

DAVID SAMUELS
University of Minnesota

Ambition and Competition: Explaining Legislative Turnover in Brazil

Despite Brazil's electoral laws, which would appear to encourage incumbency, legislative turnover in Brazil consistently exceeds 50% with each election. In this article, I explain this phenomenon as a function of two factors: the nature of political ambition and the dynamics of electoral competition. Political ambition accounts for about half of the turnover because a sizeable portion of incumbent legislators decides to run for nonlegislative office. Electoral competition accounts for the other half. Since many potentially strong candidates for reelection decide to run for another office the group of incumbents running for reelection is relatively weak. In addition, a wide-open nomination process ensures that incumbents running for reelection face a pool of extremely strong challengers. Finally, Brazil's at-large, open-list proportional representation electoral system undermines incumbents' attempts to protect their status. Given these factors, many incumbents lose. I provide evidence for the impact of ambition and competition on legislative turnover in Brazil, place Brazil in comparative perspective, and suggest avenues for further research.

Introduction

In this article, I explain how political ambition and electoral competition contribute to the relatively high rate of turnover in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Scholars care about legislative turnover for both theoretical and empirical reasons: an examination of the factors associated with high or low turnover rates can inform theories of political ambition, as well as theories of representation more broadly considered, and can help explain various aspects of executive-legislative relations, legislative development, and policy-making.

Most work on legislative turnover focuses on the U.S. House of Representatives, where scholars assume that the desire for reelection drives incumbents' political ambitions (Mayhew 1974) and where over 90% of those who run for reelection manage to win. Although fewer

scholars have explored political ambition and its consequences outside the United States, most of those who do so import this “Mayhewian” assumption (cf. Ames 1987, 1995; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Epstein et al. 1997; Geddes 1994; Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1993).

Despite its intuitive appeal, the “ambition as reelection” assumption may not be applicable to explanations of legislative politics in other areas. Obviously, where reelection is proscribed or limited by law, as in some American states, Costa Rica, and Mexico, adopting such an assumption will not get us very far (Carey 1996; Weldon 1998). Also, legislative scholars have started to explore the relatively new democracies in Latin America and have discovered that legislators in the region are less likely to develop long-term legislative careers than are members of the U.S. Congress, for example (cf. Carey 1998; Jones 1998; Morgenstern 1998). These findings pose both an empirical and a theoretical challenge to political scientists: what accounts for these varying turnover rates? Do most legislators around the world desire reelection and are simply unable to achieve it? Or do they desire something else?

In this regard, Brazil is a particularly perplexing case. On the one hand, its electoral laws appear to encourage incumbents to build legislative careers. As in the United States, nomination control is highly decentralized, and candidates can decide to run independently of whether their party wants them to run or not. Moreover, a “birthright candidate” (*candidato nato*) law *automatically* places incumbents’ names on the next election’s ballot. Given this institutional environment, some scholars have assumed that Brazilian politicians do indeed desire to build legislative careers (Ames 1987, 1995; Geddes 1994).

Yet in contrast to the United States, where turnover in the House is less than 10% with each election, turnover in Brazil has consistently exceeded 50% since democratic elections began in 1945 (Samuels 1998). If politicians *can* run for reelection when they want, how can we explain this relatively high degree of turnover? Below I argue that two factors explain legislative turnover in Brazil—the nature of political ambition and the dynamics of electoral competition.

First, the nature of political ambition in Brazil is such that very few politicians attempt to make long-term careers out of congressional service. Instead, politicians exhibit what I will call “extra-legislative ambition.” Their career energies are focused on political positions outside of the Chamber, typically in the executive branch at the state or municipal level. Compared to congressional seats, these positions concentrate significant power and provide politicians with greater political payoff. Thus, the “Mayhewian” reelection assumption does

not hold in Brazil because a seat in the Chamber of Deputies is but a middling rung on the political career ladder.

