

Chapter 3

Political Ambition, Candidate Recruitment, and Legislative Politics in Brazil

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1) Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how legislative recruitment in Brazil contrasts with other countries in Latin America. The purpose of this book is not merely to describe the factors associated with candidate recruitment, but to hypothesize about the impact candidate recruitment patterns have on larger political processes within and across the countries under study. Thus, using the Siavelis-Morgenstern variables, I describe the nature of legislative recruitment in Brazil as well as relate the nature of recruitment patterns to a contentious debate about the nature of Brazilian political parties and thus about the general contours of Brazilian politics. I argue that the institutions and processes that Siavelis and Morgenstern point to as relevant independent variables point away from “party loyalist” candidates and towards “entrepreneurial” candidates.

Given this conclusion, I also suggest that the nature of candidate recruitment in Brazil supports the view that Brazil’s parties are organizationally weak. Scholars often describe Brazil’s parties as chronically underdeveloped. The party system is highly fragmented, and most of the parties are organizationally weak. Mainwaring and Scully (1995, 17) place Brazil’s parties near the bottom in terms of institutionalization across Latin America. Electoral volatility is comparatively high (Roberts and Wibbels 1999), and more than one-third of sitting legislators change parties during a term. On the campaign trail, individualism, clientelism and personalism rather than programmatic appeals dominate. Within the electorate, party identification levels are below the world average (Samuels 2004). Power (2000, 28) summarizes by stating that “Brazil is an extraordinary case of party weakness.”

Scholars have suggested that the roots of this weakness lie in Brazil’s political institutions: its open-list proportional representation electoral system (which encourages individualism), large district magnitudes and a low electoral threshold (which encourage fragmentation), strong federalism (which encourages politicians to favor local and regional

appeals rather than national partisan platforms), and the fact that nominations are set at the state and not the national level (separating legislators from national partisan concerns and weakening the power of national party leaders over back-benchers).

Given these institutions, many scholars suggest that Brazil serves as a good example of how institutional design can contribute to governability problems. For example, although Brazil's president is institutionally powerful (Shugart and Carey 1992), Mainwaring (1997, 107) argues that the president's powers "only partially compensate for the fragmentation created by other institutional arrangements". Power (2000, 31) argues that the productivity of Brazil's Congress' is "handicapped by the internal weakness of the larger parties," and Ames (2001, 3) concludes that Brazil's political institutions "create a permanent crisis of governability."

However, other scholars have challenged this image of Brazil as a poster child for the ills of institutional fragmentation. The conventional view of Brazil suggests that governability is sometimes problematic because presidential power is insufficient to overcome inertia generated by the fragmented party system and other institutional roadblocks. Yet some scholars suggest that Brazil's presidents *are* successful and Brazil's parties *are* cohesive. If this counter-claim is true, then institutions external to the legislature are irrelevant for party strength and government performance. The revisionist argument suggests that "individualistic behavior does not thrive" in Brazil's legislature (Figueiredo and Limongi 2000, 152). Party leaders keep backbenchers in line, which gives presidents the ability to achieve their goals. Figueiredo and Limongi go so far as to suggest that Brazil's presidents "are in a position to demand support for their entire legislative agenda" (*ibid.*, 165) and that legislative organization "neutralizes... representatives' incentives to cultivate 'the personal vote'" (*ibid.*, 152).¹

Figueiredo and Limongi base their claim that Brazilian legislative party leaders can control backbenchers on two empirical phenomena: presidential success rates and party cohesion rates on roll-calls votes in the lower chamber of Brazil's legislature, the Chamber of Deputies. Yet as Palermo (2000) and others have noted, one cannot infer presidential success, much less presidential strength, simply from roll-call success rates because roll-calls do not account for the process that filters potential proposals to actual proposals to proposals that are put to a vote. Barry Ames also analyzed important presidential proposals in Brazil and revealed that many

¹ See e.g. Figueiredo and Limongi 1994, 1996, 1999; Limongi and Figueiredo 1995. For different views within this debate, see Abranches 1988; Nicolau 2000; Amorim Neto and Santos 2000; Amorim Neto, Cox and McCubbins 2004; Santos 2003; Meneguello 1998; Pereira and Mueller 2000.

were dead on arrival at Brazil's Congress. In contrast to Figueiredo and Limongi, he thus concluded that Brazil's presidents face "constant, crippling difficulties in moving their agenda through the legislature" (2001, 222). (Resolving this particular point in the debate hinges on identifying the extent to which presidential proposals are modified both before *and* after submission, which no scholar has yet done systematically.)

