Keeping a Seat in Congress: 
Provincial Party Bosses and the Survival of Argentine Legislators

August 21, 2001

Mark P. Jones  
Michigan State University

Sebastian Saiegh  
New York University and CEDI

Pablo T. Spiller  
University of California, Berkeley

Mariano Tommasi  
Universidad de San Andres and CEDI

Abstract

What effect does provincial-level politics have on the ability of Argentine legislators to survive in office? We develop a game-theoretic model of incumbent renomination and derive two related hypotheses on the variation in the time a national deputy will survive in office. We argue that the brevity of Argentine congressional careers can be explained by the disproportional power held by local party leaders vis-a-vis incumbent legislators. Drawing upon a novel data set on the composition of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies between 1983 and 1997, our expectations are tested through censored Weibull regression. Our hypotheses are supported by the analysis. We find the probability of staying in the national congress decreases with the passage of time. The hazard is mitigated if a legislator occupies a leadership position in the legislature.

The authors can be reached at: mark.jones@ssc.msu.edu; sms267@nyu.edu; spiller@haas.berkeley.edu; tommasi@udesa.edu.ar

“Prepared for delivery at the 2001 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington DC, September 6-8, 2001.”
Introduction

Long legislative careers are very rare in Argentina. In January 2001, only one legislator had continuously served in the Chamber of Deputies since the country returned to democracy in 1983.

Since 1983, the overall stability of membership in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies has been fairly low. The average legislator has served only one four-year term in office. The percentage of "newcomers" has always exceeded 40 percent, while only 20 percent of incumbents obtained immediate reelection.

What explains such brevity in Argentine congressional careers? Why are turnover rates so high and reelection rates so low? Why do incumbents not return to their seats? Is it that incumbents decide not run for reelection? Is it that voters keep on throwing the rascals out? Or, is it that congressional careers are neither in the hands of incumbents nor in the hands of voters? Furthermore, who determines the length of legislative careers in Argentina?

Our purpose is to answer some of these questions by looking at the relationship between provincial-level politics and legislative careers. Incumbents may not be reelected for a variety of reasons: because they do not want to be, because they are not successful in their attempts to get on their party list, because they are rejected by the voters. In Argentina, nominations are organized by political parties in a highly decentralized way. Thus, legislative careers are dependent on the support of local party leaders.

We argue that the brevity of Argentine congressional careers can be explained by the disproportional power held by provincial party leaders vis--vis incumbent legislators. We propose a game-theoretic model that improves scholarly understanding of the strategic interaction between local party bosses and incumbents that shape legislative careers, and thus, their brevity. The model accounts for the empirical record regarding the instability of membership in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies.

We conduct an empirical test of our model using duration analysis employing data from the
Argentine Chamber of Deputies between 1983 and 1997. The results show that the probability of staying in the national congress decreases with the passage of time. They also show that the hazard is mitigated if the legislator occupies a leadership position in the legislature.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we discuss the electoral rules and the renomination process in Argentina. Next, we formulate the theoretical model of the renomination process and its consequences for the length of congressional careers. Finally, we empirically evaluate our theoretical model.

1 Provincial Politics and the Fate of Legislators

Argentina is a federal republic consisting of 23 provinces and an autonomous federal district. It has a presidential form of government and a bicameral legislature. The Chamber of Deputies has 257 members who are elected from province-wide multi-member districts (the 23 provinces and the federal district) for four year terms. The deputies are elected from closed party lists using the d'Hondt divisor form of PR. One-half (127 and 130) of the Chamber is renewed every two years, with every district renewing one-half (or the closest approximation) of its legislators.

The brevity of Argentine legislative careers

Since the country’s return to democracy in 1983, the overall stability of membership in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies has been relatively low. According to Jones et al. (2001), turnover rates have always exceeded 40 percent, while reelection rates have been extremely low. Throughout the whole period only 20 percent of incumbents returned to their seats.

Political instability certainly played an important role in curtailing congressional careers in Argentina prior to 1983 (Molinelli, Palanza and Sin 1999). However, instability by itself cannot satisfactorily explain the high turnover rates during the post-1983 democratic period. Regime discontinuities result in significant changes of parliamentary elites elsewhere. In fact, this was in
the case of most West European countries after World War II. In these countries, approximately after three elections or an eight-year period, turnover rates showed a steady decline (Cotta and Best 2000).

For example, in Germany the experience of war, defeat, and reconstruction brought a relatively large share of 'outsiders' into politics and the Bundestag. The average duration of membership at the end of the first legislative term (1949-1953) was 3.70 years. However, by the end of the tenth Bundestag term (1983-1987), the average duration of membership rose to 10.52 years (Saalfeld 1997: 34-35; Best, Hausmann and Schmitt 2000). In the French Constitutional Assembly of 1945, almost 77 percent of its members had no previous parliamentary experience. Similarly, in the 1958 general election, which took place after the collapse of the Fourth Republic, 62 percent of the elected parliamentarians were newcomers. However, today, on average about two-thirds of the deputies elected after a general election have been members of the previous assembly while only a third are newcomers (Best and Gaxie 2000: 118). Outside Western Europe, some parliaments underwent an analogous process. For example, in Japan, after the U.S. occupation an entirely new generation of elected politicians emerged. Some 81 percent of the lower house members elected in the 1946 election had never served before. By the 1949 elections, the newcomers of newcomers declined to 41 percent (Pempel 1985: 123). Recent accounts of the Japanese Diet note that the average length in office for representatives in 1998 was around 11 years (Miyoshi 1999: 96).

