The Theory of Legislative Institutionalization and the California Assembly

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How do legislative bodies change over time? Polsby's (1968) examination of institutionalization in the U.S. House provides an organizational framework to assess how a legislature develops. I argue that the process of legislative institutionalization is driven by the membership's career goals. Because members of the California Assembly have different career ambitions than U.S. Representatives, application of institutionalization to the Assembly produces important contrasts with the House. Examination of data collected on the Assembly from 1951 to 1985, particularly with an interrupted time-series model, reveals that the Assembly has increased internal complexity, and, on many but not all measures, it has established well-defined boundaries. But, while the Assembly meets some minor standards of universalistic criteria and automatic methods, it fails to employ seniority as the main rule for the distribution of positions of power. Seniority does not matter because, I argue, more discretionary and particularistic methods better serve the career needs of the Assembly membership. This analysis suggests important implications for the utility of the concept of institutionalization.

Analysis of overtime change in legislatures is a highly regarded but rarely attempted undertaking (Cooper and Brady 1981). The best-known work in this genre, Polsby's (1968) study of the U.S. House of Representatives, provides a framework for understanding what he terms the “institutionalization” of that body. Some scholars have criticized institutionalization’s general theoretical tenets (e.g., Cooper and Brady 1981; Sisson 1973; Hibbing 1988; but see Polsby 1981), and other approaches derived from organization theory have been investigated with some success (see Hedlund 1985, 327–28). Still, a spate of recent studies exploring institutionalization (e.g., Hibbing 1988; Chubb 1988; Canon 1989; Brace and Ward 1989; Van Der Slik 1989) attests to the continuing influence of Polsby’s idea. Overall, however, few attempts

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Institutionalization’s importance is suggested by the extensive discussion of it in several Handbook of Legislative Research articles (Matthews 1985, 39; Hedlund 1985, 332; Eulau and McCluggage 1985, 436–37; Thompson and Silbey 1985, 712).
have been made to assess the institutionalization process in other legislative bodies.2

It is critical to examine institutionalization in other legislatures to determine whether the concept is generalizable, must be modified to be of use, or is fatally flawed and should be discarded altogether. That is the task I undertake in this investigation of the California Assembly. The Assembly presents a particularly good test case for institutionalization. Like the House, the Assembly is a highly professionalized, “transformative” legislature, the sort of body most likely to experience institutionalization (Polsby 1975, 307–308). Thus, if any legislature institutionalizes like the House, it ought to be the Assembly. The pattern of change in the Assembly, however, contrasts in important ways with that experienced by the House. Rather than evolving as the House did (Polsby 1968; Polsby, Gallagher, and Rundquist 1969; Price 1975), the California Assembly experienced a severe structural jolt in the mid-1960s. After exploring the conceptual relationship between legislative professionalization and institutionalization, I discuss the dramatic reforms in the California Assembly. I then assess the consequences of Assembly changes to determine in what ways it did or did not institutionalize like the House, and why.

I argue that professionalization and institutionalization are distinct but linked concepts and that each is driven by the main career goals of the membership. Thus, it is likely that professionalization will lead to institutionalization, at least along some dimensions. I also propose decentralization of power as a manifestation of universalistic criteria and automatic methods, one found in far more advanced bodies than a seniority system. Overall, the findings presented here shed more light on the institutionalization process and suggest some limits on its direct application, but also ways it can be made more generalizable.

PROFESSIONALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

What is the relationship between legislative professionalization and Polsby’s (1968) conception of institutionalization? Although some use the term legislative professionalization to mean a change in the personal characteristics and attitudes of the sort of individual who serves in office (e.g., King 1981; Eliassen and Pedersen 1978), I employ it here to mean a change in the attributes of the institution. Measures of professionalization, usually applied to American state legislatures (e.g., Grumm 1971; Citizens Conference on

2Applications to state legislatures have been presented in Chaffey (1970) and Chaffey and Jewell (1972), to the British House of Commons (Hibbing 1988), the Portugal Assembly of the Republic (Opello 1986) and to Western legislatures in general (Gerlich 1973; Loewenberg 1973; Sisson 1973). Van Der Slik (1989) examined institutionalization in the first U.S. Congress, and Canon (1989) in congressional leadership structures.
State Legislatures 1971), can be broken into three components (Squire 1988a, 69–70): 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.

An institutionalized legislature (Polsby 1968, 145) is characterized by the establishment of well-defined boundaries, the growth of internal complexity, and the adoption of universalistic criteria and automated methods for internal decision making. The example used by Polsby is the modern U.S. House. Among the measures employed by Polsby to demonstrate aspects of institutionalization were mean years of member service and percentage of first-term members, years of service before becoming speaker and reason for leaving that office, violations of seniority in naming committee chairs, and expenditures for operation of the House. Although boundedness, complexity, and universalism may be manifested in other ways, clearly, the focus of institutionalization is on how the body operates, particularly how it handles its work load and distributes positions of power.

Professionalization and institutionalization, then, are not exactly the same thing, although they are occasionally treated as such (e.g., Chaffey 1970; Chaffey and Jewell 1972; Price 1975; Eliassen and Pedersen 1978; Chubb 1988). The concepts are not necessarily related on a theoretical level. It is easy to conceive of a legislature having none or just a few of the characteristics of a professionalized body, but meeting the requirements for institutionalization; there is no reason why they cannot be found apart. The two concepts are, however, likely to occur together because the dynamic element leading to the development of an institutionalized legislature is closely related to the result of professionalization. Polsby (1975, 297) notes that the state legislative professionalization movement is driven by the adoption of the modern U.S. House as the model to be emulated. A professionalized body is likely to be one where members look on their service as being their career; after all, service is full-time and the pay offered reflects that fact. Legislators who adopt this long-term or professional perspective mold the organization to meet their needs; that is, to institutionalize it.3 Discussing the changes begun in the late nineteenth century, Kernell (1977, 671) observes, “Perhaps the prime reason for the transformation of the House can be found in the changing needs and incentives of congressmen.” Dodd (1989) provides a similar explanation. As turnover rates declined in the House and average years of service increased, the organization evolved norms and rules, like seniority, and established a full-blown, powerful committee system (Polsby 1968; Polsby, Gallagher, and Rundquist 1969; Price 1977).