Scholars have also noted that party cohesion scores (in any country) reflect nothing about party leaders' ability to *enforce* discipline (Krehbiel 1999, 2000; Palermo 2000, 539; Power 2000, 24; Ames 2001, 188). That is, parties might exhibit high cohesion because their members share ideological beliefs or because their constituencies share similar characteristics. Cohesion may also be high because the president strategically shapes proposals so that allied deputies will support the proposals without debate (Amorim Neto and Tafner 2002). If this is the case, then Rice cohesion scores indicate nothing about party leaders' capacity to enforce discipline, and thus nothing at all about the strength or weakness of party organization.

I do not dispute the power of Brazil's president to influence the legislative agenda. However, this is a far cry from concluding that the president can get whatever he wants and that legislative party organization neutralizes the incentives of Brazil's other political institutions. In this paper I relate candidate recruitment patterns to a key aspect of the core *necessary condition* of the strong parties hypothesis: Figueiredo and Limongi's claim that party leaders can enforce discipline because they control resources that legislators "need for their political survival" (2000, 165). If party leaders employ available resources as "carrots and sticks" to keep backbenchers in line, their claim gains support. If we find evidence to the contrary, then we support the conventional wisdom.

To evaluate this point I explore the relationship between political ambition, candidate recruitment, and legislative party organization in Brazil. Given the nature of political ambition and the relevant variables Siavelis and Morgenstern point to in terms of candidate recruitment, I ask whether we should expect strong legislative parties. I conclude that we should not, because Brazilian party leaders control few resources and individual politicians therefore develop "entrepreneurial" careers. Anyone reading this volume will be struck by the differences between Brazil's "entrepreneurial" candidates and the nature of candidate recruitment in other countries. If such differences are meaningless, then this book has little use. I argue that such differences do make a difference for broader political processes, and therefore conclude that the revisionist

hypothesis is misguided. The nature of political ambition and of candidate recruitment in Brazil suggest comparatively weak legislative parties. Our understanding of Brazilian politics and of comparative legislative politics hinges on debates such as these.

2) Legislative Recruitment, Political Ambition and Legislative Party Organization

Legislative parties are endogenous creations of ambitious politicians who work together to solve some sort of collective action problem. Legislative party structure is therefore a function of the nature of politicians' ambition, which itself is shaped by politicians' particular career goals and the factors that shape their success or failure in achieving those goals (Schlesinger 1966, 1991; Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Epstein *et al.* 1997; on the relationship between political ambition and legislative parties in Brazil, see Samuels 2003). In order to understand the nature of party organization and parties' influence over the legislative process, we must therefore explore two questions: the nature of political careers in Brazil, and the degree to which career success depends on party elites' control over resources that politicians consider valuable. In other words, to what extent are candidates "party loyalists" or "entrepreneurs" - or some other type? Do leaders control access to the ballot? Do they control access to campaign finance? Do they control other resources that backbenchers consider valuable?

A general way to think about the nature of party influence follows.² We can generate a simple fourfold classification of the relationship between political careers, party elites' relative influence, and legislative party strength by dichotomizing the degree of legislative careerism and party leaders' control over political careers into "high" and "low." Figure One provides the four idealized type outcomes. This scheme holds a great deal constant and assumes that career preferences are exogenously defined, which is reasonable for the exercise at hand, that is, to gain a "snapshot" view of political dynamics.

Figure One Here

Follow the "high" careerism branch first. When legislative careerism is relatively high and when party leaders control legislators' careers, then legislative parties will be relatively strong (e.g. Japan, Chile). In contrast, when legislative careerism is high but parties offer

² This discussion derives a great deal from Polsby 1968; Polsby, Gallagher and Rundquist 1969; Price 1971, 1975, 1977; and especially Epstein *et al.* 1997.

comparative fewer payoffs for career-minded incumbents, legislative parties will be relatively weaker and deputies will institutionalize a decentralized system (e.g. the US House). (These classifications are not fixed in stone but can change over time). Now let us move to the “low” careerism path. When legislative careerism is relatively low but party leaders still control legislators’ careers, then legislative parties will be relatively strong.

In contrast, when legislative careerism is relatively low *and* national party leaders do not control legislators’ careers, then legislative parties will be relatively weak. What evidence supports my placement of Brazil in Figure One as a case of comparatively low legislative careerism and comparatively weak parties? To assess legislative party strength, we need to determine the extent to which party leaders control access to the legislature, as well as the more general contours of political careerism in Brazil.

2.a) Legislative Recruitment in Brazil

I will first describe the variables that assess the degree to which party leaders control access to the legislature. Morgenstern and Siavelis provide a useful way to classify ideal-types of legislative candidates. In Brazil, the variables clearly point away from the “party loyalist” type and toward the “entrepreneurial” type, that is, the most individualist. Both the “legal” and the “party” variables lead to this conclusion.