The political structure in Brazil encourages ambitious deputies to remove themselves from the pool of incumbents eligible to run for reelection. As I will detail below, this factor explains about half of the turnover in the Chamber of Deputies. We must now explain the other half. Of those who do run for reelection, only about two-thirds manage to win, on average. This result calls into question the idea that incumbent deputies can successfully translate access to the pork barrel into votes (cf. Ames 1995).

Ambition indirectly explains why many incumbents lose. The logic of political ambition in Brazil requires that most of the legislature's political "heavyweights" leave the Chamber and run for other, more illustrious offices. Therefore, the remaining incumbents who *do* decide to run for reelection are relatively weaker politicians and thus more vulnerable to strong competition. The second factor, the nature of electoral competition in Brazil, enters at this point. Brazil uses an open-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system where the 27 states of the federation serve as at-large electoral districts. The number of seats per district varies from 8 to 70. Under these electoral rules, parties do not present a rank ordering of candidates. To win, candidates must compete against their listmates as well as against candidates from other lists in their district.

Quite simply, this electoral system drives incumbents batty. Because of open nomination rules, the relatively weak incumbents cannot influence the number or quality of their challengers. Consequently, they usually face intense competition from challengers on their own lists as well as on other lists. Brazilian incumbents cannot scare off the competition, as scholars have argued that many U.S. House incumbents do, and because they are not the strongest politicians in the available pool, their electoral positions are highly tenuous. As a result, many lose. This explains the remainder of the turnover in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.

Below, I elaborate on how ambition and competition conspire against congressional incumbents in Brazil. In this next section, I explain in more detail how the nature of political ambition explains legislative turnover in Brazil. In section three, I explain how the nature of ambition results in a set of relatively weaker incumbents who run for reelection. In section four, I elaborate on how electoral competition in Brazil works against those incumbents running for reelection. Section five concludes.

Political Ambition and Legislative Turnover in Brazil

In Brazil, the nature of political ambition is such that those who arrive at the Chamber of Deputies do not necessarily desire to stay. In contrast to systems where incumbents seek reelection with near unanimity, in Brazil an average of only 74.4% of incumbents have run for reelection (Samuels 1998, ch. 2).¹ Thus, if all those who stood for reelection managed to win, turnover with each election would still average 25.6%. This provides an obvious explanation for about half of the legislative turnover in Brazil, but it leaves open the question of *why* many deputies choose not to run for reelection.

The answer is that most Brazilian politicians do not consider a seat in the Chamber of Deputies a long-term career goal. Instead, a congressional seat is seen as a stepping-stone to a position higher up the political career ladder in Brazil, indicating that the "Mayhewian" motivation typically attributed to members of the U.S. House does not apply here. In Brazil, deputies perceive positions *outside* the Chamber as more attractive.² These positions include governor, vice-governor, senator, state-level secretary (e.g., of Health or Education), municipal mayor or vice-mayor, and sometimes bureaucratic appointments at any government level.

Since deputies do not attempt to build careers in the Chamber of Deputies, neither do they attempt to endow their positions with any significant power. The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies concentrates agenda-setting and decision-making power in the hands of a few leaders (Figueiredo and Limongi 1996), leaving most deputies with relatively little input into the legislative process. Deputies do not see committees as places to develop seniority or policy expertise either (Santos 1999). Moreover, most important policy proposals emanate from the executive branch, and the executive also possesses decree powers and other institutional advantages that reduce the influence of the average deputy even further (Power 1998). Consequently, most deputies have few opportunities to gain significant political payoff from a seat in the Chamber.

In contrast, positions outside the Chamber typically concentrate significant political power in the hands of one individual. For example, both mayors and state-government secretaries often directly control access to significant numbers of political jobs as well as determine the destination of large sums of politically manipulable government funds (Abrucio 1998; Samuels 1998). Moreover, since 1988, subnational governments in Brazil have benefited from a process of fiscal decentralization that has increased the resources that subnational politicians

control. Consequently, incumbent members of the Chamber now have even more reason to eye extra-legislative political positions.³ In comparison to a state-level secretary or municipal mayor, the average congressional deputy has limited access to the pork-barrel goods that all Brazilian politicians value, controls few plum political appointments, and typically has to share political credit; deputies compete for resources and media attention with over 500 other faces, whereas a position in state or municipal government offers a politician the opportunity to be “in charge” as well as the center of attention.