3Searing (1987, 432) makes a similar argument in regard to the British House of Commons.
Changing member career goals are important in explaining more recent organizational reform in Congress (Dodd 1986). The House restructures as the career orientation of its membership changes.

Many important House reforms, like the diminution of the speaker's power (Jones 1968) and the subcommittee bill of rights (Ornstein 1975), were forced on the leaders by the membership. Occasionally, legislative changes are initiated by leaders acting alone, as with the imposition of the “Johnson Rule” in the U.S. Senate (Evans and Novak 1966, 63–64), or the reforms in the Kentucky General Assembly (Jewell and Miller 1988, 283). More typical, however, may be leaders and members jointly pushing reforms, each for their own reasons (Davis 1972, 199–201). For example, increasing legislative staff not only benefits legislative leaders in their quest for equal standing with the executive, but also works to the advantage of individual legislators by giving them resources to improve their reelection prospects and to become more assertive in the policy-making process. Regardless of who initiates a reform, the membership accepts it because it suits their purposes (Davidson and Oleszek 1976), although they may not be in agreement on what those purposes are (Moncrief and Jewell 1980).

Professionalization of the California Assembly

The State of the Legislature in 1961. The pre-reform Assembly had few of the characteristics associated with a professional body. Legislative salaries had been raised in 1955, but just from $3,600 to $6,000 a year. This sum was supplemented by a session per diem and compensation for interim service, bringing the average annual salary to between $7,200 and $8,000 (Buchanan 1963, 60). This level allowed for a modest standard of living while the legislature was in session, but most members still needed another job to make ends meet. For example, in the mid-1950s, future speaker Jesse Unruh added to his legislative salary by counting boxcars for a Los Angeles railroad.

The time demands legislative service placed on individuals were strictly limited. Odd-year sessions could be no longer than 120 days. Even-year meetings were held to 30 days and could only consider budget matters. Working conditions were adequate. An addition to the state capitol in 1951 provided each member a private office (Buchanan 1963, 49). During each session members were given the use of a full-time secretary (Wyner 1973). Although no personal staff was provided, some professional assistance was available through the offices of the Legislative Counsel and the Legislative Analyst (Beek 1980).

On the whole, by the early 1960s the conditions of legislative service in

4These limits were actually rather recent creations. Prior to 1951 there were few formal limits on the number of days the legislature could meet, see Beek (1980, 21–22).
California were adequate, if not impressive. By comparison, the situation was better than in most other states (Zeller 1954; Fisher, Price, and Bell 1973, 17–18). But the ability of the legislature as an organization to perform its tasks was still limited, and the body was in no way comparable to the U.S. House. Most legislators did not serve for many terms. Although turnover had decreased from approximately 70% at the turn of the century, it was still quite significant with the majority of legislators serving three or fewer terms (Fisher, Price, and Bell 1973, 12; Zeller 1954, 66).

Reforms. Unruh recognized, understood and, in some ways, exploited the legislature's weakness to become speaker in 1961. Under his direction the California legislature, primarily the Assembly,5 instituted a series of reforms designed to strengthen the body, particularly in relation to interest groups and the governor. In general, the changes undertaken were intended to produce a "professional" legislature. Reforming the legislature was a two-track process: one to increase staff resources, the other to raise member pay.

Speaker Unruh argued that giving legislators more staff would provide them with an independent source of information and make the legislature more powerful in relation to the governor and the executive branch (Unruh 1964, 1965). In 1961 Unruh provided each legislator funds for a full-time administrative assistant, a secretary, and a district office.6 Unruh increased committee staff, with all committees getting at least one professional consultant. More institutional resources were created by establishing the Legislative Reference Bureau (now the Assembly Office of Research) in 1962. Finally, aides assigned specifically to leadership positions and to both parties were provided.

Accomplishing the second part of the reforms, increasing member pay, was more difficult. Under the state's constitution no pay increase could be instituted without voter approval. As recently as 1959 California voters had overwhelmingly rejected a referendum to increase the yearly salary from $6,000 to $9,000.

Unruh adopted a circuitous scheme to overcome the California electorate's inherent resistance to raising politicians' pay. At the speaker's urging in 1963 the legislature passed a concurrent resolution creating a Constitutional Revision Commission. In early 1966 the commission submitted its report which suggested a series of changes in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. This collection of reforms was placed on the November 1966 general election ballot as Proposition 1A.

Embedded in this complex proposal was a provision giving the legislature

5On the reforms Wyner (1973, 53) notes "Most of the time the Senate was either a reluctant partner or an absent party," see also Cannon (1969, 119).
6The following discussion of staff improvements is based on Bell and Price (1984, 187–89); Cannon (1969, 113–16); Wyner (1973, 59–66); and Unruh (1965).
the ability to set its own salary level. A limit of 5% was set on yearly increases and raises could not go into effect until the next legislative session. Prior to the vote on Proposition 1A the legislature passed a measure to increase their pay from $6,000 to $16,000, contingent on the proposition's passage. They justified the large percentage increase by retroactively raising pay 5% for each year since the last adjustment. Proposition 1A also contained a provision removing limits on the number of days the legislature could meet. Backed by the speaker, members of both parties and most of the state's major newspapers, Proposition 1A passed easily.

