# Why Study Political Dynasties? Popular Expectations of How Politicians from Political Families Will Perform in Office

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### Popular Expectations of How Politicians from Political Families Will Perform in Office

It is hardly novel to observe that many prominent politicians in democratic countries have family ties to established politicians. To note some prominent recent examples, the current prime ministers of Japan and Canada (Shinzo Abe and Justin Trudeau) are both sons of previous prime ministers, a recent US president (George W. Bush) is the son of another president while the wife (Hillary Clinton) of a different former president won the popular vote but not the election, the recent president of South Korea (Park Geun-hye) is the daughter of a former president, the recent president of Argentina (Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner) was the wife of another former president, and in Norway after three terms in the 1980s and 1990s as prime minister by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the daughter of a cabinet minister, Jens Stoltenberg, the son of a different former cabinet minister was twice prime minister, both times succeeding Kjell Bodevik, the nephew of yet another cabinet member. These are merely some of the highest profile examples of political dynasties, in which one member of a family follows another member of that family into elected political office. If we look further down the political ladder, there are innumerable cases of sons taking fathers' former seats in national legislatures, wives succeeding husbands as governors or mayors, and daughters continuing the family business in local assemblies.

So what? Does it matter that political dynasties are scattered throughout the democratic world? Is there anything fundamentally undemocratic about electing the scion of a political family? After all, they still have to win elections just like any other aspiring politician.

In the past decade, there has been a heightened interest in studying political dynasties. Most of the literature treats political dynasties as the dependent variable, trying to the mechanisms and institutional structures which give rise to political dynasties and allow them to persist. For example, this literature explores whether dynastic politicians do better because of higher name recognition, financial advantages, better access to powerful party politicians, favorable electoral rules, and so on. This literature takes it as a

given that political dynasties are interesting and worthy of study. If authors feel the need to justify their topic, they usually do so with a quick reference to common queasiness about inherited power in democratic regimes. Normatively, this literature boils down to the phrase, "power begets power" (Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder 2009). Again, the suggestion that politicians can entrench themselves in power seems antithetical to the basic principles of democracy. How can voters throw the rascals out if power begets power? However, voters might not always want to throw the incumbents out. The only hard evidence we have of whether voters actually want to replace a certain set of politicians are the voting returns, and when the voters cast their votes in favor of a politician – dynastic or not – they are bequeathing legitimate democratic power to that politician. Is there really anything wrong if power begets power through free and fair elections?

A much smaller segment of the literature on political dynasties directly confronts the "So What?" query by treating political dynasties as an independent variable and arguing that polities in which political dynasties flourish produce worse outcomes, such as lower economic growth or higher levels of corruption. Unfortunately, it has proven extremely difficult to conclusively link dynastic politics to specific outcomes. There are, after all, many factors affecting complex processes such as those that lead to poverty other than the identity of the local legislator.

This project proposes looking at the effect of political dynasties from a somewhat different angle. Like many previous studies, I also argue that polities in which dynasties are prevalent produce a different type of politics than those in which dynasties are rare. However, rather than looking for evidence of this difference in aggregate government statistics documenting economic growth, poverty, corruption, or other concrete outputs, I look to individual attitudes. Put simply, people think differently about how democratic politics are supposed to work when dynastic politicians are prevalent. There are two main components to this.

First, rather than assume that dynastic politics are a flaw in democracy, we should ask citizens how they feel. Do people really dislike dynastic politicians, or do they actually prefer politicians from political families? Do average citizens think that dynastic politicians have an unfair advantage, and does this reflect a flaw in their country's

democratic regime? In short, whether regular people are actually bothered by political dynasties is an empirical question, not merely something that scholars should abstractly assert. This project will produce evidence suggesting that citizens are, in fact, bothered by political dynasties, though it is rarely the seen as the worst facet of any regime. Nevertheless, if average people think that a polity rife with dynastic politicians is somehow unfair or flawed, then scholars have a responsibility to study the topic.

Second, in addition to the question of whether dynasties are good or bad for democracy, we should also ask whether voters evaluate dynastic politicians differently. Dynastic politicians may have systematically different appeals to voters than non-dynastic politicians, so voters supporting dynastic politicians may be opting for a different sort of democratic regime. For example, dynastic politicians might be seen as being better at securing and distributing particularist resources. A variant of this is that dynastic politicians may "inherit" their message from the previous family member, so that voters are more likely to believe a dynastic politician's appeal because it is consistent with what the preceding family member pursued while in office. Again, if voters expect different behavior in office from dynastic politicians than from their non-dynastic counterparts, this in and of itself justifies a thorough investigation of the causes and consequences of political dynasties.