Similar processes were also experienced by countries with regime discontinuities not related to external factors, such as World War II. For example, in the case of Portugal, turnover rates since the 1976 transition to democracy show a steadily growing number of MPs being reelected to the Assembly, with many often after having served many terms in previous legislatures (Magone 2000: 365). Hungary is another good example: in the first democratic parliament elected in 1990, only 7 percent of the MPs had previous parliamentary experience. Four years later, the share of new members dropped to 64 percent (Ilonszki 2000: 220; Agh and Kurtan 1995: 25).

Many Latin American countries show a similar picture. The case of Venezuelan legislative careers is a good example. As Carey (1996) points out, the Venezuelan Congress became increasingly "experienced" during the post 1958 democratic period. For example, in the last term he examined
(1988-93) only 38 percent of legislators were freshmen. Another 30 percent had served one previous term, and 32 percent had served two or more previous terms (Carey 1996: 75). Even Brazilian legislative careers show a somewhat similar pattern. Legislative turnover in Brazil is fairly high, however – as Samuels (2000) notes – political ambition accounts for about half of the turnover because a sizeable portion of incumbent legislators decides to run for nonlegislative office. In fact, the proportion of successful reelection-seeking legislators in Brazil has been increasing since 1986. According to Pereira et. al. (2001), almost 50 percent of incumbents were reelected for the 1994-98 term.

In contrast, in Costa Rica, multiple legislative terms are a rarity. Given Costa Rica’s use of term limits since the early 1950s this is relatively unsurprising. Immediate reelection rates to the Costa Rican Congress were 34 percent on average in the 1920-1944 period. The introduction of term limits after 1949, though, virtually eliminated legislative careers. As Carey notes, despite the legal possibility of staggered reelection, the prospects for legislative careers have been comparably bleak. Of 569 politicians who have served in the Assembly, 495 have served only one term, 60 have served two terms, and only 14 have served three terms (Carey 1996: 77).

In spite of the absence of term limits in Argentina, the Costa Rican figures are strikingly similar to the post-1983 Argentine situation. For all legislators elected from 1983 to 1997, 87 percent served only one term in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, 11 percent served two terms, and only 2 percent served three or more terms. Table 1 provides information on reelection rates in the Chamber of Deputies between 1985 and 1997. These figures have been calculated taking into account the renewal of the Chamber every two years, thus, they show how many sitting deputies were reelected given the total number of seats at stake.

Table 1 about here

The table indicates that only 16.6 percent of deputies were immediately reelected to the Chamber during the 1985-1997 period. When one considers the effect of these reelection rates on the ”seniority” of sitting deputies the evidence is even more conclusive. With each renovation, every two years, around 80 percent of incoming deputies are elected to the Chamber for the first time.
Thus, from 1985 to 1997, the percentage of "newcomers" has been 46 percent. Note that given the staggered nature of legislative terms, the "effective" turnover rate has been lower. However, throughout this period almost 5 out of 10 incoming members of the Chamber had no previous experience as a national deputy.

In sum, in contrast to the general trend described above, in Argentina legislative careers are extremely short, even after many years of sustained democratic rule. While the average duration of membership at the end of the first full legislative term (1983-1987) was 2.98 years, it only rose to 4.23 ten years later (Jones et. al. 2000).

**Legislative career choices**

What explains such brevity in Argentine congressional careers? Several hypotheses can be put forward. First, one can hypothesize that incumbents do not present for reelection because they either retire or run for other elective offices.

Unfortunately, there is no systematic evidence on voluntary retirements from the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. Still, in one of the few empirical studies on the career paths of Argentine politicians during the post-1955 era, Jones (2001) shows that after the deputies of the 1991/95 class completed their term in office, an overwhelming majority continued a career path tightly linked to their respective parties. Of the 108 legislators included in his study, as of mid-1998, 82 were in positions that were strongly influenced by their party ties/position within the party. Of these 82, 50% held elective office at the national, provincial or municipal level, 29% were active solely as party leaders at the provincial, county or municipal level, while 21 percent occupied appointive posts in the national or provincial executive branches. Of the remaining 26 legislators, six held high political content posts (5 Union Leaders and 1 Business Association President), where ties to the PJ were an integral part of their position. Seven could not continue in any of the elective, appointive, or party posts because of prior events. Only 13 of the 108 (12%) deputies seem to have departed voluntarily from the political scene (at least two of these 13 for reasons of poor health) (Jones 2001).
Alternatively, one can argue that incumbents either run for other offices or present themselves for reelection and voters decide not to reelect them. This is the "progressive ambition"/"throwing the rascals out" hypothesis. Note, that incumbents can seek another elective post or voters can punish them only when these legislators have been nominated by their parties. The first step any incumbent must take to seek another office or to be reelected, thus, is to gain his/her party nomination. Namely, once an incumbent legislator has decided to run for another office or seek reelection, he/she needs first to get the approval of the subset of citizens who has say in the choice of party candidates.