The Results of Reform. Unruh was extremely successful in building a professional legislature. Staff resources dramatically increased. Member pay was raised substantially and unlimited sessions were introduced. The perquisites of office are impressive: health, dental, and life insurance programs; funds to lease an automobile and credit cards to pay for gas and maintenance; and all office expenses. In addition, according to one recent report, "At an annual cost of at least $2.3 million, 80 sergeants-at-arms and chauffeurs cater to 120 lawmakers in a way that even members of Congress are unfamiliar."7

Legislators also reaped political benefits from the reforms. District offices gave members a permanent presence back home and promoted their reelection prospects. More staff increased the legislators' abilities to deliver constituent services. Also, funds were created to pay for four constituent newsletters per two-year session (Jewell 1982, 61–63).8

Consequently, most post-1966 legislators approach their service as a profession. Observers claim there are fewer alcoholics and that legislators are more serious about their duties (Fisher, Price, and Bell 1973, 69; Salzman 1976, 79–81). A much larger percentage of members now live year-round in Sacramento with their families—70% according to a survey by Dodd and Kelly (1989, 25). Many ex-members stay in the capital and are employed in government-related positions (Rodda 1980). By every measure the mid-1960s reforms made the California legislature a professional body, the most professionalized state legislature in the nation according to several early 1970s rankings (Grumm 1971; Citizens Conference on State Legislatures 1971).9

Institutionalization and Structural Environment

Initially, it might seem that the professionalization of the California Assembly ought to create the conditions in which institutionalization of the sort

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8Proposition 73, passed by the voters in June 1988, severely restricts legislators' use of mailings (Paddock 1988).
9The 1965 reapportionment did not appear to make much difference in the operation of the Assembly (Sokolow and Brandsma 1971, 758).
Polsby documents occurs. But, having observed that institutionalization in the House was driven by members' career goals, we should expect the same changes in another legislature only if the major political career goals of its members are like those of House members. On these grounds institutionalization is sensitive to a legislator's political and structural environment, as Cooper and Brady (1981, 996–97) suggest.

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century the vast majority of House members have operated under the following assumption: they intend to serve for an extended period. This assumption is valid because, among other reasons, of the place the House occupies in the political hierarchy. The position is accorded high status, and there are relatively few more coveted posts, mainly the U.S. Senate, the presidency, and the governorship. Because upward mobility is limited and House service is rewarding, members adopt long-term perspectives and create and maintain organizational schemes to meet their career needs.

Members of the California Assembly operate under different assumptions. That body sits in the middle of the political hierarchy, in an environment flush with opportunities to move to higher office. The 80 members of the Assembly have 40 state Senate seats, 45 U.S. House seats, 2 U.S. Senate seats, and 6 major statewide offices for which to shoot. These higher posts are regularly won by members of the Assembly (Muir 1982, 117–18; Squire 1988a, 68; 1988b, 730–31).

While members of the California Assembly have always been politically ambitious (Buchanan 1963), the number of higher positions available to them has increased dramatically over time. Between 1942 and 1982 the number of U.S. House seats increased from 23 to 45. The number of statewide offices has held constant, but their political value has increased as strategic politicians have exploited them for their career advancement. The secretary of state, for example, was a low profile, politically inconsequential office until Jerry Brown used it as a springboard to the governorship in 1974. An ambitious member of the Assembly, in turn, replaced Brown as secretary of state. The other statewide offices also have been used successfully as launching pads, as have mayoralities in major cities. Finally, the state Senate became

10For an ambitious politician the political value of the other positions is demonstrated by some of their former officeholders: lieutenant governor (Glenn Anderson, Robert Finch, Mervyn Dymally), attorney general (Pat Brown, Stanley Mosk, George Deukmejian), state treasurer (Jesse Unruh), state controller (Thomas Kuchel, Alan Cranston). In 1987, for example, all statewide offices except attorney general were held by former members of the Assembly. The mayoralty of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego have become important enough positions that their holders often become national figures; Tom Bradley and Dianne Feinstein, for example. Current governor and former U.S. Senator Pete Wilson began his career in the Assembly and then moved to the mayoralty of San Diego. The mayor of San Francisco, Art Agnos, is a former member of the Assembly.
Table 1

Reasons for Leaving the Assembly, 1974–1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of Those Leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defeat in Primary or General Election</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for State Senate</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for U.S. House</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for U.S. Senate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for Governor or Statewide Office</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for Local Office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed Government Office</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retire from Politics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information collected from election related articles in California Journal. The entry is the immediate reason for leaving office.

a more promising opportunity for Assembly members after the Reynolds v. Sims (1964) revolution (Mills 1987, 202).

Because of the plethora of higher offices for which members of the Assembly can run, turnover rates are higher and mean years of service figures lower than would be expected given the body’s professional characteristics (Squire 1988a, 72–73). As table 1 shows, most members of the reformed Assembly who leave do so on their own initiative to seek other office. A majority of those who voluntarily leave the House do not do so to pursue higher office (Cooper and West 1981, 86). Assembly members enter office with a short-term perspective, intending to serve only until an opportunity to move up arrives (Squire 1988a, 1988b).

Based on the different career goals of U.S. House and California Assembly members—staying versus moving up—we should not expect that the two bodies will institutionalize in the same manner. The Assembly is unlikely to manifest universalistic criteria and automatic methods in the form of a seniority system because its membership would not have its career needs met through such a system. More discretionary and particularistic methods better serve Assembly members by allowing them the opportunity to gain power without first gaining seniority. But, other aspects of universalism may be found. And on other institutionalization standards we should expect the Assembly to develop like the House. It is in the interest of members of the Assembly to establish well-defined organizational boundaries and to increase

11This may be changing. Of the 83 members who voluntarily left the House from 1984 to 1988, 47 (57%) ran for another office (Dodd and Oppenheimer 1989, 40).
internal complexity because they elevate the office members hold and generate the sort of exploitable political resources useful in attempts at higher office. Consequently, the professionalized Assembly should be bounded and internally complex in the same ways as the House.