**How Prevalent Are Dynastic Politicians Around the World?**

Try asking a person whether dynastic politicians are common in his or her country. Almost without exception, the person will think of an example of a dynastic politician and confidently reply that dynastic politicians are, in fact, rampant. If you ask them to estimate a percentage, they almost always overestimate the percentage of dynastic politicians by a wide margin. I have experienced this talking to people both from countries in which dynastic politicians are relatively common and from countries in which dynastic politicians are comparatively rare. In the absence of widely accessible data, people wildly overestimate the prevalence of dynastic politicians.

Counting dynastic politicians is no simple matter. Since conditions are different in each country, scholars do not tend to use standard definitions or data sources to estimate the prevalence of dynastic politicians. This section will present a variety of estimates

from different countries, but the reader should keep in mind that these are not strictly comparable.

There are several ways to define dynastic politicians. Some of the major differences involve which offices to consider, which family relationships qualify, and whether the later politician directly assumed a seat from the earlier politician.

The most common way to count dynastic politicians is to look at the national legislature. A politician is dynastic if he or she wins a seat in the national legislature and was proceeded by a different family member in the national legislature. The advantage of this definition is that it is tractable and meaningful. Researchers only have to consider the relatively small universe of politicians who have served in the national legislature rather than the much larger set of all politicians in a given country. Moreover, since the national legislature is powerful in every democracy, a seat in the national legislature is always a meaningful political office. The drawback of this definition is that in most countries there are also other important political offices. For example, in some countries governors or mayors may be more powerful than a member of the lower house of the national legislature. If the child of a powerful governor wins a legislative seat, most observers would consider that child to be part of a political dynasty. If one expands the definition of a dynasty to include predecessors who held any elected office, the estimates of dynastic politicians in the national legislature can increase dramatically. For example, Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap estimate that in the Congress elected in 2010, 37% of Filipino legislators had a family member in one of the three previous Congresses. However, if they expand the definition to include governors and mayors in the same time period, this estimate of nearly doubles (Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap 2012). Similarly, the proportion of dynastic legislators in Taiwan's legislature increases from 12% to 27% when the definition is expanded from legislators preceded by a family member in the legislature or higher elected office to include legislators preceded by a family members elected to any office (Batto 2018).

A second question involves which relatives are close enough to constitute a political dynasty. Children and spouses always qualify, and siblings almost always do as well. However, more distant relationships are not as clear. Does a son-in-law, a niece, or a grandchild count? What about a godchild? Authors do not always clarify where they

draw the lines. Third, how much time can elapse between the preceding and succeeding politician? Some scholars differentiate between a direct transfer of a specific seat from one member of the dynasty to another, and a transfer with a time gap in between (CITE). How much time must elapse before a political dynasty is considered to have ended? Again, most definitions do not include this level of detail. However, different definitions of families and permissible time gaps probably do not have as much of an impact on overall estimates as the inclusion of other elected offices.

After settling on a definition, the next step is to find a data source. Some fortunate scholars can simply turn to previously published reference books which provide information on politicians in a particular country. For example, Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder (2009) acquired their data on family relationships from the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. In the absence of an off-the-shelf source, other sources must be sought out. One possibility is combing through newspaper reports (eg, Batto 2018); another is to conduct extensive interviews with knowledgeable local politicians (eg, Japanese data CITE). Scholars studying the Philippines taken advantage of the Spanish colonial regime's assignment of unique surnames to each family within a province to infer family relationships based on surnames (eg, Querubin 2015). Each of these methodologies will inevitably miss some relationships, the surname-matching method might also produce false positives.

Understanding that each estimate was constructed in a different way and that they are not strictly comparable, there is nevertheless value in looking at carefully compiled estimates of how common dynastic politicians are around the world. Table 1 shows estimates of the percentage of members of the national legislature who have dynastic ties for several different countries. Canada is at the low end of the spectrum, with only about 2%~3% dynastic legislators. Canada is probably not unique in this respect. Scholars almost certainly choose to study dynastic politicians in countries with large numbers of dynastic politicians, so there may be many other democracies in which dynastic politicians are similarly rare. The group including Norway, USA, Belgium, Uruguay, Argentina, Taiwan, and the UK make up the middle group, ranging from the high single digits to the low double digits. Note that the USA and UK estimates in this table cover multiple centuries and are inflated by higher frequencies of dynastic politicians in the

nineteenth century. The figures from recent decades are roughly 6-8% for both countries. There is a considerable jump up to the high-prevalence countries, including India, Ireland, and Japan, where roughly a quarter of all legislators are dynastic. Brazil probably fits in this group as well, since its estimate is significantly inflated – perhaps doubled – by its inclusive definition of dynastic ties. Finally, the Philippines stands out. Of the countries that we have estimates for, none have as many dynastic politicians as the Philippines. Note that the estimate cited uses a very conservative definition; it only looks back to the previous three terms of the national legislature to find dynastic predecessors. Using a more expansive definition (but still not as expansive as Marques's definition for Brazil), an astounding 62.9% of legislators elected in 2010 could be considered dynastic (Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap (2012).