Many Brazilian deputies find positions outside the Chamber so attractive that they will abandon their recently hard-won congressional seats to take extra-congressional jobs if the opportunity arises. During a given legislature, about 20% of all sitting deputies will take extended leaves of absence to become ministers, to head state-level government departments, or to head municipal-level government departments (Samuels 1998, ch. 3). Some deputies who decide to run for reelection have actually served very little time in Brasília, having been on leave for a good part of the legislature instead.

In addition to those deputies who opt to leave the Chamber temporarily after they have spent considerable time, energy, and money to get there, another 20% of all deputies attempt to leave the Chamber permanently by running for municipal mayor or vice-mayor (municipal elections are held during the legislature’s midterm year). Overall, about 40% of all incumbents actually display a desire to leave the Chamber during the term through their actions (i.e., either taking temporary nominated positions or running for municipal office), and we can imagine that many more would do so if the political conditions were right (Samuels 1998). In short, almost half of sitting Brazilian deputies attempt to leave or manage to leave their seats during a legislature, demonstrating a preference to take extra-legislative positions and thereby implying that they believe these positions offer better returns on their investments.

Let me now explore what deputies specifically opt to do at the end of a legislature. Table 1 provides details on deputies’ career decisions at the end of the 1991–94 and 1995–98 legislatures for those deputies who did not decide to run for reelection.

Table 1 shows that once we remove the deputies who died, resigned, or were removed from office for one reason or another, we are left with 27% and 23% of the total eligible deputies in each legislature who did not run for reelection. Most of these deputies had either won election as municipal mayors (only about a quarter of those who run for mayor win) or decided to run for statewide office.

TABLE 1
Accounting for Deputies Not Running for Reelection
in Brazil, 1991–98

	1991–94 (# and % of 503 total deputies)	1995–98 (# and % of 513 total deputies)
Ran for Governor, Vice-Governor, or Senator	47 (9.3%)	32 (6.2%)
Ran for State Deputy	2 (0.4%)	4 (0.8%)
Won Election as Mayor	26 (5.2%)	31 (6.0%)
Other	1 (0.2%)	3 (0.6%)
Did Not Run for Office	60 (11.9%)	47 (9.2%)
Subtotal	136 (27.0%)	117 (22.8%)
Died	6 (1.2%)	13 (2.5%)
Removed from Office	8 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Renounced	5 (1.0%)	6 (1.2%)
Total Not Running for Reelection	155 (30.1%)	136 (26.5%)

Source: Author's compilation.

With these numbers we can account for the political decisions of about 90% of those deputies eligible to run for office: 70–75% run for reelection, while 15–20% run for extra-congressional office. The decisions of the remaining 10–15% of eligible deputies are unknown. Moreover, though the “unknown” category no doubt contains some deputies who are retiring from public office for good, that category obscures the plans of a number of politicians who may be awaiting appointment—typically at the state level—or planning to run for office four years down the road. Overall, more than two-thirds of all deputies eventually continue their political careers after serving in the Chamber, nearly all at the state or municipal levels (Samuels 1998, ch. 4).

In short, the nature of political ambition accounts for about half of the turnover in Brazilian legislature at each election. Deputies do not seek long-term congressional careers. Instead, many seek to become mayors or seek positions at the state level. This motivation removes a sizeable portion of deputies who might have run for reelection from the competition and provides a simple explanation for about half of the turnover observed.⁴

TABLE 2
Political Experience of Brazilian Deputies
Running for Reelection vs. for Other Positions

Previous Position Held	<i>1991–94 Legislature</i>		<i>1995–98 Legislature</i>	
	% of Deputies Running for Reelection	% of Deputies Running for Other	% of Deputies Running for Reelection	% of Deputies Running for Other
Ex-Governor or Senator	3.2%	6.7%	3.2%	11.9%
Ex-State Secretary	28.2%	32.0%	29.2%	32.9%
Ex-Mayor	14.9%	24.0%	19.4%	31.3%

Source: Author's compilation.