The Assembly and Institutionalization

A Methodological Digression. To assess institutionalization of the Assembly, I collected biennial data for the period 1951 to 1985. (The coding and sources for the variables are given in the appendix.) The sequence of events leading to the professionalization of the California Assembly lend themselves to analysis by a particular quantitative technique: an interrupted time-series model (ITS). The statistical model for ITS can be conceived as estimating the short-term and long-term changes in the trajectory of a dependent variable (here an attribute or characteristic of the Assembly), after an “interruption” (the 1966 passage of Proposition 1A). That is, we can determine what trends were present before the interruption, what change the interruption induced and how trends were altered by it (Lewis-Beck 1986). The following equation captures these changes:

\[ S_t = b_0 + b_1 X_{1t} + b_2 X_{2t} + b_3 X_{3t} + e_t \]  

where \( S_t \) = biennial observations (from 1951–1985) on measures of Assembly structure; \( X_{1t}, X_{3t} \) are dummies capturing the global reform shift as follows, \( X_{1t} = \) a counter variable for time from year 1 (1951) to year 18 (1985), \( X_{2t} = \) a dichotomous variable valued 0 for observations before 1966 and 1 for observation 1966 and after, \( X_{3t} = \) a counter variable of time scored 0 for observations before 1966 and 1 (at 1967), 2 (at 1969) . . . 10 (at 1985); \( e_t \) = the error term; \( b_0, b_1, b_2, b_3 \) = the parameters to be estimated.

Reform and Institutionalization. Clearly, the reforms professionalized the California Assembly. But, did they move it in the direction of institutionalization? Were some trends already in place? According to Polsby (1968, 145), establishing boundaries “refers mostly to the channeling of career opportunities.” An institutionalizing body (Polsby 1968, 145–46), “stabilizes its membership . . . and turnover is less frequent. . . . Recruitment to leadership is more likely to occur from within, and the apprenticeship period lengthens.” Can this pattern be discerned in the California Assembly during the period under study?

After the reforms, members of the Assembly began to identify themselves as full-time legislators, as shown in figure 1. In 1951 and 1965 almost every member claimed an occupation other than legislator, but by 1985 a strong plurality were so identified. Moreover, these latest figures undoubtedly understate the number of members who are full-time legislators because many
fear negative electoral consequences from admitting such (Rosenthal 1989, 72; Bazar 1987, 4). This is strong evidence that the Assembly is differentiated from its external environment.

Further evidence of boundedness is difficulty in gaining entry to the legislature (Hibbing 1988, 686–89). Getting into the Assembly is not easy. There is considerable competition. Between 1974 and 1980, an average of seven serious candidates—considered to be those getting at least 10% of the vote—contested open seats in primaries. During this same period only 6% of Assembly seats were uncontested in the general election, less than half the rate found in U.S. House races (cf., Squire 1989). In addition, winning and protecting an Assembly seat is expensive, almost on the same scale as the U.S. House (Sorauf 1988, 265–66, 296; Rosenthal 1981, 33).

Despite the cost and competition, once in office members are incredibly safe. Informative time-series data on electoral safety cannot be collected because of the peculiar cross-filing system used until 1958. In the 1950 general election, for example, 59 of the 80 seats in the Assembly were uncontested because one candidate won both the Democratic and Republican nominations. Evidence presented in table 2 shows that the mid-60s reforms did not affect the electoral safety of Assembly members. They were invulnerable before professionalization and remained so. In that sense, the Assembly is well bounded. But, as Alford and Brady note (1989, 162–63),

**FIGURE 1**

**SELF-IDENTIFIED OCCUPATION OF MEMBERS OF CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY 1951, 1965, AND 1985**
TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Percentage of Incumbents Winning Reelection</th>
<th>Mean Percentage of Vote for Winning Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960–1962</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968–1976</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978–1986</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


institutionalization in the House did not result from increases in member electoral advantage. Indeed, if high levels of electoral safety led to institutionalization we would expect that all state legislatures are institutionalizing because state legislators are as safe as U.S. House members (Jewell and Breaux 1988). This runs counter to Chubb’s (1988, 143) assertion that, “Legislatures do not become thoroughly institutionalized . . . when legislators decide they want to keep their positions but when they demonstrate that they can.” Evidence from the House and Assembly indicates that wanting to keep the seat is the important factor, not ability to get reelected. But it is true that legislators who want to get reelected term after term create resources to assist them in that effort, as members of the professionalized Assembly did in getting district offices, personal staff and funds for constituent newsletters.

To this point it appears clear that the Assembly is well bounded. But the first two equations in table 3 suggest that on a few other measures it is not. None of the variables predicting turnover or length of service is close to meeting traditional levels of statistical significance. These equations show that reform made no difference in membership stability. As can be seen in figure 2A and figure 2B, relative to the U.S. House, turnover in the Assembly has been higher and mean years of service lower, and professionalization has done nothing to change this relationship. But, this is what we

12Hibbing (1988, 707), citing Baldino (1983), claims that “in the House of Representatives, many of the trends toward institutionalization have been reversed (or at least stopped) in the last 20 years . . . including turnover rates.” Much of this line of reasoning now appears time bound to observations from the 1970s. The 1980s are very much like the 1950s and 1960s. For example, turnover and average years of House service in 1987 and 1989 are among the lowest and highest levels respectively in the last 40 years (Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1990, 17–18). According to Dodd and Oppenheimer (1989, 41) House members are becoming careerists again. Although more time must pass before we can have complete confidence in determining trends, it appears that the 1970s were just a blip.
# Table 3

**ITS Model of Institutionalization Measures**  
(Boundaries and Universalistic Criteria)  
(Model: $St = b_0 + b_1X_{1t} + b_2X_{2t} + b_3X_{3t} + e_t$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$b_1$</th>
<th>$b_2$</th>
<th>$b_3$</th>
<th>$b_4$</th>
<th>$b_5$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>D.W.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Years of Assembly Service</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly Turnover</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>-.73</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Years of Assembly Service for Chairs*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.89</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.90</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Discontinuous Chairs (All)*</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>18.21</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Discontinuous Chairs (Return)*</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>29.59</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Years of Service—W&amp;M Members*</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>-.71</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Pay</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>6,861</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Listed in the Appendix.