Brazil’s election laws allow for highly individualistic campaigns (see e.g. Mainwaring 1999, Ames 2001) as opposed to a party-coordinated effort. Brazil uses a version of open-list proportional representation wherein the states of the Brazilian federation are the electoral constituencies. Brazil has 27 constituencies with district magnitudes ranging from eight to seventy. There are a total of 513 seats at stake in congressional elections, which are held every four years. Following Table 1 in Morgenstern and Siavelis’ chapter, Brazil thus has a “high magnitude/open list” system, associated with an “entrepreneurial” system, in contrast to Argentina, for example, which has relatively high magnitudes but has a closed-list system. Under this system, citizens can cast one vote for either an individual legislative candidate or for a party label. Most vote for a candidate (Samuels 1998). The “open” list means that candidates’ individual vote totals determine their placement on the list; party leaders do not rank candidates. This system thus promotes both intra- and inter-party competition: candidates must compete with their list-mates as well as with candidates on other lists to obtain votes. Lists receive seats based

on how many total votes all candidates on the list receive, and list seats are then distributed to candidates based on their individual vote totals.

Brazilian law bars independent candidacies. All candidates must run on a party list, must be a member of their party for at least one year prior to the election, and must also have lived within their state/constituency for one year prior to the election. These last two requirements might point toward a “constituent servant” classification of candidate type, but both of these rules are inconsequential. Candidates can and do subvert the residency requirement by purchasing property in the state where they wish to run for office. More importantly, because constituencies conform to entire states (and some of Brazil’s states are larger than many countries), the residency requirement is never a contentious issue.

The party affiliation requirement also lacks teeth because of the comparative ease with which Brazilian politicians can (and do) change parties. Over 40% of sitting legislators change parties during each legislative session (Schmitt 1999; Desposato 2001), and if we exclude the leftist Workers’ Party (PT) delegation from this calculation (the PT held about 20% of the seats in the 2003-06 legislature), *more than half* of remaining deputies switch parties during a given legislature. This obviously means that party labels and party organizations possess little value for many Brazilian politicians. Still, the party affiliation requirement does have one visible effect: politicians who are considering running for Congress must declare a party affiliation and refrain from party-switching for one year prior to the next election.

The last “legal” variable is whether reelection is permitted and the degree to which it is pursued. Reelection is allowed in Brazil, and up until 2002 all incumbents were even legally guaranteed a spot on the next election’s ballot. This rule made party leaders’ preferences about individual candidates’ careers wholly irrelevant and made Brazilian politicians’ career choices perhaps the most individualistic in the world.

The “automatic renomination” rule is no longer in effect, but “party” variables ensure that Brazilian legislative candidates remain largely “entrepreneurial”. Brazil’s electoral law (#9504, promulgated initially in 1997 and slightly modified several times since) regulates how parties nominate candidates (Brazil, 1997, Articles 7-10). Each national party’s statute must contain rules for how the party will choose its candidates and for how it will form electoral coalitions. For legislative elections, all of Brazil’s parties’ statutes provide for a decentralized system of nomination, and self-selection characterizes the composition of party and/or coalition lists. The

process is decentralized to the constituency level (that is, to the state level), and state-level politics dominates the party conventions at which lists are generated. However, in contrast to other systems, such as Mexico's or Argentina's, neither national- nor state-level party *leaders* control the nomination process. Instead, individual candidates have substantial leeway to decide whether to run or not, and for which party label. For all parties, self-selection characterizes this decentralized nomination process.

Few party rules exist regarding whom may run for Congress beyond the legal requirements of residence in the state and one-year membership in the party. In seven of Brazil's eight largest parties, which together won 86.2% of the seats in the 2002 legislative elections (a total of 19 parties won at least one seat), the party statutes vaguely state something to the effect that "state-level party conventions shall choose candidates for federal deputy."³ Only the PT (Articles 128-131) provides a few additional rules. First, the PT requires that all candidates sign a "Commitment to the PT's principles." The party also requires anyone who wishes to run for federal deputy to obtain signatures from one of the following: 1/3 of the members of the state party executive committee; 5% of the municipal committees in the state; 1% of all party affiliates in the state, or approval from a state or national "sectoral" meeting. Finally, the PT requires that all people who fit the above qualifications must obtain at least 20% of the votes in the state party convention to make the ballot. These rules may encourage PT candidates to have some minimal connection to the "grass roots" and to the state-level party organization, but they are not as restrictive as one might imagine, nor do they give party leaders as a group at any level of the party particular importance in the candidate selection process.

