.S. Congress (Hall, 1996), a similar feat for the multitude of other national legislatures and U.S. state legislatures is generally beyond the scope of legislative scholars.

In terms of state legislatures, Francis and Riddlesperger (1982), using questionnaire data, identified the amount of time members spent on committee activities in the early 1980s. In that period, members averaged more than six hours per day on committee work in Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington legislatures. At the other end of the spectrum, they report that legislators in the Delaware House and Senate spent less than two hours daily on committee work. As expected, in legislatures in which committees were an important part of the decision-making process, members spent a greater amount of time in committee activity, although this factor does not account for even a majority of the variation among the states.

**Continuity of Committee Membership:** Unlike the U.S. Congress, relatively few national parliaments and U.S. state legislatures require the strict use of committee seniority in making committee appointments. Consequently, members of these legislatures appear to be able to move from committee to committee with fewer prohibitions and organizational constraints than are found in the U.S. Congress. At the same time, national studies do indicate that in a few
legislatures, members, once they have secured a position, are able to keep it for the time that they serve in the legislature.

The non-use of seniority in making committee appointments could foster member turnover and diminish stability in committee membership. Substantial movement of members across committees could also affect subject matter continuity. According to Malcolm Jewell, if such movement is sizable, it could impair the development of specialization since familiarity with a subject matter area and with prior legislation on a topic are associated with extended service on a committee (1969:52-53).

Informed Membership: The informed membership indicator--occupation--is tied directly to organizational theories and to Krehbiel’s informational theory. In these theories “... a legislature appoints to committees members who can specialize at relatively low cost due to, for example, their prior experience or intense interest in the policies that lie within a committee’s jurisdiction” (1991: 136). Krehbiel argues that the occupation variable is “perhaps the best measure--of low-cost specialization” (1991:136).

At the state level, scholars have long recognized the tendency for certain occupational groups to populate certain committees.

A member’s background, experience, and competence in a particular area are important criteria... lawyers seek to be named to judiciary, and have a far better chance of getting appointed than do non-lawyers... Legislators who work or who have worked in the area of education, such as teachers or school board members, frequently find their way onto education committees. Farmers and those with occupational ties to farming choose agriculture committees. Insurance brokers seek out assignments to committees having jurisdiction over insurance and usually obtain them (Rosenthal, 1981: 185).

It should also be remembered that at the state level, the membership of many committees is heavily weighted with legislators whose occupational interests coincide with the topics handled
by the committee (educators, farmers, lawyers, insurance brokers) (Jewell and Patterson, 1986: 166). Should this paragraph after the quote be indented?

A study of occupational representation on four types of committees in 32 state legislative chambers from 1971-1986 concluded that key occupational interests comprise a significant percentage of the membership on agriculture, business, judiciary, and to a lesser extent education, committees (Hamm and Hedlund, 1989). Comments on the process in specific state legislatures tend to confirm the general thrust of these contentions (Hamm, 1986, 1987 on Nebraska and Colorado; Stanley, 1975 on Alabama; Clark and Lippett, 1978 on New York).

MEASURING COMMITTEE SPECIALIZATION

As shown in Figure 1, the three levels of committee specialization are composed of a total of 10 variables and 15 indicators. In this report, we focus on just six variables and eight indicators. These are shown by having a superscript " beside them in Figure 1. We use two measures of chamber specialization via committees in this paper. One indicator for the number of subunits variable is the total number of standing committees, both chamber and joint. Total subunit positions are measured as the total number of committee positions. Committee-level specialization is represented, in part, by the mean size of committees in a chamber. Committee subject matter is measured as the percentage of committees having similar names from one session to the next.

In this paper two variables compose the legislator-level specialization trait. The number of assignments to subunits/member is a straightforward measure. Committee Continuity is represented in the following measures: 1) Legislative Experience, 2) Carryover, and 3) Constancy (Hedlund and Powers, 1987). The first measure of committee continuity -- Legislative Experience -- reflects the level of prior legislative experience held by committee members. This measure represents the proportion of legislators on a committee who served as
members of that chamber in the previous session. As such, this measure represents the presence of veteran legislators on a committee.

Committee Carryover is the proportion of members on a committee in one session who also served on the comparable committee in the previous session. This represents a simple indicator of committee members with previous experience on that committee. The greater the proportion of members serving on a committee in the later session who also served on the committee in the former session, the greater the amount of Carryover, the higher (or closer to) the value, and the greater the potential for developing expertise and specialization.

While Carryover is a useful concept that indicates committee continuity, it does not reflect an important factor: the non-return of committee members due to their leaving the legislature/parliament. The third measure -- Constancy -- is defined as the proportion of re-elected committee members (again for a comparable committee) from the first session who return and serve on the same committee in the second session. This measure reflects committee continuity, but is also sensitive to the re-election patterns found in a parliament or legislative chamber.

The differences among these three measures of committee continuity rest in what one considers as the distinguishing characteristic for continuity. Carryover identifies prior experience on a comparable committee as the feature necessary for continuity. Thus, in those legislatures in which membership on a chamber organization committee is defined according to positions (i.e., the presiding officer, majority leader, assistant majority leader, minority leader, and assistant minority leader) and in which these leaders remain the same over two sessions, there would be a high level of carryover (1.00) for that committee. Legislative Experience, on the other hand, stresses the importance of prior legislative experience for high levels of continuity. In this case, very technical committees like pensions and retirement to which legislators with prior experience in the chamber, but not necessarily on that specific committee,
are likely to be appointed, would have high levels of legislative/parliamentary experience. The third continuity measure -- constancy -- recognizes that the non-return of members to a parliament or legislature may affect the score and thus evaluates committee continuity in terms of members returning to a committee of those reelected to the chamber. Thus, in years of high legislative/parliamentary turnover, the constancy indicator would measure committee continuity for comparable committees in terms of those reelected and "eligible" for reappointment.

The differences among these measures may become clearer if we present them in equation form (See Hedlund and Powers, 1986).

Assumptions:  
(1) two legislative sessions (designated as 1 and 2);  
(2) a comparable committee (as determined by the committee name) exists in both sessions.

Let $\text{SizeS}_2 =$ committee members this session (size of committee in session 2);  
$A =$ committee members in session 2 who served in the legislature in session 1 (number);  
$B =$ committee members in session 1 re-elected in session 2 (number);  
$C =$ committee members in session 1 re-elected and on comparable committee in session 2 (number);  
Legislative Experience $= \frac{A}{\text{SizeS}_2}$  
Carryover $= \frac{C}{\text{SizeS}_2}$  
Constancy $= \frac{C}{B}$

The differences among the three measures can be seen from three examples.