Consequences of Political Ambition in Terms of Electoral Competition

We now know that the nature of political ambition accounts for about half of the relatively high turnover observed in the Brazilian lower chamber. Indirectly, the nature of ambition also affects the dynamic of electoral competition. Simply put, because many of the politicians who would be considered highly competitive candidates choose not to run for reelection but instead to run for another office, the set of deputies who *do* decide to run for reelection is relatively weak.

How can we confirm that deputies running for reelection are relatively weak? While there is no way to test this hypothesis directly (because those who do not run for reelection cannot be compared with those who do in terms of electoral success), we can demonstrate that the deputies who choose not to run for reelection are generally more experienced and more prominent. First, Table 2 shows that deputies who choose to run for positions outside the Chamber are more experienced politicians; they are more likely to have held important political positions at the state and/or municipal level *prior* to their election to the Chamber. Thus, the deputies who choose to leave the Chamber are more likely to be those with already established political careers.

Second, we can track the deputies who appear on a nonpartisan watchdog group's list of Brazil's "Congressional Elite" (Departamento Intersindical de Assessoria Parlamentar [DIAP] 1994, 1998). This designation categorizes deputies by their capacity to sway others' opinions, articulate positions, and negotiate agreements and for their

technical capacity and specialization in specific areas of legislation. In short, the DIAP “elite” are the best legislators in the traditional sense of the word, regardless of political party or ideological position.

As might be expected, these elite do not dally long in the Chamber but typically move on after one or two terms. For example, in both 1994 and 1998, 28% of those who ran for statewide office were designated among the congressional elite, while only 15% of those who decided to run for reelection were deemed worthy of the “elite” category. Again, we see that the higher quality legislators do not seek to build careers within the Chamber. Instead, they are much more likely to seek extra-congressional careers.

In sum, the structure of the political career ladder in Brazil is such that the political “heavyweights” in the Chamber of Deputies often opt to seek other positions. This leaves the “lightweights” to run for reelection. As I will show in the next section, the nature of electoral competition in Brazil leaves these “lightweights” extremely vulnerable to competition from challengers.

Electoral Competition and Turnover in Brazil

As we have seen, political ambition for extra-congressional office accounts for about half of the turnover in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, those who opt not to run for reelection would likely have been considered highly competitive candidates if they had run. The deputies who run for reelection are thus the relatively weak candidates. Adding to their misery, the nature of electoral competition in Brazil conspires against incumbents. I will focus on how competition at both the nomination and the electoral stages of the game levels the playing field between incumbents and challengers in the Brazilian electoral process. Brazil’s electoral and party system (in contrast to that of the U.S. House, for example) offers incumbent deputies few ways to protect their turf from highly competitive rivals. This leaves them especially vulnerable to defeat and explains the remainder of legislative turnover in Brazil.⁵

At the first stage of the electoral process—nomination—incumbents are weakened by their inability to scare off potential challengers and thereby protect their precarious positions. While an incumbent can sometimes prevent a challenger from gaining a spot on his own list, Brazil’s weak registration and nomination rules make it easy for an aspiring deputy to find a place on some party’s list (Mainwaring 1999). The challenger can therefore husband his resources because he confronts no expensive primary election and does not have to fight his way through a nasty internal party dispute for a spot on the list.

Even more damaging to incumbents, the state-level party leaders who decide the composition of candidate lists for federal deputy eagerly seek out as many strong candidates as possible—whether incumbents or not—because under open-list PR the list's *total* vote determines how many seats the list wins, and only then do candidate rankings determine who gets those seats. (Because the votes pool to the list first, some candidates may obtain many more votes than necessary to win, and these “extra” votes will then allow some less successful candidates to gain office.)