The legal guidelines that determine the *number* of candidates a party may nominate are somewhat complex. Parties that run candidates alone, i.e. not in a coalition, may nominate up to 1.5 times the number of seats in the constituency, in states that have more than twenty seats at stake. In constituencies that contain twenty or fewer seats, each party can run up to two times the number of seats. (19 of Brazil's 27 states have 20 or fewer seats at stake in each election, accounting for 197 of the 513 total seats up for grabs). Coalitions of two or more parties can run

³ These regulations are contained in the following articles in the party statutes: PMDB (Article 77), PFL (Article 43), PTB (Article 32), PSDB (Article 77), PP (Article 27), PL (Article 14) and PDT (Article 41). All of these are available (in Portuguese) on the web at www.pdt.org.br, www.pmdb.org.br, etc. etc.. The author possesses copies of the party statutes.

two times the number of seats in the states with 20 or fewer seats, and 2.5 times the number of seats in the states with more than twenty seats.

As for the formation of electoral coalitions, if the party is not running a presidential candidate, the state party convention can choose its coalition partners for legislative elections. If the party is running a presidential candidate, the national coalition holds for all other levels of elections. Prior to 2002, state parties could decide coalition partners regardless of the national presidential alliance. In any case, coalitions are not necessary to win a seat. A coalition may boost a list's overall vote total, but they do not help any particular candidate.

Based on the number of parties and coalitions in each constituency/state, and given the rules of the electoral law, the maximum number of candidates that parties *could* have nominated in 2002 would have been 10,852 (calculated from TSE 2002). However, parties "only" nominated a total of 4,296 candidates (for the 513 slots) (TSE 2002), meaning that on average a list filled only slightly more than 40% of the slots to which it had a right. For example, in São Paulo, Brazil's largest state, a coalition could nominate up to 140 candidates on its list (the state has 70 deputies). However, the largest multiparty list had only 109 candidates. Overall, 253 parties or coalitions of parties ran candidates in Brazil's 27 states/constituencies in 2002, but in only three of these cases did the party or coalition nominate the maximum number of candidates.

Because of the nature of Brazil's open-list system, which provides seats to lists based on the total number of votes each list receives, parties and coalitions prefer to have more rather than fewer competitive candidates, unless competitive candidates on one list find themselves competing over the same geographic space. This happens infrequently. More commonly, especially given the comparative ease with which Brazilian politicians can change parties, a party will seek out candidates to join its list. In fact, parties have a relatively strong interest in swallowing a bitter pill and keeping a popular "troublemaker" on the ballot, because the troublemaker can help boost the total number of candidates the party will elect. After the election, candidates who won election with fewer votes than the troublemaker (and who might not have won election without him or her) stay in office whether or not the troublemaker stays with the party or switches to another party. Thus, prior to the election parties always desire to aggregate more votes rather than less, and thus always favor having more candidates than fewer. Given this, yet given that parties are *not* actually running the maximum number of candidates,

we can conclude that the candidate nomination process is wide open and that candidates self-select.

Why do parties generally fail to recruit enough candidates to fill their lists? Perhaps there simply aren't enough people interested enough to devote the time and energy. Another potential reason is the gender quota, which Brazil established in 1995. Initially the quota was set at 25% of all candidates, but it was increased in 1997 to 30% for the 2002 elections. Given Brazil's open-list rule, women cannot be ranked on the list, except by voters themselves. A lack of female candidates is perhaps one reason why so few parties fill their lists. The quota is *technically* 30% of the slots on a list, but parties are penalized for ignoring the gender quota *only when they nominate the maximum total number of candidates permitted*. In 1994, prior to the law, women comprised 6.2% of all candidates for federal deputy. After the law's promulgation, in 1998, women jumped to 10.3% of all candidates. But in 2002 the improvement in gender balance slowed, and women comprised only 11.4% of all candidates. Were parties to attempt to fill their lists, they would first have to nearly triple the relative number of female candidates on the lists.

No party has come close to filling the "mandated" gender quota - even without filling the list! The PT, which makes great claim to being inclusive, had the highest proportion of women candidates in 2002, but its proportion of women candidates was only 13.7%. By comparison, within Brazil's largest parties the PP (formerly PPB) had the fewest women candidates (5.7%), while the PTB had 12.7%, the PMDB 10.9%, the PFL 9.1%, and the PSDB 12.0% (figures calculated from TSE 2002). Thus although there is a slight correlation between the conservative-liberal spectrum and the percentage of women candidates by party, the differences are not that substantial, and in any case no party comes near to the quota "requirement." In short, although a gender quota law exists on paper, *de facto* there is no quota.

After control over ballot access, control over campaign finance is perhaps the second-most important factor determining what "type" of candidates emerge in a given a country. If party leaders control the money, and if individual candidates require money to win election, then the party controls the candidates. In Brazil, party *organizations* are publicly-funded through a yearly appropriation, but political campaigns are not. Parties provide no funding to individual candidates for congressional campaigns. Instead, and in great contrast to most countries in the world and all others in Latin America, individual candidates are entirely responsible for raising

and spending money for their campaigns. There are no effective limits on campaign contributions in Brazil, and campaigns are quite expensive (Samuels 2001a, 2001b). Not surprisingly, the more a candidate raises and spends, the more likely he or she is to win election (Samuels 2001c).