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<td>$B = 10$</td>
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<td>$B = 2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$C = 5$</td>
<td>$C = 0$</td>
<td>$C = 2$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Legislative Experience | $\frac{10}{20} = .50$ | $\frac{20}{20} = 1.00$ | $\frac{3}{10} = .30$ |
| Carryover | $\frac{5}{20} = .25$ | $\frac{0}{10} = .00$ | $\frac{2}{10} = .20$ |
| Constancy | $\frac{5}{10} = .50$ | $0/0 = \text{NC}$ | $2/2 = 1.00$ |

Several conclusions can be reached from the formulas and examples. First, the three measures do not have to be highly correlated. Second, Experience and Carryover can range between 0 and 1.0 if the same committee exists in both sessions. A sizable Experience value
means that a large proportion of the current committee served in the last legislative session. A sizable Carryover value indicates that the composition of the current committee is similar to the composition of the committee in the last session.

Constancy, on the other hand, can not only range between 0 and 1.0 but also can take on a missing or not calculated value if B=0. If B> 0, then the value for Constancy is always greater than or equal to the Carryover figure. A maximum Constancy value indicates that all possible committee members from last session who were re-elected to this session returned to the same committee.

Having outlined the operational definitions for the various dimensions of specialization, we now turn to a discussion of our sample.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Several rules guided the selection of the unit of analysis and the scope of the study:

(1) Since many differences exist between the two chambers of any bicameral legislature, especially in their organizational traits, each legislative chamber, Senate and House/Assembly, must be treated as a separate unit of analysis;

(2) Since popularly elected legislative bodies at the state level usually undergo changes after each annual or biennial election and since legislative committees are usually formed to last until the next election, each two-year session (or one-year session for three early state/sessions\(^{iii}\)) of a legislative chamber is considered a distinct data collection unit. When the entire legislative body is elected every four years, we treat the period as having two distinct two-year data points; and

(3) Since it is very difficult to analyze all legislative sessions during the twentieth century, we examine legislative committee specialization during the last two sessions of each decade (i.e., 1907/08 & 09/10, 1917/18 & 19/20, 1927/28 & 29/30, 1937/38 & 39/40,

In this study we examine a total of 450,059 committee positions (legislators having a seat on a standing committee for a two year session) on 40,270 committees in the houses and senates in 34 states-- Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. This large number of cases provides a substantial data base for generalizing about the nature of specialization in the committee systems at the U.S. sub-national level for the 20th century.

**SPECIALIZATION: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

**Early 20th Century**

To understand better the levels of specialization in U.S., sub-national standing committee systems and its evolution during the twentieth century, we have provided means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values for each set of indicators used in this report and for both chambers in Table 1.

**Chamber-Level Measures:** In the first decade of the twentieth century, significant differences existed among state legislative committee systems. State legislatures tended to reflect their own values and evolution with minimal cross system sharing of organization or experiences. At the chamber level, there was a wide range in the number of committees, varying from a low of 18 in the Delaware and Idaho Senates to a high of 62 in the Michigan Senate and from 21 in the Rhode Island House and Nevada Assembly to 62 in the Illinois House, with a mean of slightly larger than 32 and 40 in the senates and houses, respectively.
While it is difficult to locate where each chamber falls on the specialization continuum from number of committees alone, we would argue that in the Michigan Senate, for example, the number of committees seems to point to a form of “individualization,” an extreme level of specialization. For example, there was a standing committee for each specifically named state asylum (N=4) plus one for the generic state asylum; a separate committee for the school for the blind and one for the deaf plus one for the employment institution for the blind; a separate committee for the home for the feeble minded; one each for the industrial home for boys and industrial home for girls; one for each state prison (N=2) plus one for the state reformatory; and one for the state TB sanitarium. In the field of higher education, there was a University Committee, a Normal College Committee, and a College of Mines Committee plus one for each “normal school” (N=3). In other words, several committees were given the task of overseeing specific institutions without a concern for larger policy issues. By contrast in the Delaware Senate, committees appear to have covered more generic issues—agriculture, corporations, insurance and banking, judiciary, public buildings and highways, finance, accounts, cities and towns, education, elections, and executive along with those that deal with the functioning of the legislature (e.g., enrolled bills, printing).

By the end of the century a much different pattern is apparent across states and chambers regarding the number of committees. The mean number of committees is reduced almost in half among both senates and houses (senate = 32.64 before 1910 and 18.18 after 1990; houses = 40.42 before 1910 and 22.93 after 1990) with a reduction in the standard deviation for both the senates and the houses. We believe this substantial reduction in the number of committees, together with the appointment of fewer individualized committees, suggests substantial movement away from “over-specialization” by state committee systems during the century.

Table 1 also provides insights regarding the number of committee positions appointed for both chambers during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The sizeable reduction described above in the number of
committees is also noted for the number of committee positions assigned among members—for senates the mean number dropped from 211 before 1910 to 163 after 1990 and for houses from 422 to 328. Although there was some reduction in the size of legislative bodies during this time period, that reduction alone did not account for the reduction in committee positions. Legislators were being appointed to substantially fewer committee positions at the end of the 20th century thus fostering greater policy area specialization among members. Also, the mean number of total committee positions was almost twice as large in the state houses as in the state senates. A more significant difference can be found within the senates and houses. As shown in Table 1, the ratio of committee positions to committees was more than 9 to 1 in the upper chambers and more than 13 to 1 in the state houses.

Committee-Level Measures: At the committee level, the typical situation was for the bulk of the committees to have a consistent jurisdictional structure as indicated by the same name for committees in both sessions that could be compared (e.g., 1907 with 1909, 1917 with 1919, etc.). In only one chamber during the 1907-09 comparison (i.e., Idaho House) did the percentage of changed committee names exceed one-third. Stability regarding standing committee jurisdictions was the norm for this indicator of specialization with the mean value for the state houses exceeding 90 percent for both chambers throughout the century. (Two comparisons are possible and included in Table 1, the first calculates the percentage of consistent committees based on the number of committees in the second comparison session [-9] while the other uses the first session [-7]).

Committees were not, on average, very large in the early years of this study. The mean size for senate committees before 1910 was 6.3. And while committees were larger in state houses, they still had a modest mean size during this period of 10.08. By the end of the century the average size had increased in both chambers to 9.18 for senates and 14.18 in the houses.
**Individual-Level Measures:** The analysis of individual-member indicators regarding committee systems also provides significant information on evaluating specialization in these systems. In general, state senators had more committee assignments than did their house counterparts. In only a small percentage of the state legislatures studied did the mean value for the houses exceed that of the senates. As expected, the senate committees in the second session for the comparison sessions (-9) were more populated by members who had served in the previous session of the legislature. This difference is probably reflective of the staggered system of elections in most state senates, where, for example, only half of members stand for re-election in a single election, thereby creating a built-in level of member continuity.

Committee carryover is also higher, on average, in the senates than in the lower houses of the state legislatures studied. Perhaps, most surprising is that the mean carryover value was only 15.90 percentage points less in the lower houses where all members had to seek re-election every two years. In 21 of the 34 state houses, the mean carryover value was less than 10 percent in 1909, hardly the level at which committees could register any appreciable levels of specialization of members. In the state senates the mean carryover value for 1909 was 27 percent, although this figure masks substantial variation. The range is from 0 percent in the Vermont Senate to more than 90 percent in the Virginia Senate where members were elected to four-year terms.