Consequently, not only can incumbents not scare off potential challengers, but incumbents never face a pool of novice politicians. Instead, they are likely to face intense competition from challengers who may possess significantly more political experience and power than they do. Table 3 verifies this hypothesis by providing background information on the challengers in 1998, taken from a list of “quality” challengers (Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC) 1999).

Table 3 is most likely incomplete because the source did not present information on every candidate in every state. Thus, the list underestimates the true numbers of “quality” challengers. Nevertheless, we can confirm that the 377 incumbents who sought reelection to the 513-seat Chamber in 1998 faced at least an equal number of experienced politicians and otherwise prominent citizens, plus competition from hundreds of other less-competitive (but still bothersome) challengers.

Incumbents are very likely to face challenges from up-and-coming state deputies, ex-mayors, and ex-federal deputies who may have run for governor or senator and lost four years earlier or who lost a reelection attempt and are trying to get back into politics. In addition, challenges come from members of prominent political families, ex-governors, ex-senators, union leaders, wealthy businessmen, popular evangelical preachers, and others. Given the number and quality of the competition, in many states the incumbent deputies find themselves small fish in a very large pond.

Details from two states provide a more specific picture of what incumbents face. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in 1998, the five incumbents seeking one of the eight seats at stake faced an ex-governor, the son of another ex-governor, an ex-deputy, two sitting state deputies, and a sitting senator. Only three of the incumbents won. In Espírito Santo, the eight incumbents seeking one of ten available seats faced an ex-mayor, a well-known evangelical preacher, the sitting vice-mayor of an important city, an ex-governor, an ex-deputy, another ex-deputy's son, two sitting state deputies, and even the mother of the mayor of one of the state's largest cities. Only four of the eight managed to win (INESC 1998).

TABLE 3
 Number and Types of Challengers
 for Election as Federal Deputy, Brazil 1998

Position	Number of Candidates
State Deputy	58
Ex-Federal Deputy	50
Ex-Mayor/Vice-Mayor	50
Political Family Connection	29
City Council Member	23
State Secretary	19
Ex-Governor	17
Prominent Businessman	16
Evangelical Preacher	16
Union or Student Leader	15
State-Govt. Parastatal Pres.	11
Medical Doctor	11
Senator/Ex-Senator	9
<i>Suplente</i> Deputy or Senator	6
Lawyer/Professor	6
Judge/Prosecutor	4
Radio Announcer	2
Ex-Minister of State	1
Army General	1
Total	344

Source: INESC (1998).

Incumbents know that because party leaders in their state will be wooing potentially strong candidates, they could face a battery of strong challengers. As the nomination process unfolds and the deadline for presenting candidacies draws near, deputies evaluate the likely degree of competition on their lists and sometimes conclude that the reelection battle will be uphill. Although they can do little to impede challenger candidacies, they do have another option to attempt to protect their positions: they can elect to switch parties and run on another list that they hope will be less competitive. Brazilian law allows incumbents to change parties virtually at will up until six months before an election,

TABLE 4
The Fates of Deputies Who Changed Parties
vs. Deputies Who Did Not

	Deputies Who Changed Parties	Deputies Who Did Not Change
% Reelected, 1994	52.4%	67.0%
% Reelected, 1998	60.4%	73.2%

Source: Author's compilation.

and many deputies change parties as if they were changing shirts. In the 1991–94 legislature, 207 of the 503 incumbents (41%) changed parties at least once, and in the 1995–98 legislature, 137 of the 513 incumbents (27%) did so (Brasil 1995, 1999).

When a deputy switches parties during a legislature, this indicates a position of relative weakness (Desposato n.d.; Schmitt, 1999). Deputies change parties not when they seek a better match for their ideological beliefs, but when they perceive that their electoral position is relatively weak *within their state*. For example, they may see that leaders in their original party are seeking strong challengers for the next election and that their chances might be better on a relatively weaker list. A party switch therefore indicates that the incumbent is “running scared” and perceives his or her own electoral insecurity. In contrast, a deputy who perceives that her electoral position is already strong feels less of a need to switch parties. Thus, party switching ought to be associated with a lower probability of reelection success. Table 4 supports this hypothesis: deputies who switched parties in both legislatures had much less success at winning reelection.