In sum, the most critical variables - decentralized self-nomination and candidate self-financing - provide an overall picture of “entrepreneurial” legislative candidates in Brazil. Only one variable that Siavelis and Morgenstern point to is ambiguous: “re-election norms.” Although reelection is permitted and desired by some incumbents, party leaders do not control access to the ballot, as they do elsewhere. Moreover, reelection is almost never the *primary long-term career goal* of most incumbents. Instead, incumbents exhibit progressive, *extra-legislative* ambition, which I describe below.

2.b) Contours of Careerism in Brazil

We now know that legislative recruitment is a fairly open and decentralized process in Brazil, and that national party leaders do not act as “gatekeepers” who can determine whether an individual candidate is nominated or wins legislative office. But once in office, to what extent do national party leaders influence legislators’ choices and success or failure? Do incumbent legislators even desire to stay and build a legislative career?

Brazil’s electoral and party institutions appear to encourage incumbency and legislative careerism. That is, even though incumbents are no longer automatically re-nominated, the decentralized and candidate-centric decision rules for running for reelection leave the decision almost entirely up to the individual candidate. Thus if deputies wanted to, they could seek to develop legislative careers. However, this is not the case. Even though many deputies do run for reelection, almost no deputies seek to build long-term legislative careers. Instead, *extra-legislative* ambition dominates deputies’ career goals - deputies focus their energies seeking positions *outside* the legislature, typically in state or municipal government, *even while they are serving within the legislature* (Samuels 2003).

With each election, turnover in the Chamber of Deputies hovers around 50%. About two-thirds of incumbents tend to run for reelection, and about two-thirds of these win, accounting for the 50% turnover. Two-thirds is not one-third, and indeed some might consider 2/3 a relatively high proportion. Yet although far fewer deputies are returned to the legislature in

several other countries where reelection is also permitted, the critical difference is that in many of these countries *party leaders* (provincial or national) decide not only who gets on the ballot but also the placement of candidates on the ballot. Thus even if deputies in those countries have static ambition, their own preferences are less relevant, and party leaders' preferences are more important. That is, in other countries the reason turnover is higher is precisely *because* national party leaders control incumbents' careers. In Brazil, individual candidates make the decision to run or not, and voters ultimately decide candidates' placement on the list, making the "reelection dynamic" more like what we see in the US.⁴

More importantly, several factors point to extra-legislative ambition and not legislative careerism. First, the average number of years deputies serve is about seven, about half the average tenure in the US House. Yet even this "average length of service" is misleading, as is the percentage of incumbents who run for reelection, because even during a legislature almost 40% of sitting deputies exhibit extra-legislative ambition by taking a leave of absence to serve in local or state government or by running for municipal mayor (Samuels 2003).⁵ That is, many deputies do not consider the legislature their primary goal, *even after spending considerable resources to get elected* – and they often leave the Chamber immediately after winning election. Thus four years later if they run for "reelection," they may have spent little or no time as a legislator per se. This makes the notion of "legislative careerism" as understood by ambition theory nonsensical for these deputies. And finally, in contrast to the US, where very few retiring members of the House continue in state or local politics (Herrick and Nixon 1996), about two-thirds of Brazilian politicians continue their careers at the sub-national level after serving in the Chamber of Deputies (Samuels 2003). Indeed, post-Chamber careers are typically far longer than politicians' legislative "careers" in Brazil, even though legislative terms are four years long instead of two as in the US.

The high rate of turnover and the evidence of extra-legislative ambition also suggest that in contrast to the US or Japan for example, Brazil's legislature should lack a career ladder as well as norms for working one's way up that ladder. These are two of the most important indicators

⁴ Brazilian politicians' extra-legislative ambition dominates any ambition they might have to advance within the legislature. Re-election is a *second-best option* for many incumbent deputies. In contrast, in the US for example, far more incumbents see reelection as their best opportunity for consolidating political power. Elsewhere (Samuels 2003) I describe these incentives and their consequences in detail.

⁵ If a deputy takes a leave of absence, a *suplicante* or substitute deputy takes his or her place, until the incumbent desires to return. Many *suplicantes* serve for just a few days or weeks.

of an “institutionalized” legislature, which emerges as a function of the degree to which politicians desire to develop an intra-legislative career. This is indeed the case, for there is no institutionalized career ladder within the Brazilian legislature. Legislative agenda-setting and decision-making power is concentrated among party leaders and in the hands of the members of the *Mesa Diretora*, a kind of legislative board of directors, over which the Chamber President (akin to Speaker of the US House) presides. However, a deputy who reaches one of these positions cannot maintain his or her position for an entire legislature, because deputies elect new *Mesa* members every two years and reelection is prohibited. Moreover, no institutionalized norms govern access to the *Mesa* or to party leadership positions (Figueiredo and Limongi 1996, 23-4). For example, first-term deputies often become party leaders, and level of experience does not determine election to the *Mesa*. As Figueiredo and Limongi (1996, 24) themselves noted, the norm of rotating party and *Mesa* leaders highlights the absence of institutionalized norms of career advancement, and they conclude that “there exist few positions of power that would help establish a congressional career” in the Chamber (*ibid.*, 25).