Among those legislators who served in both the comparison sessions for this analysis (-7 and -9), to what extent did committees have the same membership? At the outset it should be noted that this question does not apply to some committees since no members of that committee serving in the first session (-7) were returned for the second (-9) session. This problem was more prevalent in the houses than the senates as indicated by the lower values for the “carryover” indicator. In the state houses, the mean percentage of committees on which a constancy score could be calculated during the 20th century was 74.19 percent for senates and 74.25 percent for
houses. For the 1909 session, the mean percent for committee constancy was 49.55 among senates and 37.57 among houses a level considerably below what was found for the post-1990 comparison sessions (senate mean = 76.52 and house mean = 67.59). The main point, however, is that there was a tendency, in some chambers quite strong, in the first decade of the twentieth century for legislators to be placed on the same committees if they were re-elected. The contention that members developed little in the way of expertise in an area because they moved around from committee to committee from one session to the next is not borne out by this data. Rather, the key problem was that so few state legislators served in two consecutive sessions.

State Differences: Before we leave this description of the level of committee specialization at the turn of the century, it is worth emphasizing that significant differences existed among the legislative chambers studied. At the one extreme is the Delaware House in which the committee experience and carryover scores were 0 and no score could be computed for constancy. This finding is completely understandable when one notes that only one member served in both sessions and he was the speaker in 1909 and did not serve on any committees. At the other end of the spectrum we have the Virginia Senate in which the mean experience score exceeded 50 percent, the mean carryover score was 94 percent and the mean constancy score was 77 percent. This finding provides some insight as to why the key factor in explaining individual-level measures was the rate at which members returned to the chamber. Clearly, membership stability is a significant factor in structuring committee specialization at the individual member level. This finding confirms our earlier work (Hedlund and Hamm, 1994; Squire, Hamm, Hedlund and Moncrief, 2005).

Changes in Specialization Over Time

Chamber-Level Measures: As shown in Figures 2 and 3, significant changes have occurred in the chamber-level measures of specialization over the nine decades studied. The average number of committees has dropped substantially, from a peak of 33.71 in 1939/40 in the upper
house to a low of 16.59 in 1977/78, and from a peak of 41.15 committees in 1909/10 in the lower house to a low of 20.15 in 1989/90. (See Figure 2.) Both chambers showed slight upticks in committee numbers in the 1990s, but these increases are quite modest and follow a long-term decline in committee numbers. The decreases appear to be concentrated during the middle of the century, with the bulk of the drop in the 1940s and 1950s preceding the emergence of the state legislative reform movement in the 1960s and 70s. Of course, this type of analysis does not tell us about the optimal number of committees given the environment in which the legislatures operated. Still, it is obvious that the total number of committee subunits has decreased dramatically during this century with only some portion being attributable to the reform movement itself.

In the state senates the total number of committee positions peaks in the late 1920s, with the bulk of the decreases occurring in the 1960s and 1970s concurrent with the legislative reform movement. In the state houses a slightly different pattern can be seen with the number of committee positions peaking a decade later in the 1930s, and then decreasing with each successive decade up to and including the 1970s. (See Figure 3.) The nadir was reached for both chambers in the 1970s, with lower houses having an average of 283 positions and upper houses averaging only 145. Both houses showed slight increases in committee positions in the 1980s and 1990s, probably indicating the effects of growth in demands for committee appointments from members.

Overall, these two findings indicate that state legislatures over time, despite increases in state’s population and workload, have streamlined operations and rely on fewer permanent committees and fewer total committee positions and that this change was only partly due to the reform movement.

**Committee-Level Measures:** It might be expected that the size of committees would also decrease, reflecting the findings on total committee positions. This is not the case; instead, the
trend in these 34 state legislatures is for committees to be larger at the end of the century than at the beginning, with the consistent increases in the first half of the century and then somewhat greater stability after that. (See Figure 5.) One possible explanation for this increase in size involves the increased bureaucracy in state government over the years, and the emergence of committee jurisdictions to parallel the bureaucracy. The result was that committees which once dealt with individual problems or institutions were consolidated, but the workload for each committee was higher. To deal with this increased workload, committee sizes had to be increased. At this point, these observations are merely speculations until more rigorous analysis can be undertaken.

In terms of the stability of committee systems, as evidenced by the percentage of committees with a consistent (i.e., the same) name from one session to the next, the results in Figure 4 indicate relative stability during the first six decades, only to be followed by greater change in the 1960s and 1970s and then in the 1980s a return to having more than 90 percent of the committees having a consistent name from session to session. This analysis is presented in two forms, the first as a percentage of committees for the second session of the comparison (-9) and the other as a percentage of the first (-7). This was done because in virtually every chamber there was one two-session comparison when a dramatic drop in the number of committees with the same name was observed and the authors wanted to be certain that such variation did not affect the usefulness of this concept. The appearance of committees with the same names across sessions indicates the continuity of committee jurisdictions across time and provides insights regarding the permanence of committee subject matter coverage and hence public policy endurance across time.

**Individual-Level Measures:** Aggregating individual level specialization measures adds some information to this picture. At the start of the twentieth century, the typical state legislator in the upper houses of these state legislatures received just under six committee assignments
while those in the lower house members averaged slightly over four assignments (See Figure 5.)
The figures increased slightly and peaked at a little over seven in the late 1920s and 1930s for the
upper houses and at slightly greater than 5 in the late 1930s for the lower chambers. If one
considers that sessions at this time tended to be shorter in length, it must have been difficult for
members to attend all of the scheduled committee meetings. However, since the number of bills
tended to be small in the early years in most states, many committees may have had few, if any,
bills to consider during a session.

After the 1930s, committee assignments decreased, reaching a low in the 1970s and
increasing slightly in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, the average senate member had an average of
just under four assignments while those in the state houses had an average of just under three.
Throughout the 20th century the variation in the number of assignments decreased among both
the senates and houses. During the 1907/09 period the range of assignments per member in the
senates was from 1.74 to 11.49, or a ratio of 1 to 6.46. These figures increased in the 1927/29
period to 2.11 at the low end to an incredibly high number of 15.98 assignments per member in
the Illinois Senate. The ratio of lowest to highest, therefore, increased to 1 to 6.81. For the next
40 years the ratio was 1 to 3.2-3.7. However, in the late 1990s, the range narrowed
considerably, with minimum being 1.9 (i.e., 1999 Wyoming Senate) while the maximum was
just 6.81 (i.e., 1999 North Carolina Senate). For the only time during this century, the ratio
between those senate chambers with the least number of assignments per member to those with
the most, fell below 3.00. A similar pattern appeared in the lower houses.