Following Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999) we can call this subset of citizens the "selectorate". The American politics literature often assumes that the selectorate is composed of all voters in a particular electoral district, and that legislators' career choices are based on their own assessment of their electoral prospects. In other words, legislative career decisions are either on the incumbent or the voters' hands (Kiewiet and Zeng 1993).

However, this need not be the case. The incumbent's will is indeed important, yet candidate selection processes play an important role. In particular, legislators' career choices largely depend on their party's selectorate. In general, parties are characterized by different institutional rules pertaining to the role of citizens in influencing candidate selection. While some parties leave the decisions in the hands of all citizens (open primaries), some other parties only let their members participate in the selection process (closed primaries). Sometimes, only party officers will be in charge of selecting candidates without any other sort of participation.

These different party norms coupled with the overall electoral rules of a given system will define the selectorate, and eventually the voters' chances of punishing/rewarding incumbents. The candidate selection process is critical to electoral success under single-member district systems, when nominations are in the hands of party officers (the selectorate is small). The same is true in the case of closed-list PR systems, where a nomination at the top of a major party list can virtually guarantee electoral success. On the other hand, under open-list PR and under the single transferable or non-transferable vote, candidate selection is a less binding constraint, albeit still very important. In open list systems, once nomination has been achieved, the success of each
candidate depends far more on the preferences of the ordinary voters than on their location on the party ballot. Perhaps the candidate-centered extreme is represented by Brazil, where parties cannot refuse to renominate incumbents and open list PR is employed (Ames 1995).

When candidate selection takes the form of party primary elections or some other form of intra-party democracy (the selectorate is large), both single-members districts and closed-list PR systems tend to limit the role of party officers. Here, the candidate selection process is also critical and the placement a candidate gets on the list is likely to be decisive to get reelected (Strm 1997: 165). We can talk of voters throwing the rascals out in this context, but we certainly need to be more careful when the selectorate consists of a very tiny subset of the eligible voters.

Note that the same is true for other elective posts. The decision to run for another office does not depend on the legislator’s will. Again, as long as the incumbent seeks to present him/herself for another elective post, he/she must secure the candidacy with the selectorate’s support. Therefore, a third hypothesis emerges: short congressional careers are not related to voluntary retirement or voters’ rejection, but due to the particular characteristics of the candidate selection process.

Candidate selection

The two dominant political parties in Argentina (Partido Justicialista [PJ] and Unin Cívica Radical [UCR]) employ three distinct methods of candidate selection: elite arrangement, assembly election, and direct primary (De Luca, Jones and Tula 2000). The first category includes a variety of types of elite arrangement, ranging from the imposition of a list by a provincial level caudillo (e.g., a powerful governor) to a list that emerged out of a negotiation among provincial party elites. The second category encompasses those lists that were the product of a formal provincial party assembly in which delegates to the assembly (themselves directly elected by party members) elected the candidates. The final category includes only those cases where two or more lists competed in a direct election. ³

Given Argentina’s federal structure, local party leaders are key players in the nomination
process. De Luca, Jones and Tula (2000) show that the decision (within the PJ and UCR) to hold a primary depends first and foremost on whether or not the party controls the governorship at the provincial level, and secondarily on whether or not the incumbent governor is eligible to seek reelection. As governors are likely to bear a disproportionate share of the costs of any divisive primary, they have both the incentive to and means by which (e.g., the resources of the provincial administration) to arrange a negotiated list of candidates. The governor should be able either to impose his or her candidates, co-opt potential opponents, and/or successfully negotiate an agreement with other party factions.

In contrast, when the provincial-level party is in the opposition at the provincial level, the resources at the disposal of its leader are minimal in comparison to those of a governor. Hence, the ability of this party leader to avert a primary is much weaker than that of a governor, increasing, then, the probability of a primary being held (De Luca, Jones and Tula 2000).

The ability of the national party to influence the composition of provincial party lists depends in large part on the cohesiveness of the district-level organizations. The national party has some cards to play: if the party is in power, the president may utilize the power of the purse to influence the composition of a particular list. It could even use the constitutional power to takeover the provincial government, or just take over the district-party organization. The opposition party, however, cannot use either of the two first instruments, and thus has less influence on the district-level organizations. Finally, the influence of rank-and-file party members is usually relegated to instances of internal party conflict (i.e., primary elections), whether between the national and the provincial party organizations, or within the regional level party organization itself.