The difficulties for incumbents do not end at the nomination stage of the electoral process. At the electoral stage, challengers can subvert incumbents in many ways. Recall that under open-list PR, parties do not present a rank ordering of candidates (neither do they “endorse” certain candidates and not others). Therefore, candidates must not only compete against other parties’ candidates, but they must also strive to win more votes than their listmates. Because of the intensity of the competition, most incumbents fail to maintain their list ranking from one election to the next. In 1994, strong challengers pushed incumbents down an average of 4.0 places on the party list relative to 1990, and in 1998 challengers pushed incumbents down an average of 1.7 places relative to 1994 (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral [TSE] 1991, 1995, 1999).

TABLE 5
The Fate of Deputies Given Their Vote Swing

Vote Swing from One Election to the Next	% Who Won, 1994	% Who Won, 1998
Negative	43/143 (30.0%)	38/113 (33.6%)
0 < Swing < 50%	85/110 (77.3%)	93/123 (75.6%)
Swing > 50%	87/96 (90.6%)	124/132 (93.9%)
Average Reelection Rate	61.8%	69.3%

Source: Author's compilation.

Incumbents' list rankings may fall even if they *improve* their vote totals. An unlucky incumbent under open-list PR could improve his or her vote total from one election to the next and still lose because challengers may gain more votes or other incumbents may improve even more. This means that incumbents are not simply "sprinting and staying in place"; some actually sprint forward but lose the race. Table 5 reveals that this is not a rare phenomenon.

First, we can note that about a third of incumbents lose votes from one election to the next due to the toughness of the competition and that most deputies who lose votes also lose the election. Second, even among the incumbents who improve their vote totals by as much as 50%, there is still a reasonable (about one in four) chance of defeat. Finally, we can see that *incumbents in Brazil must improve their vote totals by more than 50% to approach the average probability of reelection in the U.S. House of Representatives*. However, less than a third of incumbents are able to accomplish this extraordinary feat.

The at-large nature of the election, combined with open-list PR, explains why incumbents are so vulnerable. This electoral system allows candidates to seek out votes in any part of their state, but it also means that incumbents' own vote bases are vulnerable to attack—whether from candidates from other parties or from competing candidates on their own lists. Challengers may be particularly good at stealing deputies' votes because incumbents may be more concerned about maintaining their original vote bases than seeking out votes elsewhere. Ex-governors and senators are likely to be leaders of extensive state-wide clientelistic networks and thus may be able to steal votes from several incumbents. Prominent business leaders running for office may

also undermine incumbents because they are likely to have the deep pockets necessary to finance their own campaigns. Finally, because mayors are responsible for executing public-works projects within their jurisdictions, the voters may be more likely to recognize the ex-mayor's name than the incumbent deputy's name. While an incumbent would prefer to avoid competing for votes against her hometown mayor, she has no power either to impede the candidacy or to stop the mayor from seeking to steal her votes.

A final factor levels the playing field between incumbents and challengers: Brazil's electoral laws do not privilege incumbents in terms of campaign finance. In Brazil, as in the United States, individual candidates are largely responsible for raising their own money, and congressional campaigns are extremely costly. Yet in contrast to laws in the United States, Brazil's electoral laws force candidates to transfer any leftover funds after an election to their party's organization. As might be expected, few candidates find any funds in their campaign bank account after the election. Consequently, although incumbents may have deep-pocketed friends or be rich themselves, they cannot defend their seats by building up a campaign finance "war chest," as U.S. incumbents can, and they will necessarily face strong challenges from other rich and/or well-connected politicians. As we have seen, many new candidates are prominent businesspeople, ex-mayors, ex-secretaries of powerful state-government departments, or even ex-senators or governors. Given this intense intra-list competition, all candidates scramble to raise and spend as much as they can.