The results for the three indicators of committee continuity--experience, carryover, and
constancy--are shown in Figure 6. We believe that this figure contains at least five findings
worth discussing:

(1) Senate values for the three indicators are always higher than for the houses in any
particular decade.
(2) In both the senates and houses all three measures increase in value, although not always in a consistent fashion, from the beginning of this century through the 1980s.

(3) For the Legislative Experience measure, in the 1909 session, less than 40 percent of committee members in the lower houses had legislative experience in the 1907 session, while just over one-half of upper house members had legislative experience in 1907. The key point here, however, is that this gap decreases somewhat over time as the levels for both houses increase (excepting a dip in the 1930s in both houses and a slight dip in the senates in 1917/19), with both houses having roughly similar experience levels of around 80 percent in the late 1990s.

(4) As with the Experience measure, there has been a slow increase over time in both chambers in committee carryover, though there is a dip in the 1930s in the senates. The size of the gap between the two chambers’ values is quite large (i.e., around 16 points in the 07/09 period, which narrows slightly to around 12 points in the 47/49 period, decreases further after that. During the late 1950's, the value drops to about 10 where it has remained into the late 1990s. In other words, while the rate at which members occupy the same committee position has increased in both chambers over time, there has been only modest change in the net difference between senate and house carryover values during the last 40 years. On the other hand, differences in carryover values among the senates have decreased (from a range of 5+% to 95+% in the 1907/09 period to a range of 31+% to 91+% in the 1990s).

(5) For the third measure of committee continuity, constancy, there has been substantial increase over time, and at about the same rate in both chambers. Since the 1940s the overall mean value for the lower houses has been greater than 50 percent, meaning that committees retain a majority of members who have been reelected. This is true for senates as far back as 1927/29. In the late 1980s, only five of the 72 state legislative
chambers studied (i.e., Wyoming Senate, Arizona House, California House, North Carolina House and Oregon House) had a mean committee constancy score less than 50 percent. The mean constancy score is greater than two-thirds in 27 of 34 state senates and in 20 of 34 state houses. The implication is that the bulk of the re-elected members are re-appointed to the same committees on which they sat in the earlier legislative session if that committee exists in both sessions.

Taken together we believe these trends indicate an enormous enhancement in the specialization of legislators via the committee system and demonstrate the degree to which sub-national legislative bodies in the U.S. have evolved in their approach to decision making. The longer continuous service of members on committees having similar jurisdictions over policy reinforces observations about the how these legislative organizations and their members have adapted.

Correlations Among Specialization Measures: How do the various measures of committee specialization relate to one another in the period 1907-1990? As shown in Table 2, 20 of the 27 relationships among the measures of committee specialization are significant at or beyond the .05 level. At the chamber level, as the number of total committees increases, the total committee positions increase. At the committee level, mean committee size is not related to the mean same committee name measure. At the individual level, experience, carryover, and constancy all relate strongly and positively with each other. Comparing across levels, we see that a variety of patterns. On the one hand, chamber level specialization, as we have defined it is generally negatively related to individual-level measures of specialization. Experience and carryover, decrease as total committees and total committee positions increase, while constancy is inversely related to total number of committees. On the other hand, committee-level measures are either positively related to the individual-level measures (i.e., mean committee size) or unrelated (mean same committee name), but never in a significant negative direction. These results highlight the
importance of treating specialization as a multi-level phenomenon with separate measures for each level.

**EXPLAINING LEVELS OF SPECIALIZATION**

Explanations for varying levels of specialization can be divided into those that focus either on the legislative institution and its members or on factors in the legislature’s environment. We first provide the most frequently cited explanations for specialization, with the discussion of professionalization’s impact incorporating some of these explanations.

**Importance of individual legislator preferences:** Our starting point is that committees are created to satisfy either the preferences of individual legislators or the wishes of the legislative chamber leadership. In its most classic form the changes in committee systems involve the leadership agreeing to increase the size of committees, the number of committees, and/or individual assignments (all affecting specialization at every level--chamber, committee and individual) to satisfy the demands of legislators (Francis, 1989: 36). In this explanation the change in the "committee system" is a function of the individual member's desire for tangible indicators of their own importance that can be shown to their constituents and fellow members. Legislative and parliamentary leaders comply by creating more committees, which results in a wider array of committee policy area involvement for members, greater number of members having the opportunity to become a chair of a committee and an opportunity to have an impressive-sounding array of assignments, even if the committees on which they serve have little, if any, policymaking responsibilities (e.g., Shepsle, 1978; Ray and Smith; Francis, 1989). In terms of positive theories, a considerable portion of the congressional literature focuses on the distributive perspective of legislative organization. The distributive perspective argues that legislative organization reflects the electoral needs of its members (Shepsle 1978; Weingast and Marshal 1988). This model views members as seeking committee assignments that will help
them obtain particularized benefits for their constituents thus helping secure their re-election. This perspective is based on the *gains for trade* hypothesis.

A second set of writers emphasizes the key role that the legislative leadership plays in any expansion and contraction of committees. According to this alternative model, the structure of the standing committee system is the outgrowth of the majority party leadership strategy (e.g., Westfield, 1974; Liebowitz and Tollison, 1980). In these models, "... committee assignments in most places are a major leadership resource; they enable leaders to distribute benefits and to exercise control. Generally speaking, the fewer assignments there are to distribute, the more diminished the legislative leadership" (Rosenthal, 1981: 184). Cox and McCubbins (1993) alter the distributive hypothesis, by arguing that political parties also advance particularized benefits by manipulating committee membership to accommodate the policy goals of the party. In accomplishing this, however, the party must also consider the electoral needs of its members.

A third perspective focuses on the needs of the parent chamber, especially the basic and continuing requirement for facts and knowledge. Uncertain policy outcomes drive legislatures to create organization structures that increase the flow of information (Krehbiel 1990 & 1991; Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990). Thus, the selection of committees becomes a means for enhancing the informational component in policy making. In this perspective legislatures tap the talents of their members.

An alternative interpretation of Shepsle’s findings is readily available from alternative, informational theory, which holds that a rational legislature is one that efficiently taps the special talents of its legislators. Such a legislature appoints to committees, members who can specialize at relatively low cost due to, for example, their prior experience or intense interest, in the policies that lie within a committee’s jurisdiction. Other things being equal, this form of interest is likely
to make members work relatively hard to master the intricacies of policy-making (Krehbiel, 1991: 136)

The difficult question is how to utilize the implications of these three models of committee organization in studying the development of specialization in state legislatures over an 90-year period. Since we are conceptualizing specialization as a multi-level phenomenon, we cannot simply continue the extensive debate over preference outliers that has dominated the research over the past ten years. We have opted in this report to use a few of the variables (i.e., membership stability and majority party strength) that were tested in a study of change in the number of committee positions in 36 U. S. state legislative chambers over a 16-year period (Hamm and Hedlund, 1990).