In Argentina, then, except for rare occasions, the selectorate is seldom the citizenry of a particular district. In general nominations are in the hands of the (local) party leadership, thus, legislative careers depend more on the selectorate’s will than on the voters or incumbents’ choices.

There is plenty anecdotal evidence on this respect. For example, in 1997, one of the few specialized congressional journalists in Argentina wrote: "after almost fifteen years of democratic governance, the most productive legislators have been set aside by their own parties. One is Jorge
Vanossi, from the City of Buenos Aires, a renowned scholar who lacks support within his party ... the other is not so well known: the Peronist Hector Dalmau, from Misiones, who was expelled from his party by the local caudillo. Dalmau spent eight years in the Chamber of Deputies and generated at some point the largest number of bills presented by a particular legislator and approved by Congress” (Vidal 1997).

In a recent paper, Jones (2001) presents more systematic evidence: during the 1989-99 period only an average of 26 percent of all incumbent legislators were successfully renominated by their parties. He also shows that once incumbent legislators were included on the party lists, their probability of reelection increased considerably. During the same period, approximately three quarters of those incumbents who obtained a position on the party list achieved reelection (Jones 2001: 205).

Local party bosses and legislative careers

This section along with the following one seeks to answer the central question of this paper: what is the effect of state-level politics on legislative careers? For this purpose, we analyze the extent to which local party bosses have incentives to rotate incumbents and curtail their legislative careers.

As stated above, the process by which the regional party lists are formed largely affects which candidates run on the party list, what order they occupy, and, consequently, their chances of winning. This process gives local party leaders (as long as they constitute the selectorate) the upper hand in the electoral process.

Now, the following questions arise: why local party bosses have no interest in renominating incumbents?; why local party bosses would jeopardize their parties’ electoral chances by nominating unexperienced candidates?; why wouldn’t local party bosses want their provinces’ representatives in the national legislature to be experienced legislators? After all, there is an efficiency loss associated with bringing an experienced legislator away from Congress.

Our argument is that local party bosses have a complex political objective. On the one
hand they want to maximize the performance of their legislators. On the other hand, they want to safeguard their position within the provincial party structure. Therefore, local party bosses face a tradeoff between the costs of being potentially challenged by incumbent legislators and the efficiency loss associated with bringing those experienced legislators away from Congress.

The threat of being eventually challenged by popular legislators provides local party bosses with a strong incentive to reduce the national and provincial visibility of their underlings by rotating them among the various jobs the local party can offer. At the same time, local party bosses may jeopardize their parties’ electoral fate by nominating unknown candidates. However, this risk is attenuated by the closed-list PR system. Since voters vote for the party list and not for individuals, the impact on voter’s decisions is limited. There is a remaining cost, though, associated with the loss of an experienced representative in the national legislature.

In the case of incumbent legislators, in order to pursue their desired career paths, they must maintain a good relationship with the local party leadership. Nonetheless, they do pose a threat on local party bosses as long as they can challenge them. As Jones (1997) notes, a challenge could aid a politician in his/her quest to become the local party boss, or to gain support from the national party leadership for a national position. Hence, challenging the local party boss would at times be an optimal strategy for incumbents. However, the timing of the challenge should be strategically chosen.

In this sense, Argentina is neither Brazil nor the United States. The career structure, electoral and party rules are very different. More importantly, legislative career choices are not in the hands of incumbent legislators. Analyses such as Kiewiet and Zeng’s (1993) for the U.S. case or Pereira et al. (2001) for the case of Brazil are therefore inappropriate. The Argentine situation calls for a more complex analysis, incorporating the strategic interaction between the local party boss and incumbent legislators. In the next section we provide a game-theoretic model of the renomination process and its consequences for legislative career choices.
2 The Renomination/Transfer Game

We assume that two players, a local party boss (denoted by G) and an incumbent legislator (denoted by D) are engaged in a non-cooperative situation. Our model examines the decisions that leaders make under this contingency. In the game, the local leader chooses to renominate the incumbent legislator or to transfer him/her to a local office. Then, incumbents decide whether to accept such offer or to reject it. If they reject the offer, they can either leave politics or challenge the local party boss. In case they decide to challenge the local party boss, two feasible outcomes ensue: nature moves, and with some probability they are successful and with some other probability, their challenge fails. Our full game of sequential decisions is depicted in Figure 1.

The outcome of this process and the ultimate change in welfare resulting from a challenge is not known with certainty. Hence, making a challenge yields an expected value, assessed according to the probability of being successful or failing. To make their decisions, the players evaluate their payoffs under each contingency and decide whether they are better off by renominating/transferring (in the case of local bosses) or by accepting/challenging (in the case of incumbents).

The structure of the game is the following:

1. The local party boss moves first and makes an offer.

2. After observing the offer, the incumbent decides whether to accept it or reject it. If he/she chooses to reject, then he/she also chooses whether to challenge or not.