Note: $b_1$ is a counter variable for time from year 1 (1951) to year 18 (1985), $b_2$ is a dichotomous variable valued 0 for observations before 1966 and 1 for observation 1966 and after, $b_3$ is a counter variable of time scored 0 for observations before 1966 and 1 (at 1967), 2 (at 1969) ... 10 (at 1985). The other variables are described individually. The statistics are defined as: Underneath the columns, respectively of $h_1$, $h_2$, $h_3$, $h_4$, $h_5$, are the ITS parameter estimates (the intercept $b_0$ is not reported); below the parameter estimates are the t-ratios; $R^2$ = the adjusted coefficient of multiple determination; D-W = the Durbin-Watson statistic, which is reported for the OLS equations; @ = estimation with SAS Autoreg, a Cochrane-Orcutt style procedure to correct for significant first order autocorrelation (thus no D.-W). All equations were checked for problems with autoregression.

*coefficient for a dummy variable for change in speaker

*coefficient for a dummy variable for change in party control of assembly

*equation also run with control for overall member mean years of Assembly service with that coefficient proving to have no statistical or substantive importance

*number of cases is 17
should expect because of Assembly members’ career ambitions and numerous opportunities to leave. As the Assembly professionalized, members did not become more likely to stay, because the changes did not alter their career goals.

What of entry to leadership positions? As can be seen in table 4, both before and after the reforms Assembly speakers had moderate levels of experience before gaining that office; there was no lateral entry. But, only Ralph Brown and Willie Brown served in the Assembly for as many as 10 years before becoming speaker, the former winning the first session in which he served as a member of the majority party, and the latter unexpectedly getting the post after a bizarre and bloody intraparty battle which toppled the sitting speaker. Until Willie Brown, none of the speakers served as long as a decade in that position. In general, the tenures in table 4 are longer than those that preceded them (cf., Driscoll 1986, 199–200), indicating that on this score the Assembly is institutionalizing. But this trend began before the reforms. And reasons for leaving the speakership still include seeking higher posts, a tendency which stopped in the institutionalized House (Polsby 1968, 150–51).13

13Unruh and McCarthy served in the Assembly after stepping down as speaker, but each left the body to seek higher office. McCarthy was elected lieutenant governor in 1982 but lost his
Other leadership positions show similar patterns. Majority and minority leadership posts were formalized in the 1950s (Buchanan 1963, 91–93). Although their creation indicate increased internal complexity and boundedness, the route to reaching them seems inconsistent with the expectation of universalistic standards and automatic methods for selection. Many floor leaders achieve their position early in their Assembly careers (Squire n.d.). But some U.S. House leaders also are appointed before accruing much seniority. There is no apparent leadership ladder in the Assembly; floor leaders do not automatically, or even frequently succeed to the speakership (Squire n.d.). But in the Congress only the House Democrats follow such a clear path (Canon 1989). Thus, on balance, the Assembly leadership structure shows that the body is bounded, although not in exactly the same manner as the House.

Finally, the ability to set its own pay level granted by Proposition 1A can be taken as further evidence of the Assembly's boundedness. The results in table 3 show a small, statistically significant $171 increase in pay for each
The interruption coefficient, $X_{\text{int}}$, reveals the large intercept shift of $6,861$ produced by Proposition 1A. The post-Proposition 1A coefficient, $X_{\text{int}}$, indicates a much greater annual increase of $767$ for each session after 1966.

Overall, the weight of evidence supports the notion that the Assembly has developed well-defined boundaries. But what of the means by which power is distributed and decisions are made? In regard to the House, Polsby (1968, 160) observes, “The best evidence we have of a shift away from discretionary and toward automatic decision making is the growth of seniority as a criterion determining committee rank. . . .” Universalistic criteria and automatic methods for the acquisition of positions of power in the House are most pronounced in the naming of committee chairs, and to a lesser extent, in naming subcommittee chairs and in appointment to the most powerful committees. Figure 3 presents the mean years of service of all Assembly members, Ways and Means committee members, and committee chairs during the period under study. Ways and Means is considered the most powerful committee in the Assembly. If the Assembly is like the House, we should see much higher levels of service for chairs and Ways and Means members relative to the general membership, a trend which is instigated or accelerated by the mid-1960s reforms. The patterns in figure 3 are, however, ambiguous. Although in almost every year the mean seniority level of chairs and Ways and Means members exceed that of the full Assembly, the difference peaks in the late 1960s and declines to the early 1980s.