An implicit assumption in several of the explanations for the growth of committee systems is that membership stability is important to the operation of the committee system. Returning legislators are unlikely to go along with a contraction in either the number of assignments or committee chairs. They would prefer to maintain or expand their number of assignments, not see a decrease in them. As turnover increases, however, the leadership has greater opportunity to restructure the system without having to appease entrenched members. Recent research confirms the importance of membership stability as a key factor in committee retention rates at the turn of the century in U.S. state legislatures (Squire et al, 2005).

Several studies of the U.S. Congress have indicated that a key to understanding the change in the size of the majority party on committees is the changing party ratio in the chamber (Ray and Smith, 1984; Whiteman, 1983). That is, increases in the size of the majority party from one session to the next place additional pressure on the chamber leader to increase the number of seats over those allocated in a previous session. From a cross-sectional perspective, the
hypothesis should be that the larger the majority party, the greater the number of committees, total committee positions, average size of committees, and committee assignments per member.

Impact of the legislature’s environment: Another set of factors often described as affecting the growth of specialization in a committee system arise due to alterations in an organization’s environment. Some commentators have suggested that the evolution of a fully developed standing committee system in several parliaments was a response to the changing exogenous societal pressures and demands for government action.⁷

Some parliaments responded to the growing burden of lawmaking and the increasing complexity of the issues by adopting a division of labor among their members, which constituted at least a pale imitation of bureaucratic organization. Although committees of parliament had long existed, the development of specialized committees was a product of the late nineteenth century and occurred primarily in those parliaments, which were free of executive domination (Loewenberg, 1971: 7).

One way that external factors may lead to increased specialization involves the following sequence of events. Forces outside a parliament or legislature give rise to external demands that, in turn, affect workload--both in terms of the number of legislative proposals considered and level of complexity associated with the legislation considered. As the parliamentary/legislative workload increases, the tendency is to create or enhance the use and power of various subunits within the parliament or legislature. The consequence is strengthened specialization among committees. (Francis and Riddlesperger, 1982; Davidson, 1981; Salisbury and Shepsle, 1981; Loomis, 1979).⁶

In the present study, the concern is with "What effect did changes in the workload have on the subsequent development of specialization in committee systems?" That is, is there any evidence that parliaments or legislatures modify their committee systems to enhance specialization in response to changes in the external environment, or are modifications that occur
over time driven more by internal organizational and political pressures? A few observers have conceded that some portion of the growth in the number of committees, committee positions, and committee assignments per member "... has been partly due to the increase in both the volume and diversity of business" (Luce, 1922: 126). Harris and Hain, while not talking about specific aspects of the committee system in U. S. state legislatures, suggest that there has been a wholesale adjustment within legislative bodies to these external pressures:

A major part of the legislative response to the increased social and technological complexity of society--and to the resulting flood of legislative proposals--has been to assign such proposals to the legislative committees with appropriate jurisdiction before the entire chamber membership considers the measures. Then the entire chamber considers only those measures the committees consider worthy (Harris and Hain, 1983: 277)

Institutional Characteristic – Size: The structure of a committee system is often seen as a function of the size of the parliamentary/legislative chamber. Using concepts from organization theory, Froman hypothesized that "... the larger the size of the organization, the greater the number of subgroups in it" (Froman, 1968:524). Part of Froman's evidence came from his comparison of the two houses of the U.S. Congress. Shaw reaches a contrary conclusion in his summary of committees in eight national legislatures. He argued that "... there is in fact little relationship in our eight examples between size of the chamber and the number of subgroups in it. This can be emphatically said in the matter of official subgroups" (1979: 367). Blondel weighs in on this point by stating that: "If we do concentrate on these legislative committees, however, we find that marked discrepancies separate legislatures across the world from the point of view of their apparent activities even if the size of the chamber is taken into account" (Blondel, 1973: 69). Thus, differing expectations can be found regarding the relationship between chamber size and the specialization of its committee system.
Scholars who have studied the emergence and development of U.S. state legislative committees give some support to the size hypothesis. For example, Jameson suggested that in the eighteenth century committees emerged in legislatures with 50 to 100 members while the same did not happen in the smaller chamber of New York with only 25 members (Jameson, 1894: 266). Morris provides information about the lower house in the Florida Legislature that offers a most unusual explanation. He notes that as counties were created, more legislators were added to the chamber; however, since there was a chamber rule from the mid-1840s to the mid-1920s setting the size of each committee at between five and nine members, the leadership had no option but to increase the number of committees (Morris, 1982: 128). Increased chamber size indirectly affected the increase in the number of committees in Florida, but not in the manner suggested elsewhere.

Winslow, in his classic 1931 study, observed that there was a relationship between size of the legislative body and number of committees and the average size of the committee (1931: 38-39). Francis and Riddlesperger (1982) have provided the greatest evidence for this hypothesis. In their study of committee system in the 99 U. S. state legislative chambers during the early 1980s, they found that chamber size was correlated with the number of committees \( r = .37 \) and with the average size of committees \( r = .65 \) (1982: 460. See also Francis, 1989: 137). Interestingly, the relationship between number of committees and average committee size was spurious once chamber size was taken into account.

**Institutional Characteristic: Professionalization:** The concept of professionalization is utilized to explain institutional differences among legislatures and variations in behavior among legislators. At its core, the concept taps the extent to which U.S. state legislatures are similar to the U.S. Congress. The current predominant perspective is that the concept has three major components: (1) the level of renumeration and benefits, afforded to members; (2) the time commitment that legislators must devote to perform their duties; and (3) staff support and
facilities available to legislators (see Squire, 1988a: 68-70). This concept has provided legislative scholars not only with a way to systematically differentiate state legislatures, but also to develop explanations for how and under what conditions professionalization matters. (Squire and Hamm, 2005) Recent research, for example, has shown that the public is more likely to have more contact with legislators in the more professionalized legislatures (Squire, 1993). At the same time, legislators with progressive, as opposed to static or discrete, ambitions devote significantly more time to monitoring public opinion, with the differential time devoted to monitoring increasing as professionalism increases (Maestas, 2003).

At the same time, a highly regarded observer of state legislatures—Alan Rosenthal—has suggested that legislative professionalization be differentiated between the legislature as an organization and the legislator as an individual. (1996) He argued that “institutional professionalism” is separate and distinct from what is taking place at the individual level—legislator professionalism. Organizational characteristics like full-time legislative scheduling, size and nature of staffs, the availability of information, and legislative facilities create the institutional setting within which legislators operate and should be kept analytically differentiated. Similarly, legislators themselves can become more “professional” in how they go about their activity within the organization—amount of time spent on legislative tasks, self-identity with a legislative/public servant occupation, reliance on non-legislative employment, and future political ambitions—somewhat independent on what is transpiring at the chamber level. While the two are obviously related, Rosenthal provides case-level information indicating they are not synonymous—not all legislators in a professionalized legislature describe themselves in professional terms and some legislators in less professionalized bodies describe themselves in professional terms. Rosenthal proposes two separate, four-fold typologies for distinguishing professionalized legislatures (large versus small staff and heavy versus light legislative schedule) from professionalized legislators (full-time versus part-time service and long-term service versus
short term service). (1996: 174 – 6) As a consequence, this research will differentiate between institutional and individual measurements of legislative professionalization.