We model the decision to challenge as a lottery, in which the incumbent’s expected utility from the challenge depends on the probability that it will be successful or not and the utilities associated with each possible outcome. We restrict the probabilities in such lotteries: $0 < P < 1$. We
also distinguish between the probability of being successful given that a candidate was renominated \((P|\text{Renomination}) = P_r\) and the probability of succeeding given that a candidate was transferred \((P|\text{Transfer}) = P_t\). The values associated with a successful challenge and a failed one are normalized to one and \(R_d\), respectively. Where \(R_d\) is the incumbent’s reservation utility. In addition, the incumbent has to pay a cost, \(c\), associated with launching an unsuccessful challenge. Therefore, the utility for the incumbent of launching a successful challenge equals 1, and the utility for failing is \(R_d - c\).

The local leader’s payoffs from a renomination/transfer offer are: \(1 - V(r)\), and \(1 - \Delta - V(n) - V(t)\), respectively. Where \(V(r)\) is the value of renominating the incumbent legislator, \(V(t)\) is the value of transferring the incumbent legislator to a local office, \(V(n)\) is the value of offering a candidacy to a new guy, and \(D\) is a cost in lost efficiency for the local party boss associated with taking an experienced legislator away from the national arena. Whereas we normalize the payoff for the local leader if he/she is defeated to a reservation utility, \(R_g\). Table 2 summarizes the payoffs associated with each possible outcome at each of the terminal nodes in the full game in figure 1.

\[\text{Table 2 about here}\]

We solve the game by finding the subgame perfect equilibrium, starting at the bottom of the game tree and working sequentially backward. First we analyze the outcomes associated with the decision by the incumbent, and then we move to the preceding decision.

If offered to be transferred, the incumbent chooses whether to accept the offer or not. He/she compares the expected utility from each outcome given the probability of launching a successful challenge. Therefore, the incumbent accepts the offer iff

\[V(t) > P_t(1 - R_d) + R_d - c\]  \(\text{(1)}\)

Suppose the local party boss decides to make a renomination offer. Now, the incumbent accepts the offer iff

\[V(r) > P_r(1 - R_d) + R_d - c\]  \(\text{(2)}\)
Having examined the incumbent’s choices, we move to the preceding decision: whether the local leader renominates or transfers the incumbent. For simplicity, assume that $R_d = 0$ and $V(n) = 0$. A renomination offer that makes the incumbent indifferent between accepting it and launching a challenge, should be at least $V(r) = P_r + c$.

Then the local leader’s payoff is $U_g = 1 - P_r + c$. Similarly, given the same assumptions about $R_d$ and $V(n)$, a transfer offer that makes the incumbent indifferent between accepting it and launching a challenge, should be at least $V(t) = P_t + c$. In this case, the local leader’s payoff is $U_g = 1 - \Delta - P_t + c$.

The local leader makes a decision that maximizes their expected payoff. This means that he/she will renominate the incumbent only when

$$1 - P_r + c > 1 - \Delta - P_t + c$$

Solving for $\Delta$, we find that in equilibrium incumbents will only be renominated if

$$\Delta > P_r - P_t$$

This equation can be easily interpreted as the tradeoff faced by the local party boss stated above: the threat of being eventually challenged provides the local party boss with the incentive to reduce the national and provincial visibility of their underlings by rotating them. However, when the efficiency loss associated with replacing an experienced representative in the national legislature is big, then the local leader should renominate the incumbent.

Note also, that the different probabilities of launching a successful challenge influence the local leader’s decision because they determine the critical value of $\Delta$. Assume now that the probability of launching a successful challenge is a function of time. This assumption captures the idea that incumbents can become increasingly popular, have more visibility, accumulate more resources and, thus, become a more serious threat to the local leadership as they spent more time in the national legislature.
We also want to allow for individual-specific traits that may affect incumbent’s probabilities of launching a successful challenge. Namely, assume there is a "power differential" among the candidates, such that $P_r = (1 + \gamma_i)f(t)$; that $P_t = f(t)$, and

$$P_r - P_t = \gamma_i f(t) \quad (5)$$

In the last expression, the incumbent’s power differential increases the size of the right hand side of the inequality in expression 4, making it harder for those guys to stay in power unless they are very valuable to the local party boss. Conversely, the cost in lost efficiency decreases with $\gamma$. Thus, deputies will survive in congress when their tenure there poses no threat to the local party boss, either because they are politically "harmless" or because they are more dangerous at home than in the national legislature.

The local leader’s decision to renominate or to transfer the incumbent depends, thus on three parameters: the "efficiency" loss, $\Delta$; the "power differential" among different incumbents, $\gamma$; and the incumbent’s probability of launching a successful challenge as a function of time, $f(t)$. These implications of our simple model give us the following hypotheses:

**HYPOTHESIS 1.** The odds in favor of a legislator’s political survival in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies decrease as a function of the logarithm of the time that he/she has been in office.

**HYPOTHESIS 2.** The greater the prospective losses associated with taking an experienced representative away from the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, the more likely a legislator will increase his/her tenure.