Table 1: Estimates of Dynastic Politicians in Selected National Legislatures

| Country | Years | Estimate | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 2000-2011 | 2%~3% | Smith (2012) |
| Norway | 1997-2013 | 6%~8% | Fiva and Smith (2015) |
| USA | 1789-1996 | 8.7% | Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder (2009) |
| Belgium | 2010 | 10% | Van Copponelle (2014) |
| Uruguay* | 2005-2010 | 10.1% | Marques (2018) |
| Argentina* | 2005-2011 | 10.5% | Marques (2018) |
| Taiwan | 2001-2016 | 12.2% | Batto (2018) |
| UK | 1832-2005 | 17% | Van Copponelle (2014) |
| India | 2004-2014 | 24.0% | Chandra (2016a) |
| Ireland | 1944-2016 | 25% | Smith and Martin (2017) |
| Japan | 1993-2009 | 22%~33% | Smith (2012) |
| Philippines | 2010 | 36.7% | Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap (2012) |
| Brazil* | 2007-2010 | 43.3% | Marques (2018) |

Notes: When possible, this table uses estimates defining dynastic politicians as legislators who were preceded by a family member who also served in the national legislature.

*Legislator's family member has held elective or first-level non-elective public office.

**Previous Literature on Political Dynasties**

Most of the previous literature on political dynasties treats dynasties or dynastic politicians as the dependent variable. What factors give rise to dynasties?

The most basic answer is that powerful politicians transfer power to family members, and the more powerful a politician is, the more likely he or she is to establish a

dynasty. In the USA, Argentina, and Philippines, scholars have documented an incumbency effect, in which the longer a politician spends in office, the more likely he or she is to found a dynasty (Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Synder 2009; Querubin 2016; Rossi 2017). Supposedly, the longer a politician is in office, the more resources he or she can amass and then transfer to a family member. Scholars researching Ireland and Norway have failed to find evidence of this same effect (Fiva and Smith 2018; Smith and Martin 2017). However, in both are parliamentary systems in which powerful legislators are those who occupy cabinet seats, not those who amass more seniority. In Ireland, MPs with a family member who previously held a cabinet seat are more successful themselves at securing cabinet seats (Smith and Martin 2017). Put simply, "power begets power" (Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder 2009, 115).

However, Smith (2012) argues that, given the high variance in the observed prevalence of political dynasties in different contexts, a convincing explanation must be more complex than simply looking at amassed power. He points to the institutional context. In particular, systems with candidate-centered electoral systems and decentralized nominations are more likely to see dynasties emerge (Smith 2012). Other scholars also look to institutional rules. Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin argue that term limits encourage Filipino incumbents to attempt to put relatives into office in order hold onto power (Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin 2017). In other words, term limits promote dynasties. Chandra argues that in India, organizationally weak parties tend to nominate dynastic candidates as a means for party leaders to secure their hold on power (Chandra 2016a), and Zeigfeld demonstrates that parties run by a single, autocratic leader do, in fact, have more dynastic politicians than parties with a more robust organizational structure (Zeigfeld 2016). In Taiwan, dynastic politicians are more likely to emerge when the institutional rules produce fewer competitive contenders from lower-level elected offices (Batto 2018).

Institutional arrangements aside, what specific advantages do dynastic politicians enjoy that help them to win votes? The literature points to a package of items that can be divided into supply-side factors – resources that politicians amass – and demand-side factors – features that voters look for.