For our purposes, the more pertinent question is whether the level of professionalization affects the internal organization of legislatures. The evidence is that it does have an impact, but the direction is not always clear. Some studies indicate that power is less centralized in the hands of legislative leaders as legislatures become more professionalized (Squire, 1998a; 1988b; 1992a) while formal powers of House Speakers appears to be shaped mostly by the strength of electoral competition and the career opportunity structure, not the level of professionalization (Clucas, 2001). In addition, in the more professionalized legislatures, the specific career path of state legislative speakers is less defined than for those speakers in less professional legislatures (Freeman, 1995).

Is professionalization linked to the various dimensions of committee specialization? Somewhat surprisingly, few studies have directly addressed thus relationship. What would we expect? Those who equate the professional legislature with the U.S. Congress, may argue that in state legislative committee systems higher levels of professionalization is associated with stable committee names and jurisdictions across time, that membership on the committee would also be relatively stable, and that members would rarely move across committees.

From an organizational theory perspective, the argument is that highly professional legislatures would make more changes in their standing committees than the less professional legislatures (Freeman and Hedlund, 1993). On the one hand, state legislators try to reduce internal stress by helping members achieve their individual goals. As Freeman and Hedlund argue,

Adding or dropping committees, or changing their jurisdiction, are changes that have consolidative goals since their purpose is to relieve internal tension. We expect they occur more often in legislatures of high professionalization because they happen in states where members
hope to make legislative service a career. In these states, members put more emphasis on reelection (Rosenthal, 1989; Squire, 1988a) and therefore demand more accommodation to their committee requests than in states where turnover is higher and members are less intent on returning to the legislature (1993: 916).

At the same time,

“. . . the more highly professional legislatures are more attuned to responding to environmental demands (making adaptive changes) than less professionalized bodies since members see responsiveness as an important device to maintaining their legislative position. In addition, representatives in professionalized legislatures meet more often and they have better staff support, which should facilitate both awareness of environmental pressures and responding in a more timely manner. (1993: 916)

Regarding the relationship between professionalization at the legislative body level and individual member development of specialization, via committees, one might expect that as legislative bodies moved away from an “amateur-citizen-part time” orientation in legislative service, different expectations emerge regarding how members perform vis-à-vis the policy decision making process. Specifically we might expect that a new “ethos” regarding legislator involvement in decision making is associated with the emergence of professionalization in legislative bodies. While the most obvious and visible changes in a legislative body associated with professionalization are as Squire (1988) noted in the time and effort committed to legislative matters, we believe that a different view and approach to policy decision making also emerges. As observed in the literature, professionalized legislatures are more assertive about their independence and initiative taking in their approach for decision making. While legislators continue to be responsive to constituent policy interests and desires, legislators are more independent and take the initiative in seeking to obtain particularized benefits for their constituents. Because this approach characterizes large numbers of legislators in their collective decision making process, one result is to alter their view and involvement in many aspects of the decision making process including committee service. Since Congress has long served as a
model for professionalization as well as certain states (e.g., California, and New York), member responses there often were adopted as part of the new “code of conduct” for “professionalizing” legislators. One result was the emergence of a different perspective on and behavior toward committee service. As committees were enhanced in the decision making process by professionalization, members responded with longer term, more committed service in the legislature as well as on a committee. After all, this was a means to establish a reputation for policy expertise and influence. In this fashion individual members could enhance their role in decision making through more involved and longer term legislative and committee service and could expand their overall influence on policy making by an increased ability to bargain and trade influence with other legislators across policy and committee areas. Thus, we expect that one associated outcome of legislative chamber professionalization could be the emergence of legislator specialization in committee service as measured by our indicators of legislator experience on carryover from and constancy on legislative committees.

To round out the discussion, Squire demonstrates that professionalization does not always lead to the same impact on committee specialization (1988b). Instead, it is necessary to understand the career goals of the legislators in a particular institution and how the internal organization of the legislature enhances those goals. In his study of three legislatures—California, New York and Connecticut—he demonstrates that the most professional legislature (i.e., California) does not exhibit the greater amount of committee specialization because ambitious legislators change committees in order to enhance their chances of attaining higher office. On the other hand, in the more career-minded New York Legislature a more stable committee system emerges and more senior legislators are given greater rewards. Thus, the impact of professionalization does not have a direct linear effect on specialization. Unfortunately, it is difficult to test the argument in the context of this study at the present time, but the lack of any
statistically significant findings, positive or negative, give some credence to this perspective.

**LINKING COMMITTEE SPECIALIZATION to EXTERNAL and INTERNAL FACTORS**

**Operational Definitions**

In terms of the external factors, the volume of legislation introduced, or workload, is operationalized as the number of specific chamber-only bills introduced during the legislative biennium.

As to the factors internal to the legislature, the chamber size variable is simply the number of legislators who should have served in that biennium, not taking into account any vacancies. While several different measures of professionalization have been employed over the years, the most widely-used measure is that developed by Squire (1988a). While we would like to utilize a composite measure of professionalization similar to Squire’s for the entire 20th century, no such data set currently exists. Instead, we have decided to focus on just one attribute—number of days the legislature was in session. The amount of time that a legislature or parliament is in session should affect its level of professionalism and ultimately specialization as well, all other things being equal. If a parliament or legislature must complete its business in a relatively short period of time (e.g., two months), then in designing a committee system the leadership would place more emphasis on committees acting as sifters of legislation, not necessarily as experts on that policy. On the other hand, if the legislature can meet for an indefinite amount of time throughout a legislative session, then we would suspect that greater expectations would be placed on the committees to shape and mold legislation sent to them and to develop a more prominent reputation for expertise, again with all other factors being equal. As a result we would expect that a parliament or legislature facing greater time constraints would opt for a larger number of committees, more committee assignments per member, greater committee size, and a larger
number of total committee positions relative to the legislature that had a significantly greater amount of time in which to make decisions. The specific measure used in this study therefore is the number of days the legislature actually met in formal session.

The level of professionalization at the individual level is measured by membership stability which is defined as the percentage of legislators serving who had served in the previous legislative session. This indicator is one of the few measures of legislator professionalism readily available throughout the 20th century. The majority party variable is operationalized as the percentage of legislative seats controlled by the majority party. Chamber is a dichotomous measure, coded 2 for the lower houses and 1 for the state senates. To see if the relationships change over time, the data analysis is replicated for two time periods: 1907-1949 and 1957-1999.