Both of these hypotheses are testable. Consequently, in the next section we examine them using an original data-set on the Argentine Chamber of Deputies.
3 A duration model of Congressional Careers in Argentina

The proposed hypotheses link the survival of Argentine deputies to their tenure in office, their "power differential", and their value as representatives of the local party boss in the national legislature. To test these hypotheses, we require data that permit us to relate the length of time a legislator is able to remain in office, their personal characteristics and the role they play in the Chamber of Deputies.

Most of the data are fairly straightforward, except for the indicator of "power differential" in terms of their personal characteristics. We comment on this problem later. For the rest of the data, our basic source was Molinelli et al. (1999). These data were appropriately checked and cleaned to perform statistical analyses. The data set includes all members of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies between 1983 and 1997.

From these data, the central items of information we ascertained were three: (1) the date the legislator entered office; (2) the date the legislator left office; (3) if the leader left the sample, whether that exit was the result of death, resignation or end of term. With respect to the types of termination we decided to censor, in this study, censoring was applied to cases whose termination did not involve the end of the legislator’s term in office. Departures resulting from death, resignation or the end of the observation period (31 December 1997) are taken to fall under this stipulation.

We are also interested in ascertaining the effect of several variables on the survival of legislators. One of these is the role of that legislator in the chamber. Here we focus on whether the legislator has a leadership position on the party bloc. We also take into account whether a legislator is a committee chair or not.

To calculate the impact of $\gamma$ from our model, we need to specify whether each legislator has personal characteristics that turn him/her into a potentially successful challenger of the local party boss. Unfortunately, this is very difficult measure due to the paucity of individual-level information on Argentine deputies during this period. One measure would be the votes won by the legislator in the previous election. However, since votes are pooled because of the closed-list PR system, this
information is useless. We decided to handle this problem by incorporating heterogeneity in the legislators’ survival distribution. Also, we included the age of the legislators as a control variable.

At this point, it may be useful to lay out briefly the relationship between the hypotheses and the data. Hypothesis 1 indicates that the odds of political survival decrease as a function of the logarithm of the time the legislator has been in office. In accordance with hypothesis 2, we expect that having a leadership position in the chamber and/or being a committee chair increase survival rates. We expect age to be negatively related to the length of congressional careers.

**Model specification**

Our approach to testing the specification of the model involves the use of duration analysis. The dependent variable is the length of time a legislator remains in office. In particular, we are interested in the hazard rate faced by Argentine deputies.

There are various alternative approaches to estimation of a duration model. We believe the Weibull model is the appropriate one to test our hypotheses. However, some clarifications regarding the choice of model are in order. First, we decided against the use of a discrete-time model. Although, in principle the changes we are interested on occur at predetermined times (election day), many individuals become legislators at different points in time because of the staggered nature of the congressional terms or because they replace another legislator. Hence, it is difficult to specify the predetermined times for all legislators. What we do is to treat the times of events as a continuous-time process measured in years.

We also discarded the use of Cox’s proportional hazard model for several reasons. First, this model is appropriate for covariates that are functions of time, i.e. time dependent covariates. Time varying covariates cannot be handled by this model (Greene 1998). Our knowledge of the allocation of committee chairmanships and of party leadership positions in the chamber leads us to believe that these covariates are time varying and not time dependent. Second, when many observations exit the sample at the same time (as it is the case in our setting), estimation with
this technique becomes problematic. Finally, Cox’s model has proven useful for modeling duration data with minimal assumptions about the underlying distribution. In our case, we have a theory that makes specific predictions about the distribution of failure times.

Given our hypothesis, the Weibull model has a clear advantage over the other methods; it permits the hazard rate to change with the passage of time. In this case, we want to test whether the hazard rate of Argentine legislators is constant, increasing or decreasing. The hazard function for the Weibull distribution takes the following form

\[ h(t) = h(t)\alpha^{-1} \quad (6) \]

The terms are the shape parameters for the distribution. When \( \alpha = 1 \), the Weibull hazard is reduced to the exponential hazard (constant rate). Whether \( \alpha \) is greater than 1 or not determines whether the hazard rate is increasing or not. When \( \alpha < 1 \), the hazard rate is a strictly decreasing function. When \( \alpha > 1 \), the hazard rate is a strictly increasing function (Lancaster 1992; Amemiya 1985).

We estimate the Weibull model in the following fashion:

\[ h(t) = \exp(\beta'X + \alpha \ln t) \quad (7) \]

The last term on the right-hand side represents the shape parameter of the Weibull model and it is estimated directly from the data. Hence, we can use this specification to test our hypothesis about the ”shape” of the hazard function (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997).

**Data analysis**

We turn now to an examination of the empirical fit of our model. The main question is, Does tenure in office have the anticipated effect on the length of time that an Argentine legislator stays in the Chamber of Deputies? Table 3 reports the results of the maximum likelihood estimates based on Weibull regression for both an initial model and one incorporating heterogeneity of the
survival distribution across individuals. The latter model is estimated as a Weibull model with gamma heterogeneity (Greene 1997: 995-6).  

