The Structure of the Public Careers of Brazilian Legislators, 1963-1970

A RESEARCH NOTE

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The means of advancement from public office to public office, an aspect of the general political recruitment process, is an important characteristic in any political system. In Brazilian politics the empirical study of movement between public offices is of special significance, because there is little, if any, prescribed relation between these offices, either in the constitution, the law, or in the political culture. Given the great variety of elective and appointive offices in a constitutional framework of federalism and the separation of powers, many paths are open to those who have political ambitions. However, as is readily apparent, all paths do not always lead to higher office. No legal prohibition exists which keeps the local administrator from reaching directly the highest offices in the country. Nevertheless, such factors as public acceptance, party nomination, prior public experience, political opportunity, social expectations, party competition, personal motivation, time, the supply of eligibles, social status, personal resources, and the norms surrounding advancement and recruitment may drastically restrict the possibilities of this occurring. On the other hand, the local administrator may have a more limited opportunity to move from one office to another, each time gradually moving upward, and at the end of his career, achieve a rather responsible and elevated position in the hierarchy of the country's public offices. Despite a multiplicity of possible career lines in local, state, and national politics, it is assumed that the routes actually followed by successful politicians have not been completely haphazard. That is, paths that lead to one type of national office may not lead

1 Brazil is a federal system. Up to military coup of 1964 Brazil was very decentralized politically and administratively. Since 1964, attempts have been made to centralize the country. Although there are three branches of government, judicial, legislative, and executive, there is no equality of political power among the three branches. For the 10-15 years prior to 1964, the Congress had been politically significant. Since 1964, the military governments have been dominant. For a review of recent Brazilian politics see: (1) Thomas E. Skidmore, Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); (2) John D. Wirth, The Politics of Brazilian Development (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1970).

2 For a review of political recruitment see Lester G. Seligman, Recruiting Political Elites (New York, New York: General Learning Press, 1971).
very often to another type due, in part, to the factors mentioned above and to
the particular relation that may exist between the requirements of a specific
office and the types of experience a politician receives in the recruitment
process: for example, politicians with significant legislative experience on the
local and state levels may end up in the national legislature more frequently
than in the national bureaucracy.

Object of the Study

The object of this study is to determine the structure of public offices which
have led to a significant position in Brazilian politics, a seat in the Brazilian
Chamber of Deputies.\(^3\) In attempting to describe and analyze the legislator's
office careers, both historical and biographical sources have been used. From
career data on the 477 legislators who served in the Chamber between 1963 and
1971,\(^4\) patterns of regularity in the office backgrounds have been drawn, with
reference to the frequency and the location of the offices in their public careers,
and the major sequence-patterns or arrangements of the offices from their
initial offices to their seats in the Chamber. Unfortunately, due to the lack of
data and the brevity of the time period under consideration, the observation and
analysis of changes in the career patterns over time is not possible. Never-
theless, the study attempts to reveal the office career pattern for two separate
periods of the Chamber. The first, which began just prior to the military coup
of 1964 covers the period 1963 to 1967 and includes 194 legislators. The second
period began in 1967 and ended in 1971. It included 413 legislators, 130 of
whom were "carryovers" from the first period.\(^5\)

3 For a general analysis of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies see Robert Packenham,
"Functions of the Brazilian National Congress" in W. H. Agor, *Latin American Legislatures:
In general the socio-political backgrounds of Brazilian legislators have been neglected by
scholars. There are no studies which have catalogued or analyzed the general educational
occupation, or social backgrounds of the legislators; at the same time, there are no studies
which examine the legislative recruitment process in general nor specifically the office
careers of the legislators. For a general survey of some of the problems and potentialities
in the study of the careers of political leaders see Donald R. Matthews, *The Social Backgrounds

4 In compiling the basic data on individual legislator's careers the following sources were
examined: (1) *Deputados Brasileiros 1963–1967* (Brasilia: Biblioteca da Camara dos
Deputados, 1966); (2) *Deputados Brasileiros: 1967–1971* (Brasilia; Biblioteca da Camara
dos Deputados, 1968); (3) Michael R. Martin, *Encyclopedia of Latin American History*
The Chambers of 1963–1967 and 1967–1971 were composed of 194 and 409 legislators
respectively.

5 The legislators who have been included in this study are all of those who were elected in
1963 and 1966. Legislators are elected from the states and territories of Brazil, apportioned
on the basis of population. They were nominated after 1965 by either the National Renova-
tion Alliance (ARENA or the Brazilian Democratic Movement (M.B.D.). ARENA is the
progovernmental and majority party.