Equations presented in table 3 reveal an arresting relationship between seniority and leadership over time in the Assembly. The $X_{\text{int}}$ coefficient for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Term as Speaker</th>
<th>Seniority when Elected (in Years)</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving Speakership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collins, S. (R)</td>
<td>1947–1952</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>run for state senate (lost)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silliman (R)</td>
<td>1953–1955</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>run for lt. governor (lost)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln (R)</td>
<td>1955–1958</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>party lost majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, R. (D)</td>
<td>1959–1961</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>appointed judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unruh (D)</td>
<td>1961–1968</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>party lost majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monagan (R)</td>
<td>1969–1970</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>party lost majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moretti (D)</td>
<td>1971–1974</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>resigned to run for governor (lost)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthy (D)</td>
<td>1974–1980</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>did not seek reelection to speakership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, W. (D)</td>
<td>1981–</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
both the chairs and Ways and Means years of service equations show a sizable and statistically significant increase over time, consistent with the notion of an institutionalizing body. (Note that appropriate control variables have been included in each equation.) In the chairs equation the interruption term indicates a drop in seniority levels, although this coefficient is of questionable statistical significance. The Ways and Means service equation interruption term shows a strong rise in the mean years of service, as we might expect. In both equations, however, the strong, statistically significant trend after the reforms is for a decline in the average years of service, contrary to the institutionalization hypothesis.

Evidence from these equations supports the conclusion that seniority matters little in gaining positions of power in the Assembly (Squire 1988b, 735; Capell 1989). Retaining power is also problematic, as the equations on discontinuous chairs show. Holding a chair in one session does not mean keeping that post in the next, even if the same party and speaker are in control. The trend toward decreasing discontinuity is, in part, actually reversed by the reforms and their aftermath. Moreover, data on individual committee assignments in the Assembly document substantial discontinuity (Squire 1988b, 739; Capell 1989). Clearly, a different reward system is used in the Assembly than in the House. In place of a seniority system, power is distributed by the speaker in a particularistic and discretionary manner. Members
who align themselves with the winning candidate in the speakership race attain power, regardless of seniority (Buchanan 1963, 81; Capell 1989).

A less important indicator of universalism used by Polsby is the deciding of contested elections strictly on the merits.14 On this score, the Assembly and House look remarkably similar. Compare, for example, the House's handling of the contested Indiana eighth district election in 1984, with the Assembly's decision in a similar case involving the 26th district in 1980.15 More importantly, for both the House and the Assembly such problems are extremely rare. The lack of contested races, however, is undoubtedly exogenous to the legislature, resulting instead from the professionalization of election officials.

Overall, the Assembly is well bounded, but evidence of universalistic standards and automatic methods of the sort Polsby found in the House is weak. Is the Assembly an increasingly more complex organization? Polsby (1968, 153) notes that the growth of internal complexity "is easy enough to establish impressionistically." On the surface the Assembly is clearly complex. Like the House it has a well-defined procedure by which legislation is considered (Driscoll 1986). Details of the legislative process differ between the two bodies—for instance, in the Assembly budgetary authorizations and appropriations can be contained in the same bill, and the legislation must be referred first to a substantive committee and then to the Finance Committee. But the summary impression is that both are highly complicated organizations.

The problem in ascertaining complexity is, of course, to develop quantitative measures to substantiate impressions. Table 5 presents seven ITS models touching on different aspects of internal complexity. Although each measure is deficient in some respect, cumulatively they provide an overall picture consistent with an institutionalized legislative body.

The first equation presented in table 5, days in session, evidences increased complexity. The $X_{1t}$ coefficient shows a slow increase in the number of days in session. Proposition 1A, with its provision for unlimited sessions, produces the expected large intercept rise, 96 days. After this jump, however, the $X_{3t}$ coefficient reveals a decline in the number of days the legislature meets, perhaps as a result of the 1973 shift from yearly to biennial sessions (Driscoll 1986, 66).

14Hibbing (1988, 703) argues against the use of contested elections as a measure of universalistic standards. Polsby's (1968) main point in discussing contested elections seems to be that their number has declined over time (see table 8), and that those which do occur have a less partisan flavor. Because any contested election is likely to bring partisanship to the surface, that significantly fewer elections are contested strikes me as an indicator of institutionalization.

The number of committees in the legislature is a treacherous measure of internal complexity, for reasons Polsby (1968, 153) notes. The ITS equation of the number of committees reveals little; perhaps a slight and statistically tenuous drop as a result of Proposition 1A and its aftermath. The equation for the total number of new and discontinued committees at the beginning of a session shows little, except that new speakers shuffle the committee structure. Impressionistically, changes in the roster of committees indicates responsiveness to a changing political, social, and economic environment (Francis 1989a; 150). For example, among the 23 standing committees in 1951 were Manufacturing; Oil and Mining Industry; Military Affairs; and Conservation, Planning, and Public Works. The last of these evolved through five major name changes to (in 1985) the Natural Resources committee. Others were merged, transmogrified or replaced. Thus, the 30
committees in 1985 included Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, Housing and Community Development, and Public Investments, Finance and Bonded Indebtedness, the last created specifically to handle bills involving divestiture from South Africa (Jeffe 1987, 245). More importantly, committees exercise important and independent powers in the legislative process. They are not simple extensions of the majority party leadership (Rosenthal 1974, 42–43; 1981, 201; Muir 1982; Squire and Scott 1984), although they may be less central than in many other state legislatures (Francis and Riddlesperger 1982).

The growth in number and importance of subcommittees is another indicator of increasing internal complexity (Haeberle 1978; Davidson 1981). Before the 1979–1980 Assembly session, special subcommittees appear to have only existed sporadically. During the 1979–1980 session subcommittees became formalized with names and memberships listed in the Assembly Final History. Since that time their numbers have varied from a low of 17 (1983–1984) to a high of 28 (1985–1986). Roughly half of the standing committees have subcommittees, although the particular committees which do vary by session. Between 38% and 55% of the subcommittees have continued from one session to the next. Subcommittees of the important Ways and Means and Finance and Insurance committees are the most institutionalized. Subcommittee chairmanships have become prized positions (Zeiger and Block 1988, 157). Almost half of Assembly members claim that important committees rely on subcommittee reports (Francis 1989b).