Table 3 about here

The results reported in Table 3 reveal that tenure in office has the predicted effect on political survival. Our theory predicts that tenure in office will negatively affect a legislator’s chance of staying in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. Namely, we expect to find an increasing hazard rate. To see this, we need to interpret $\sigma$. The parameter $\sigma$ is the inverse of the parameter $\alpha$ in expression 7, $\alpha = 1/\sigma$. Consequently, the value of $\alpha$ for the initial model is 2.33, indicating an increasing hazard rate. The same is true for the model with gamma heterogeneity, in this case, $\alpha = 4.76$.  

Figures 2-4 about here

The median survival rates in office are 6.5 years and 5.8 years for the initial and the heterogeneity models, respectively. While only 25 percent of the deputies have an estimated survival of more than eight years, that is, two consecutive periods in office. These estimates are consistent with the figures on reelection rates presented above.

The question we want to address now is, What are the effects of $\Delta$, in terms of our model, on the hazard rate of Argentine deputies? The dependent variable, again, is the duration of legislative tenure measured in years. Three time-varying predictors are now included in the model. The variable AGE is the age of legislators at each particular moment in time. LEADER is a binary variable coded 1 if the legislator occupies a leadership position in the chamber (speaker, leaders of party caucuses) and 0 otherwise. The variable CHAIR is a binary variable coded 1 if the legislator serves as committee chair, and 0 if not. A Weibull model with and without gamma heterogeneity are estimated. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 about here

18
The coefficients are presented using the accelerated failure time parameterization; this means that they are reported in terms of their relationship to expected failure times. A negative sign on a coefficient, thus, implies that the duration is "shortened" by some value per unit change in the covariate. Namely, the expected time-to-failure is sooner rather than later. Consequently, it is important to note that a negative coefficient implies an increase in the hazard rate, while a positively signed coefficient implies a decrease in the hazard.

The results reported in Table 4 reveal that all of the variables in the model have the predicted effect on political survival. Being a committee chair and holding a leadership position extend time in office, while age reduces subsequent time in office. The results are perhaps better understood as relative risks (or risks ratios), which are also shown in Table 4 in the column next to the coefficients for each model. In these expressions values above 1.00 (the baseline) indicate a decreased risk that the legislator would not survive in office, while hazards below 1.00 indicate that the survival rate has fallen as the hazard has risen. For interpretation purposes, the hazard deviation from 1.00 can be understood as the percentage increase or decrease in the likelihood of political survival resulting from the marginal impact of the independent variable, so that the relative effects of the variables can be discerned by the magnitudes of the hazards.

If we exponentiate the parameter estimate for LEADER in the Weibull model with heterogeneity, a hazard rate of 1.20 is produced. This means that a one-unit increase in the leadership condition (in fact, having a leadership position, since it is a binary variable) reduces the risk of removal from the Chamber of Deputies by 20%. Similarly, being a committee chair reduces the overall risk of removal by 27%. Finally, the risk of leaving the Chamber of Deputies increases by 1% with each one-year increase in the legislator’s age. Thus, the indicators of Δ in our model (LEADER and CHAIR) evidently make an appreciable difference in the prospects of surviving politically in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. Hypothesis 2 is also well supported by the evidence.
Conclusions

In our simple model, local party bosses are assumed to be motivated by a desire to keep their job, while they also care about not losing good representation in the national legislature. They make their decisions to renominate or transfer incumbent politicians based on these political objectives. Incumbent legislators find it hard to stay in the legislature unless they are vary valuable to their local party bosses. Surviving deputies are either politically ”harmless” they are more dangerous at home than in the national legislature.

The evidence is consistent with our expectations. We found that tenure in office has a negative effect on the length of time that a legislator stays in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. The relative value different legislators posses mitigate the hazard. Legislators who hold leadership positions in the Chamber have a lower risk of removal.

These results run counter to expectations from the American politics literature. Research on congressional career decisions in the US focus on the decisions of legislators either to run for reelection, to seek higher office or to retire. These are often assumed to be individual decisions subject to electoral constraints. Thus, absent progressive ambition or voluntary retirements, long legislative careers ensue. This paper presented a very different set of underlying institutions that rule legislative career paths. Given these differences, many of the assumptions that motivate the American politics literature had to be revised in order to properly understand the Argentine case.

Most notably, the disproportional power held by local party bosses emerges as one of the key elements of this process. In this sense, this paper makes a contribution to a recent literature in Latin American politics stressing the importance of state-level factors and the relative influence of governors in explaining public policy outcomes (Carey and Reinhardt 2001; Spiller and Tommasi 2000; Tommasi, Saiegh and Sanguinetti 2001).