Service on a legislative committee also does little to advance a deputy’s career. The foremost reason for this is that Brazil’s president dominates the policy process and often employs the “urgency petition,” which allows him to pull proposals out of committee whether the committee has finished its work or not. As a result, legislative committees have a “secondary and imprecise role” within the Chamber (Figueiredo and Limongi 1996, 25). Reflecting this, the distribution of committee posts is not institutionalized according to experience (Bernardes 1996, 89) or even technical expertise (Novaes 1994, 134), and deputies frequently change committee assignments within a legislature (Figueiredo and Limongi 1996; F. Santos 1999; Pereira and Mueller 2000). The Chamber’s internal rules also require new committee chairs every year. Obviously this limits the value of a committee presidency for a career-minded deputy. Thus unlike in the US, the committee system does not offer rungs on a career ladder for ambitious politicians.

Party leaders *do* have firm control over committee assignments, but all evidence suggests that deputies don’t really care: as discussed above, the lack of long-term committee assignments reduces their value as career-building resources. Further, research suggests that legislators ascribe little value to such appointments. Less experienced deputies can not only obtain committee presidencies, but Figueiredo and Limongi (1994, 19) affirm that “older deputies do

not even covet those positions” because the place of committees within the hierarchy of power in the Chamber is ill-defined. Finally, Desposato (2001) shows that the threat of losing a “top” committee assignment does not deter party switchers.

Relatively high turnover, a lack of an internal legislative career ladder and the lack of institutionalized norms for distributing available posts within the legislature takes us down the “low careerism” path in Figure One. Yet the connection between candidate recruitment, legislative careerism and legislative party strength remains incomplete. As in countries like Mexico or Costa Rica, where reelection is prohibited and thus *legislative* careers are impossible, party leaders could still control legislators’ *political* careers. Yet in Brazil, national party leaders also do not control incumbent deputies’ post-legislative careers. This is in substantial contrast to other countries in the region, where party leaders control both intra- and extra-legislative careers. For example, In both Costa Rica and Mexico, careers have long been made by working one’s way up the ladder within the main national parties (Smith 1979, Carey 1996) (this practice may be changing in Mexico, as Langston suggests, as federalism gains importance). Other countries, such as Uruguay and Argentina (Jones *et al.* 2001, Morgenstern 2002, Jones 2002) also exhibit higher turnover than Brazil. However, in Argentina for example, provincial party bosses play a tremendous role in determining whether incumbents are renominated or not, and whether and how politicians continue their post-legislative careers. In Brazil, in contrast, neither national nor subnational leaders exert such direct influence over deputies’ career choices (Samuels 2003).

3) The Impact of Candidate Type on Politics

If we shift our discussion from candidate type as a dependent variable to candidate type as an independent variable, we then can ask “What impact does the ‘entrepreneurial’ candidate type have on Brazilian politics?” Substantial research already exists on the career backgrounds and socio-economic composition of Brazil’s legislature. An excellent recent survey of this literature is Santos (1998), while the most important recent works are by Marengo dos Santos (2000, 2001a, 2001b)⁶ and Rodrigues (2002). There is therefore little need to go into detail about the background of Brazilian legislators. Marengo concludes that Brazil’s legislature currently sees slightly greater diversity of representatives in terms of their professional backgrounds than it has in the past, with a decline in the number of “professional politicians” and

⁶ Good work on this subject can also be found in the political anthropology tradition (e.g. Coradini 2001).

an increase in the number of businessmen and professionals who enter politics somewhat later in life. This is another indicator of the absence of conventional long-term party-oriented careers in Brazil (Marenco 2000, 104-5).

However, this relatively small change has had no apparent impact on political outcomes. Brazil remains characterized by an apparent contradiction: a relatively high level of circulation into and out of the legislature (over 50% with each election) but relatively little change in the “social” composition of the legislature itself, which continues to be dominated by members of Brazil’s economic and social elites (Marenco dos Santos 2000, 235; see also Rodrigues 2002). This elite also remains largely male: neither the substantial transformation of women’s role Brazilian society nor the quota law has greatly increased the number of women representatives: from 6.0% in 1990 to 8.2% in 2002, below both the world and regional averages (TSE 2002).