In sum, under Brazil's electoral rules, the relatively weak batch of incumbents finds itself threatened by tough competition. Incumbents lack the institutional capacity to impede strong candidates from challenging, and the electoral system leaves their vote bases vulnerable to attack. In this way, the nature of electoral competition under open-list proportional representation in Brazil explains why many incumbents lose their reelection bids.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided a two-part explanation of turnover in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. The nature of political ambition accounts for half of legislative turnover—many deputies are elected municipal mayors or decide to run for statewide office. These incumbents who do not run for reelection are more likely to be the political "heavyweights," with the result that the deputies who *do* run for reelection are relatively vulnerable. When confronted with the nature of

electoral competition under Brazil's at-large, open-list proportional representation system, which forces incumbents to compete against large numbers of highly qualified candidates with little way of protecting their positions, many incumbents fail in their reelection bids.

Why do Brazilian incumbent deputies not spend more energy designing an institution that would provide them with greater incumbency security? Mayhew (1974) wrote that the U.S. House was perfectly designed to suit its members' career goals—to stay in office in the House. In a different way, the Brazilian Chamber is also designed to suit its members' career goals. Brazilian deputies have not designed institutions that enhance incumbency precisely because that is not their primary career goal. Instead, they have shaped the institutions of the Chamber of Deputies to reflect their *extra-congressional* career goals. Incumbents have even worked to *increase* the attractiveness of holding subnational office. In turn, this keeps the Chamber relatively weakly institutionalized.⁶

How does Brazil compare to other countries in the region? For example, Mexico and Costa Rica prohibit reelection, and central party organizations largely control politicians' postlegislative careers. Chile has a lower turnover rate than Brazil (Carey 1998), which may suggest that the lower chamber of the legislature provides greater attractions for career-minded deputies or that a position in the Chamber is relatively high on the political career ladder in Chile because there are fewer attractive positions outside the legislature. Both of these may indeed be true. Argentina and Uruguay, on the other hand, demonstrate even greater turnover rates than Brazil (Jones 1998; Morgenstern 1998).

In most systems (whether presidential or parliamentary), political parties exert a significant degree of control over nomination to legislative office. Thus, internal party dynamics may account for much of the variance in legislative turnover across cases. However, it is currently unclear whether party influence, the direction of individual ambition, or the nature of electoral competition in each country can account for these differences. In Brazil, national parties exert no nomination control. I therefore turned to the nature of political ambition and the dynamic of electoral competition to explain legislative turnover in Brazil. Future comparative research should attempt to clarify these cross-national institutional differences in order to understand the sources of legislative turnover.

David Samuels is Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

NOTES

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1. Brazil first held democratic elections in 1945. Elections held between 1964 and 1981 are not included in this calculation because a military regime controlled competition during that period.

2. For space reasons I do not explain here *why* Brazilian politicians consider these positions more attractive. For extensive analysis of the structure of Brazilian political careers, see Samuels (1998).

3. In fact, I argue elsewhere (Samuels 1998, ch. 8) that it was precisely deputies' career ambitions that drove the process of fiscal decentralization in Brazil.

4. This statement implies that politicians with well-established political careers do not try to become members of the Chamber. In fact, many do, but it is not because a seat in the Chamber is higher on the career ladder but instead because these politicians are in a sort of "holding pattern" in their careers and need to find a niche for a short period before attempting to move on. For more details on Brazilian career paths, see Samuels (1998).

5. In this article I am not testing for the factors associated with the reelection of any particular deputy; I am attempting to compare incumbents with challengers in general terms. Others (e.g., Ames) have explored the factors associated with deputies' reelection success independently of the degree of competition in each state but have not addressed how ambition and competition *combine* to weaken incumbents.

6. This is one potential factor that explains why deputies have not endowed their positions with significant power. For details on this argument, see Figueiredo and Limongi (1996) and Samuels (1998).

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