The present research both specifies a model and offers data that are highly consistent with that model. With this knowledge in hand, we should try to enhance our knowledge of legislative career paths under different institutional arrangements.
This is the first stage of this research project. In the near-future we plan to complete the following additional tasks. First, we will extend the dataset through December of 2001. Second, we will include additional data (using information on the deputy’s position on the party list and on candidate nomination) to evaluate the rival hypothesis that party leaders and committee chairs have a higher survival rate due to their own political power/resources. 8 Third, we will evaluate whether deputy survival rates differ depending on whether or not the deputy’s party controls the governorship in their respective province, and where the party does control the governorship on the varying political power of the governor (especially whether or not the governor is a lame duck). Finally, we will provide a more detailed description of the career pathways of deputies to illustrate the prominent role of the local party bosses (and the province) in Argentine political careers.
Notes

1 Holland (Secker 2000) and Norway (Laegrid and Olsen 1985) show very similar patterns.

2 Two are deceased individuals, one was in jail (prior to his incarceration he occupied an important post in the National Executive Branch), there was a fugitive, and there are three deputies who defected to another party (all three continued to be active in politics, one as a national deputy).

3 The two most common primary methods in Argentina are closed primaries, where participation is restricted to party members, and open primaries where independents may also participate. Even where primaries are held, the party will at times change the order of candidates on the list that emerges out of the primary process. These changes are however virtually always carried out with the consent, albeit at times grudging, of all of the affected individuals (De Luca, Jones and Tula 2000).

4 We estimated an ordered logit model (Greene 1998) recoding the data on duration in intervals, but given the relatively short time series in terms of legislative periods there was not enough variation in the dependent variable to compute the hazard rates.

5 Unlike in the United States, in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies there is no seniority system.

6 Although a logistic model may also be appropriate, such model is not available with the heterogeneity specification that we are using.

7 Note that heterogeneity adds a tendency for a decreasing hazard rate (Lancaster 1992). However, as the results on Table 3, column two indicate, the decreasing hazard rate in this model is caused both by heterogeneity and duration dependence.

8 Two versions of the list variable will be examined, one interval and one that distinguishes between the person who heads the list (cabeza de lista) and all others.
References


Table 1
Reelection in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, 1985-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Reelection</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29.9)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(18.9)</td>
<td>(16.2)</td>
<td>(14.2)</td>
<td>(14.7)</td>
<td>(16.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Immediate Reelection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(7.9)</td>
<td>(5.4)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reelected as Alternate*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.4)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reelected</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(70.1)</td>
<td>(76.4)</td>
<td>(77.2)</td>
<td>(78.5)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(79.1)</td>
<td>(79.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These are deputies who returned to the chamber as an alternate replacing a resigning or deceased deputy.
Source: Elaborated with data from Molinelli et al. (1999).
Table 2
Payoffs associated with game’s outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Expected Utilities for G</th>
<th>Expected Utilities for D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Renomination</td>
<td>$1 - V(r)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Renomination</td>
<td>$(1 - P_r)(R_g) + P_r(1 - \Delta - V(n) - c)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Renomination</td>
<td>$1 - \Delta - V(n)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>$1 - \Delta - V(n) - V(t)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>$(1 - P_t)(R_g) + P_t(1 - \Delta - V(n) - c)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>$1 - \Delta - V(n)$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
The effect of time on survival of Argentine legislators
Censored Weibull Regression Test of Hypothesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Initial Model</th>
<th>Model with Heterogeneity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.04***</td>
<td>1.55***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td>3.33***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-1314</td>
<td>-1176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=3755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that $\sigma = \alpha^{-1}$. These are maximum likelihood estimates of a Weibull duration model. Standard errors are in parentheses. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed. See text for interpretation.
Table 4
The effect of time on survival of Argentine legislators
Censored Weibull Regression Test of Hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial Model</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model with Heterogeneity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Hazard Rate</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Hazard Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.73***</td>
<td>1.626***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.097)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>-0.003*</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>-0.005**</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>0.453***</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.188***</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAIR</td>
<td>0.316***</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.238***</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.534)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma</td>
<td>0.416***</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.235***</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.051***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.174)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-1520</td>
<td>-1433</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=3755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that $\sigma = \alpha^{-1}$. These are maximum likelihood estimates of a Weibull duration model. Standard errors are in parentheses. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .05$ two-tailed. See text for interpretation.
Figure 1: The Renomination/Transfer Game

G

Renominate

D

Accept

(1-V(r), V(r))

Challen

P_t success

(R_s, 1)

N

1-P_t failure

(1-Δ-V(n)-c, R_d-c)

Reject

(1-Δ-V(n), R_d)

Transfer

D

Accept

(1-Δ-V(n)-V(t), V(t))

P_t success

(R_s, 1)

N

1-P_t failure

(1-Δ-V(n)-c, R_d-c)

Reject

(1-Δ-V(n), R_d)
Figure 2: Estimated Survival Function - Test of Hypothesis 1 (with Heterogeneity)
Figure 3: Estimated Hazard Function - Test of Hypothesis 1 (with Heterogeneity)
Figure 4: Estimated Integrated Hazard Function - Test of Hypothesis 1 (with Heterogeneity)