It is important to note that the recent growth of the Workers’ Party has not substantially altered this characterization of Brazilian legislators as largely elite. Despite massive social change in Brazil over the last decades, including industrialization, modernization, urbanization and a concurrent rural exodus, and despite the rise of the PT, “progressives” in the legislature still comprise less than 20% of all members. Brazil therefore remains characterized, as it has been for decades, by a reformist executive and a conservative legislature (Furtado 1971). Brazil’s electoral system and nomination procedures have remained constant over all these years. I do not mean to associate the social composition of the legislature with the legal and partisan context, because there is no theoretical reason to expect that substantial differences in social composition should follow from the institutional rules for candidate selection. Legislators are nearly always and everywhere elites of one kind or another, with the notable exceptions to the rule of course that we all can think of.

Political institutions may have little impact on the social composition of the legislature, but they have a stronger effect on the degree to which party leaders control their delegations. If party leaders do not control access to the pathways to power, and control few resources once politicians are treading that path, we have little reason to believe that Brazilian party leaders are particularly strong. For their part, Figueredo and Limongi acknowledge that leaders do not control ballot access (they do not discuss campaign finance), but still suggest that “backbenchers who do not follow the party line may have their share of patronage denied” (165) and thus conclude that legislative party leaders possess substantial power.

Yet no scholar has demonstrated that legislative party leaders actually *control* access to patronage. If it were obvious that party leaders did have such power, we would have better reason to believe that they more generally dominate individual politicians' careers. However, party leaders do not control the primary source of patronage funds, the pork-barrel amendments to Brazil's yearly budget. In general, Congress as a whole has very little influence over the budget: the president prepares the yearly proposal, without party input. Congress has a chance to amend the proposal, but the president possesses a line-item veto that permits him to ignore Congress' revisions.

If parties were important to the budget process, we might suppose that they would submit pork-barrel amendments themselves. However, parties themselves do not submit pork-barrel amendments to the budget. Instead, the pork-barrel process serves deputies' individual interests (Ames 2001), as well as the interests of geographically-defined *multiparty* groups of deputies, primarily state delegations (Samuels 2003). Highlighting state delegations' importance, Figueiredo and Limongi themselves (2000b, 9) note that "the data show clearly that the amendments presented by state caucuses are now the most important way Congress members influence the budget." Of course, *national* party leaders do not control the multi-party *state* delegations, which are more influenced by state governors' demands and deputies' individual interests.

Party leaders do not control the submission, approval, or funding of pork-barrel budget amendments. Ultimately, the president, not party leaders, has final word on which amendments are funded. This means that neither individual legislators nor party leaders can trade votes for greater shares of pork at the proposal or approval stage of the budget process (Figueiredo and Limongi 2000b). The only opportunity for horse-trading occurs at the "execution" stage of the budget, which the president controls. Budget amendments are not released to "parties," and their release is not celebrated as a "partisan" event. Rather, they are released to localities – municipalities, states, and even regions – and thus local and state politicians, often in multi-party groups, scramble to take political credit.

In short, like the broader organization of the legislature, politicians have not designed the pork-barreling process in Brazil with parties in mind. The pork-barreling process instead is a function of deputies' individualistic desire for credit-claiming (Ames 2001) and their need to develop state-level networks to advance their careers (Samuels 2003). This reflects the