**ANALYSIS**

Rather than provide 16 different sets of regression results, we have summarized the results for the eight dependent variables in Tables 3A and 3B. Overall, 55 of the 96 relationships are statistically significant at the .05 level or beyond and over 85 per cent of these significant results are in the positive direction. In terms of amount of variance explained, the models do best explaining the variations in committee experience and committee carryover while being unable to account for committee name constancy. No major differences appear across the two time periods in our ability to explain committee specialization. The analysis is presented in two parts. First, we assess the factors that are most important in explaining specialization at the chamber, committee and individual level. Second, we devote a section to comparing the impact of professionalization at the institutional and individual levels.

**Chamber and Committee Level Specialization**

Significant differences emerge in terms of the independent variables most important in explaining specialization at the different levels of the organization—chamber versus committee versus individual levels of specialization. In terms of specific relationships, number of bills
introduced, a measure of workload, is the most consistently significant independent variable affecting committee specialization in terms of the chamber and committee measures. The greater the number of bills introduced, the greater the number of committee positions and the greater the average size of each committee. Also, as workload increases the number of committees increased in the early time period and committee name constancy decreased in the latter period.

The size of the legislature also significantly affects five of the eight measures of chamber and committee levels of specialization, with the number of committees (1907-1949 only), number of committee positions and average committee size increasing as the number of members in the legislature increases. These results provide strong endorsement of Froman's [1968] organizational hypothesis that the number of subgroups increases with the size of the organization. While not the only factor affecting these measures of specialization, it is clearly an important organizational response to workload increases.

Increases in institutional professionalization, as measured by number of legislative days, is associated with smaller committee size, fewer committee positions (1907-1949 only) and differing effects on number of committees depending upon the time period. By contrast, increases in individual professionalization, as measured by membership stability, is associated with increases in committee name constancy (1957-1999) and average committee size (1907-1949), but a decrease in the number of committees (1957-1999)

The size of the majority party, somewhat unexpectedly, has its major effect in five equations dealing with chamber and committee level measures. As we have observed decision making in settings of increased partisan margins, there is frequently a perceived need on the part of legislators to satisfy more members without the threat of opposition “take-overs.” As a consequence, many partisan leaders accommodated members by “tinkering” with the committee system in order to maintain unity without the opposition threat. One way is to increase both the number of committee positions and the average size of the committee.
Individual Level Specialization

In terms of individual-level specialization, three variables account for 19 of 29 significant relationships. Without doubt, a major driving force in terms of the various measures of individual legislator specialization is the amount of stability among the legislative membership, a measure of individual-level professionalization. In fact, it is positively significant in six of the eight equations. As chamber membership stability increases, the level of committee experience, the level of committee carryover, and the level of committee constancy all increase. These strong relationships hold for both time periods. Institutional professionalization, by contrast has no consistent effect on individual level committee specialization. In the equations for the 1907-1949 period, increases in the number of legislative days is associated with increasing committee experience and committee carryover, but fewer committee assignments per legislator. Somewhat surprisingly, institutional professionalization impacts only committee carryover in the latter part of the 20th century with more professional legislatures having less carryover on committees from session to session.

Perhaps the greatest surprise is that the size of the majority party is statistically significant in seven of the eight equations, four of those in the latter time period. The relationships are all positive meaning that as the size of the majority party increases, increases occur in the average number of committee assignments, committee experience (1957-1999), committee carryover, and committee constancy. Comments above regarding the impact of party margins on the committee system are also relevant for these relationships.

The type of legislative chamber, independent of chamber size, is also significant in six of the eight equations. All other things being equal, lower houses tended to have a lower mean number of committee assignments, less committee experience, and less committee constancy. Since lower houses are always larger in size, some portion of this relationship probably is a byproduct of size, even though the effects of chamber size are treated independently in this analysis. For
example, when one is a member of a legislative body composed of 99 other persons, the ways of thinking about decision-making, coalition formation and voting are quite different than in a body $\frac{1}{3}$rd that size. In addition, there is a long history of other more intangible differences between senates and houses/assemblies. Differences related to norms, formality, decorum and perceived status frequently exist and affect the operations of these legislative bodies within the same state. Thus, finding differences between senates and houses for these committee specialization indicators is expected.

**SUMMARY and OVERVIEW**

Based on the principle that American state legislatures have organized to complete the policy making and policy review mission by instituting committees that are differentiated by policy areas, this paper has set out to specify a measurement approach, and indicators, to study that committee system. Such a system of segmentation of decision making by committees divided according to policy areas, is also the primary means by which legislative organizations achieve specialization, expertise development and division of labor. In this report, we have discussed the theoretical nature of that committee system with its consequent expertise development and division of labor.

Essential for understanding committee specialization is the explicit recognition that this phenomenon can occur in terms of three separate levels or objects within the legislative organization--the legislative chamber, the committee itself, or the individual member within the committee system. The approach we propose explicitly recognizes these differences and proposes different indicators for committee specialization for the chamber, the committee and the member. As a consequence, levels of specialization are hypothesized to assume independent degrees or amounts for these three levels.

Measures for all three levels of legislative committee specialization--legislative chamber, committee, and legislator--indicate an increasing amount of specialization during the 20th
Century. While our findings correspond with observations from a number of state legislator observers, this report provides quantitative indicators for multiple aspects of committee specialization. With the measurement base developed here, future work will concentrate on extending our analysis into the era of term limits when special challenges to committee specialization are expected and to supplement our data base with additional states. It is also anticipated that we will examine the effects of specialization into legislative decision making itself.

The preliminary and tentative findings reported here suggest that there is special value to the explanation of committee specialization offered in this paper. Four key findings are worth reiterating. First, legislative workload and chamber size are more likely to affect chamber and committee measures as opposed to individual-level measures of committee specialization. Second, the same pattern holds for institutional professionalization. By contrast, membership stability has a more pronounced effect on individual-level measures of specialization. Specialization at this level is much more tied to the individual-level measure of member stability than to how long the chamber sits in session. Fourth, the size of the majority party is a key factor in accounting for committee specialization. In fact, it is the factor that is most consistently related to the various specialization measures.