Another facet of growing internal complexity is an increase in legislation introduced and an improved ability to digest it. Certainly, the development of the congressional committee system was motivated to a great degree by the need to adapt to an increasing workload (Polsby 1968). One of the reasons some in the California legislature wanted to see Proposition 1A pass was to give the legislature more time to consider proposals (Bell and Price 1987). The two ITS equations examining the number of bills introduced produce expected results. The interruption term in the raw number of measures equation shows a statistically significant jump of almost 3,700 bills in the legislature after the passage of the proposition. This is to be expected because of the substantial lengthening in the legislative session. The number of measures introduced per session day, however, indicates that a decline occurring before the reforms was greatly accelerated by Proposition 1A. Since 1966 the number of proposals considered has increased, probably because session length has declined slightly in that period. These crude measures indicate that the legislature has increased its capacity to introduce and consider legislation.

16This is similar to the situation in Congress. Subcommittees were not listed in the Congressional Directory until 1972 (Deering and Smith 1985, 189).
By 1988 the California legislature employed a staff of almost 3,000 people (Weberg and Bazar 1988, 9), an average of more than 25 per legislator, giving the Assembly a much stronger informational base from which to gain power (Muir 1982). Although direct measures of such improvements over time are not available, examination of the amount of money the legislature appropriates to spend on itself seems an acceptable and useful surrogate (Polsby 1968, 158–59). The ITS equation of spending on the legislature shows a dramatic near $13 million increase per session since Proposition 1A passed. Thus, the California Legislature, which was budgeted just over $23 million in 1965–1966, spent more than $279 million on itself in 1985–1986.17

Finally, changes in legislative party structures may evidence increased complexity. Hibbing (1988, 701), building on Jewell (1973), asserts that "the degree of institutionalization of legislative parties can be assessed by observing the extent to which the party machinery within the legislature is distinct from the party machinery outside the legislature." The parties within the Assembly clearly are distinct from the weak state parties. The legislative parties—in the form of leadership and caucus committees—are distinguished by their amazing abilities to raise money. In 1984, for example, leadership and caucus committees for the two parties raised and distributed a combined $4.4 million to candidates, around 25% of all funds raised and spent (Sorauf 1988, 268; Gierzynski and Jewell 1989, 5–6). "These figures dwarf the sums the candidates receive from conventional party organizations" (Sorauf 1988, 268). Thus, on every measure the Assembly is complex and on this dimension it is institutionalized.

The Assembly and Consequences of Institutionalization

Although the Assembly has not institutionalized on every dimension in exactly the same manner as the House, it clearly has changed over the last three decades. But do any of these changes square with the consequences of institutionalization offered by Polsby (1968, 166–68), mainly the legislature's increased power in the political system and adoption of professional norms of conduct?

One form legislative independence might take is an increased propensity to pass bills contrary to the executive's wishes. That is, an institutionalized body may suffer more vetoes. The ITS model of the number of Assembly bills vetoed by the executive (table 5) finds a large but statistically marginal increase in the interruption term, suggesting that vetoes have increased in the post-reform era. The number of vetoes overridden also reflects on legislative independence. From 1951 to 1985 only 14 vetoes of Assembly bills were overridden by that body: 11 in 1973–1974, when the Democratic controlled Assembly asserted itself against the Republican governor,
Ronald Reagan, and three from 1977 to 1980 when Assembly Democrats turned against their own governor, Jerry Brown. Moreover, the governor is influential in the legislative process, but many important decisions are made without that office being very much, if at all, involved (Wiggins, Hamm, and Bell 1984; Squire and Scott 1984). The trend is consistent with institutionalization.

There is nonsystematic evidence that the Assembly has adopted the sort of professional norms of conduct Polsby discusses, although, as Hibbing (1988, 684) notes, they may just as easily represent elements of institutionalization rather than consequences of it. As mentioned earlier, members take their legislative responsibilities more seriously. Decorum and appearance matter, as evidenced by the uproar over one member's attempt to go without a tie on the floor, and another's intemperate comments during a partisan battle. And, although scandal still occasionally threatens the integrity of the Assembly, the situation is far better than before the reforms, when several speakers were indicted, and the infamous lobbyist Artie Samish was powerful (Buchanan 1963, 55–56; Samish and Thomas 1971).

**Implications for Institutionalization in Legislatures**

Overall, the weight of evidence suggests that the Assembly has well-defined boundaries, and its internal complexity has increased. Universalistic criteria and automatic methods in the form of a seniority system, however, clearly are not employed in the Assembly. Indeed, the Assembly appears to have reenforced completely opposite rules for the distribution of positions of power. These results suggest two important points regarding our understanding of institutionalization.

First, professionalization and institutionalization are not the same thing. On some scores, such as the formalization of the leadership posts and increased speakership tenures, the Assembly was already institutionalizing well before becoming professionalized. On some other standards, particularly those involving boundedness, professionalization produced few, if any, changes in the trends favorable or unfavorable for institutionalization. Only in those areas professionalization is intended to yield direct results, like staffing, pay and session length can it be suggested that it necessarily leads to institutionalization, or, perhaps more correctly, that they occur simultaneously. But again, the argument I have advanced is not that one is sufficient to lead to the other but that members of professionalized legislatures are likely to want to make the sorts of changes resulting in institutionalization.

Second, the Assembly's lapse in not valuing seniority should not be taken as evidence of noninstitutionalization. If it is, with the possible exception of

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the highly unprofessionalized Arkansas legislature (Blair 1988, 166) and New Mexico state Senate (Hain, Clark, and Clark 1981, 42–43) none of the other 97 state legislative bodies meet that standard—and most legislatures elsewhere in the world fail as well. Holding fast to this narrow conception of universalistic standards would, of course, render institutionalization a concept of limited utility.