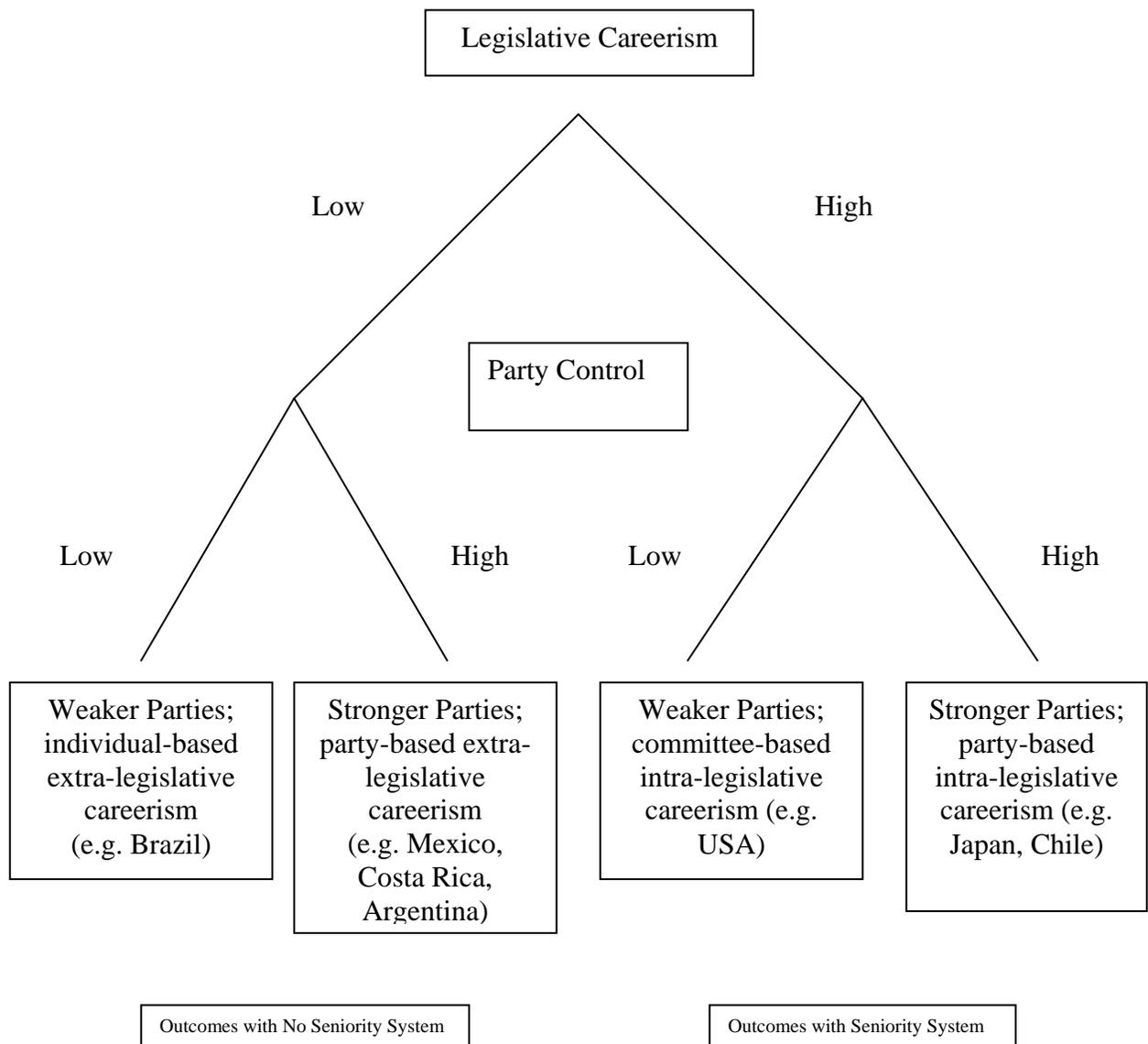
incentives of deputies' careerist motivations, and also reflects the "entrepreneurial" nature of candidate recruitment: national party organizations are relatively unimportant, while a personal vote base and state-based clientelistic connections are key. Brazilian legislators engage in largely individualistic or state-based pork-barreling efforts; an organized, "partisan" dynamic does not characterize these efforts, and national political parties have never controlled resource distribution as they have in other countries.

4) Conclusion

In most political systems, national or sub-national party leaders exert some degree of control over one or more of the following: nomination to legislative office, distribution of campaign finance, pork-barrel patronage, and post-legislative career advancement. Yet Brazilian party leaders do not control any of these levers over deputies' careers. Consequently, legislative party leaders' influence should be comparatively low in Brazil, because leaders cannot brandish these "sticks" at recalcitrant deputies. "Vote-whipping" and other tools to enforce discipline are only effective when leadership threats to withhold valuable resources are credible. Such threats lack credibility in Brazil. Moreover, time horizons are short for both leaders and backbenchers and backbenchers can easily change parties when threatened. When time horizons are short and leaders control few resources, both leaders and backbenchers know that the consequences of defection are going to be low (Cox and McCubbins 1993). In short, most of the resources that party leaders use to discipline members are either not available for Brazilian party leaders or not highly valued by deputies.

Despite my argument favoring the "weak parties" interpretation, I acknowledge that Brazil is a moving target. The current democratic regime emerged only in 1985, and only three presidents have been directly elected since then. Accepting either the conventional wisdom or the revisionist view of Brazil is in some ways comparable to attempting to generalize about the US party system by studying the US Congress up through the Jefferson administration. We should be willing to adapt and change our views as Brazilian democracy evolves.

**Figure One:
The Relationship between Careerism, Party Control, and Legislative Party Strength**



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1 Political Ambition and the European Parliament. Americanist scholars first argued for political ambition's important role in conditioning legislator behavior (Schlesinger 1966, Black 1972, Rhode 1979). They contended that "almost all elected officials have progressive ambition" and hope to move upward to more powerful, prestigious offices (Copeland 1989, 552).⁴ Candidates in EP elections, therefore, owe allegiance to their national party. Further, if a candidate seeks to return to domestic politics, she will have to seek her party's nomination in the domestic election. Once elected to the EP, however, MEPs sit in "groups".⁵ Therefore, a focus on political ambition suggests that the relationship between age and legislative behavior is curvilinear.