How do we reconcile the two levels of professionalization? In a recently published article that examines committee retention rates at the turn of the century, using data from our committee specialization study, Squire et al argue that “Controlling for legislative chamber, chamber retention rates increase with salary. The effect is substantial.” (2004: 180) We do not have the necessary data to confirm this relationship throughout the entire 20th century at this time, but we believe that it is next step in our research program.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


## Table 1
Central Tendency/Dispersion Measures for Committee Specialization
Variables in 23 State Legislative Chambers, 1907-1909

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Senates</th>
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<td>Total number of Committees</td>
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<td>11.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Committee Positions</td>
<td>208.39</td>
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<td>Percent Committees Consistent Names (from -7 session to -9 session) (% -9)</td>
<td>92.08</td>
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<td>Percent Committees Consistent Names (from -7 session to -9 session) (% -7)</td>
<td>91.67</td>
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<td>Mean Committee Size</td>
<td>8.20</td>
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<td>22.88</td>
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<td>Mean Level Committee Experience (%)</td>
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<td>Mean Level Committee Constancy (%)</td>
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<td>Total number of Committees</td>
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<td>Total Number of Committee Positions</td>
<td>396.99</td>
<td>246.58</td>
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<td>Percent Committees Consistent Names (from -7 session to -9 session) (% -9)</td>
<td>90.95</td>
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<td>Percent Committees Consistent Names (from -7 session to -9 session) (% -7)</td>
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<td>Mean Committee Size</td>
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<td>Mean # of Committee Assignments</td>
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<td>.70</td>
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<td>Mean Level Committee Experience (%)</td>
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<td>33.54</td>
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<td>Mean Level Committee Constancy (%)</td>
<td>55.03</td>
<td>17.99</td>
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<td>11.11</td>
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Table 2: Correlations Among Indicators Related to Committee Specialization
1907-2000

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<th>Total Committees</th>
<th>Total Committee Positions</th>
<th>Mean Committee Size</th>
<th>Mean Same Committee Name</th>
<th>Mean Committee Assign./Member</th>
<th>Mean Committee Experience</th>
<th>Mean Committee Carryover</th>
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<td>Total Committee Positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Committee Size</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.712**</td>
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<td>Mean Same Committee Name</td>
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<td>.023</td>
<td>- .071</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Committee Assign./Member</td>
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<td>.470**</td>
<td>.134**</td>
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<td>Mean Committee Experience</td>
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<td>-.155*</td>
<td>.167**</td>
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<td>.027</td>
<td>.695**</td>
<td>.873**</td>
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a) Results based upon analysis of 1353 legislative sessions. Cases are deleted in pairwise fashion.
b) ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
   * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
## TABLE 3
### Part A

Summary of Significant Variables in Regression Analyses for Chamber Level and Committee Measures

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<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Chamber Level Measures</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Number of Committees</td>
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<td>Number of Bills Introduced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of Chamber</td>
<td>+***</td>
<td>-*** +***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Professionalization (Number of Legislative Days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Professionalization (Membership Stability)</td>
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<td>+*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Cent of Seats Held by Majority Party</td>
<td>-*** +**</td>
<td>+**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R2</td>
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<td>.099</td>
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* = P <.05, ** = p <.01, ***= p <.001
## TABLE 3

### Part B

Summary of Significant Variables in Regression Analyses for Legislator Level Measures

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<td>Size of Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Professionalization (Number of Legislative Days)</td>
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* = P < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001
### FIGURE 1

**OPERATIONAL INDICATORS for COMMITTEE SPECIALIZATION TRAITS FROM DOCUMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Specialization Traits</th>
<th>Variables Composing Each Trait</th>
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<td>Ratio of Permanent to Select/Ad Hoc Committees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Number of Subunits&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Number of Committees&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Subunit Positions&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Total Number of Committee Positions&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Committee Subject Matter&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Jurisdiction Parallels</td>
<td>Rules Permit Only One Committee to Have Jurisdiction/Bill</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parallel Government Dept./Agency</td>
<td>Committees Have Similar Names from One Session to the Next Session&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jurisdiction Parallels</td>
<td>Extent to which Committee Names Parallel Government Dept./Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committee Size&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Continuity of Committee Membership&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Legislative Experience of Committee Members&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carryover of Membership from Previous Session&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Constancy of Membership from Previous Session&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Informed Membership</td>
<td>Extent of Fit Between Occupation &amp; Subject Matter</td>
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<sup>a</sup> = Variables and indicators utilized in this paper.
Figure 2: Mean Number of Total Standing Committees, 1907-1999
Figure 3: Mean Number of Committee Positions, 1907-1999
Figure 4: Mean Percent Consistent Committees for Year -9 & - 7 Committee Base
Figure 5: Mean Committee Size and Mean Number of Committee Assignments, 1907-1999
Figure 5: Mean Committee Size and Mean Number of Committee Assignments, 1907-1999
Figure 6: Mean Committee Experience, Carryover & Constancy, 1907-1999

- Senate Experience
- Senate Carryover
- Senate Constancy
- House Experience
- House Carryover
- House Constancy
ENDNOTES

1 This paper builds on earlier work (Hedlund and Hamm, 1994, Hamm and Hedlund, 1995 and Hamm and Hedlund, 2004), but contains a more robust data set.

2 An extreme example highlights this potential problem. Suppose that a committee system is composed of five committees that are designated A, B, C, D, and E. Also, assume that bills are randomly assigned to each committee. What would be the consequences of this system? Two major shortcomings would be the lack of subject-matter expertise and the lack of related proposals being assigned to the same committee.

iii Two states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island—had one year legislative sessions early in the 20th century—pre 1920 for Massachusetts and pre 1910 for Rhode Island. Thus, for three sessions the years are 1906/7 and 1916/17. We do not believe this difference produced any systematic effect on any of the variables under study in this research.

iv For example, Reinsch contended that the greatest increase in the number and size of committees in the late nineteenth century was most likely to occur in U. S. state legislatures which had strong party organizations in which the legislative leadership could use committees and committee assignments as "a cheap kind of patronage which helps the managers in paying certain political debts" (Reinsch, 1907: 164). In addition, "in making committees so large that it becomes unwieldy and helpless, the rule of the party manager is rendered more efficient" (Reinsch, 1907: 164).

v Blondel, writing in 1973, appears less willing to explain the development of committee systems as a simple response to increased complexity. For him, the diffusion of standing committee systems was often piecemeal and involved a certain amount of copying.

By a process of gradual development and imitation, however, most of the legislatures of the world have tended to move toward a pattern of "hard-core" of specialized committees, which correspond to the major departments of the government. Having started in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, the process extended gradually to new countries after World War II. Latin American countries and French-speaking African countries, for instance, tend to have a dozen or so committees, which cover each of the main sectors of public activity. The main exception to this pattern is provided by the United Kingdom and a number of Commonwealth countries. (Canada, however, follows fairly closely the American model.) (Blondel, 1973: 67).

Still, Blondel sees the nature of a parliament's or legislature's committee structure as a response to mainly factors and trends external to that body.

vi A perusal of the literature, which addresses the history of committee systems in U.S. state legislatures uncovers significant support for one factor serving as a major impetus for their development. For several scholars the increase in demands from the environment, translated via an increase in the number as well as complexity of petitions and bills introduced, necessitates that the legislatures adopt a more efficient system of decision making in its committee system—greater specialization. Harlow, in his classic study of U. S. committee systems before 1825, observed that "the amount of work made the committees necessary" in Virginia (1971:10), which was "the only assembly which permitted its standing committees to frame and amend bills" (1917: 16). Similarly, Dodds noted that "... the power of standing committees developed when the number of bills introduced had become too large for consideration by the whole house (Dodds, 1918: 56).