I have argued that universalistic criteria and automatic methods for the distribution of many—but not all—positions of power in the House evolved because they helped fulfill the career goals of most representatives. Many of the House reforms of the early and mid-1970s also can be seen in this light (Bullock and Loomis 1985; Loomis 1988; Oleszek 1989, 284–85; Dodd 1989). While never opting for a particularistic system—the members’ continued career orientation would argue against that—the reforms adopted at each point in time were customized to meet the changing needs of the membership, and almost every revision expanded the number of members having some measure of influence. That is, House reforms produced a more decentralized body despite some attempts to counter that trend (e.g., Rieselbach 1986, 109–111; Dodd 1989).19 Loomis (1988) shows how junior members of the House now play an important role in policy development.

This notion is not alien to Polsby’s conception of institutionalization. Indeed he states (1968, 166), “Institutionalization has, in the House, on the whole meant the decentralization of power.” Relative to the House, the Assembly is even more decentralized. The speaker is powerful, but his position rests precariously on the consent of a majority of Assembly members.20 He must share power, and some argue that he exercises little influence on policy (e.g., Jeffe 1987). Legislation is developed, introduced, and controlled by individual authors, with committees holding vetoes but not amendatory powers (Muir 1982; Capell 1991). Thus, even first-year members are

19Smith (1989, 3–4) distinguishes between a decentralized and a collegial pattern of legislative decision making. The distinction rests with the number of units involved, many for the former, and few for the latter. For my use of decentralization the matter of importance is the number of individual members involved, which is many for both Smith’s decentralized and collegial patterns. Collapsing decentralized and collegial patterns into a single category leaves Smith’s (1989, 83–85) characterization of the House in the 1980s in general agreement with my point here. Note also the point made by Bach and Smith (1988, 112) that the innovative and extensive use of special rules in the House during the 1980s "reinforce the decentralized character of House policymaking."

Dodd and Oppenheimer (1989) argue that the Reagan revolution has produced a more centralized system in the House. They note (1989, 50) that this new committee oligarchy "arose not from new rules but from a new fiscal context." It may be, then, that a different fiscal situation will see a return to previous decentralized norms, if indeed, that earlier trend has been reversed by spending constraints.

20The slippery nature of the speaker’s power is evidenced by the following major rebellions: "the revolution of 1951" (Buchanan 1963, 49–65), Unruh’s coup (Mills 1987, 31–46), the McCarthy-Berman battle (Salzman 1980), and the “gang of five” (Zeiger and Block 1988).
centrally involved in important decisions (Bell and Price 1975; Muir 1982; Capell 1988). In legislatures which are both less professionalized and institutionalized, such as Connecticut (Squire 1988b), power is far more centralized. Decentralization is likely to be found in legislatures where members have career motivations to insinuate themselves in the policy-making process.

Substituting decentralization of power for a seniority system as a manifestation of universalistic standards and automatic methods allows the process of institutionalization to be generalized to a wider range of legislatures. Legislators in an institutionalized or institutionalizing body have the motivation to seek power within it, and evidence from legislatures undergoing significant changes as disparate as the British House of Commons (Schwarz 1980; King 1981; Smith and Polsby 1981, 122–26), U.S. Senate (Polsby 1986, 88–113; Davidson 1989) and the Kentucky General Assembly (Jewell and Miller 1988) substantiates this trend. Although each legislature started at a different level of centralization and still are different, over time power has become more equitably distributed among each of their memberships. Institutionalized legislatures are those where decentralization is found in addition to well-developed boundaries and increased internal complexity. By allowing the different structural environments in which the various bodies are found to be taken into account, particularly those regarding career opportunities, this refinement holds the promise that Polsby's basic institutionalization framework can continue to produce significant advances in understanding how legislative organizations change over time.

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APPENDIX

CODING AND SOURCES OF VARIABLES

Assembly Turnover: Calculated as a percentage from data in various editions of the Book of the States.

Californians can use the initiative to force legislative reform, as was attempted with Propositions 24 (1984), 73 (1988) and 140 (1990). The last of these instituted term limitations for both the state Senate and Assembly, reduced the legislature's budget by 40% and cut legislative pensions. If it survives court challenges I do not think Proposition 140 will change the nature of the Assembly because it will not alter the career objectives of the members or how they can achieve those goals. If anything, it will force them to seek moving up the political ladder on an even quicker schedule.

Decentralization is not a simple result of increased structural complexity, particularly in the form of committees. Committees are a facade if they do not exercise some sort of gate-keeping function. In recent decades the Illinois state legislature, for example, has had a well-developed and entrenched committee system, but its gate-keeping capacity was trivial—the vast majority
Legislative Institutionalization and the California Assembly

Budget of the Legislature: Collected from *Analysis of the Budget Bill of the State of California* for each year, 1951–1985. The figures for the years 1950–1951 to 1963–1964, and 1978–1979 are estimates provided in the *Analysis*. The other years are actual spending figures. A number for 1958–1959 was estimated from earlier data.

Days in Session: Legislative, or actual, days in session (Driscoll 1986, 181–83; Bell and Price 1987, 38).

Gubernatorial Vetoes (and Overrides): Collected from *Journal of the Assembly* and, where available, *Assembly Final History* for each year from 1951 to 1985.

Mean Years of Assembly Service: Calculated from “Classification of Assemblymen as to Legislative Service” from odd-year editions of the *California Legislature Handbook*, 1951–1985.

Mean Years of Assembly Service for Chairs; Mean Years of Service—Ways and Means Members; Number of Committees; Percent Discontinuous Chairs; Total Number of Discontinuous and New Committees: calculated from committee rosters in odd year editions of the *California Legislature Handbook*, 1951–1985.

Measures Introduced: Total for legislature calculated from Bell and Price (1987, 37).

Member Pay: In current dollars (Driscoll 1986, 79–80).

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