The supply-side factors are relatively uncontroversial. Dynastic politicians inherit superior financial, organizational, networking, and institutional knowledge advantages from their predecessors and use these to muscle past their non-dynastic counterparts when competing for nominations and in political struggles after winning election. Financing political careers works differently in every country, and saying that dynastic politicians usually have superior financial clout does not necessarily imply that dynastic families engage in corruption. Rather, it simply means that the established politician has probably figured out some strategy to sustainably finance his or her career, and that strategy can be passed on to the next family member. Money is usually necessary to build up a formidable campaign infrastructure, but a healthy organization also requires campaign expertise, local knowledge, management skills, and an ability to personally connect with large numbers of voters. Perhaps the epitome of a strong campaign organization could be found in post-war but pre-reform Japan (1947-1994), where Japanese politicians built extensive organizations (*koenkai*), often with tens of thousands of members. When they retired, they simply transferred the organization to a designated successor, usually a son (Ishibashi and Reed 1992; Curtis 1988). The same type of transfer, albeit usually of a much less powerful organization, can take place in any context, and so dynastic successors often start with superior organizational muscle. The third major supply-side advantage involves networking. Over the course of a long career, most politicians build up a large network of contacts among party leaders, government bureaucrats, and business leaders. Dynastic successors can often tap into these networks, while their non-dynastic counterparts might be unable to get a foot in the door. Finally, dynastic successors have ready access to a trustworthy advisor – the elder family member – who knows how the system works. Their built-in consigliere gives them an advantage in knowing how to pull the levers of power, whether that is in constructing a campaign message, dealing with specific party leaders, or making demands on the bureaucracy. Sometimes it is helpful to have someone around who has seen the sausage being made a few time. (LIST OF CITES)

The demand-side factors include higher name recognition, an established brand, and a popular preference for dynastic politicians. Unlike the supply-side factors, which are generally all assumed to be powerful, the impact of the demand-side factors is a

matter of debate. Dynastic politicians may benefit from having a recognizable surname, though this effect may be limited if the surname is common. For example, Japanese voters might not connect one Suzuki to another, and, given that over 10% of the population is surnamed Chen, Taiwanese voters would be unlikely to assume that any particular Chen is related to an established politician named Chen. On the other hand, a Filipino voter seeing a name like Roxas or Aquino might take notice. However, name recognition by itself only makes a particular candidate stand out from the crowd; it does not necessarily predispose the voter to support that candidate. In fact, there is evidence from grassroots Filipino elections that more recognizable surnames are not more likely to be elected (Cruz, Labonne, and Querubin 2017). A more sophisticated version of the name recognition thesis involves brands. A politicians may establish a brand, a reputation for acting in certain ways or pursuing particular policies, and a dynastic successor may be able to inherit this brand. In this way, dynastic politicians can stand out from a sea of anonymous contenders struggling to establish their own messages. The brand may be a general that the candidate's family has a good record in office. For example, an Indian dynastic politician claiming to represent competent governance explained the value of his heritage, "This family system runs because of credibility … Why do people want to buy a Mercedes car? Or a BMW car? Because they know the credibility of that car. You come out with a new car that nobody knows, nobody will buy it" (Mandhana 2014, quoted in Chandra 2016a, 30). Alternately, the brand may be a very specific one of fighting for a certain set of policies or interests. There is some evidence that the family brands help to win votes and elections from Japan and Belgium (Smith 2012; Van Coppenolle 2014). The last claim is the most intriguing: it may be the case that some voters simply prefer to support the traditional ruling families. A survey in India in 2014 found that an astounding 46% of respondents preferred to vote for a candidate from a political family (Vaishnav, Kapur, and Sircar 2014, cited in Chandra 2016a, 44). Experimental data from Japan finds that voters are mostly indifferent to dynastic status (Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto 2017). These two findings from very different contexts suggest that a substantial pool of voters in both countries probably have positive feelings toward dynastic candidates in general.

As noted in the introduction, these studies trying to explain the causes of dynasties do not directly address why it is important to study dynasties. They tend to either assert that dynasties are something akin to an entrenched "democratic" aristocracy and are thus an affront to democratic values or they cite a much smaller set of literature that looks at the consequences of political dynasties. This second strand of the literature on political dynasties directly confronts the "So What?" question by arguing that political dynasties matter because they produce different outputs.

Chandra looks at whether dynastic Indian MPs are as active as their non-dynastic counterparts inside the national legislature. He finds that on several different metrics, including attendance, asking questions, participation in debates, and utilization of local development funds, there is not much difference between the two groups (Chandra 2016a, 30-32). By these metrics, dynastic Indian legislators are neither better nor worse than other legislators. Of course, how often a MP participates in parliamentary debate may not be the best indicator of his or her impact. Above, it was suggested that dynastic politicians have advantages in networks and political know-how, and these advantages might be better deployed behind closed doors rather than on the floor of the national legislature.

Rather than observing directly what dynastic legislators do, two other studies look at economic outputs to see whether political dynasties are associated with different outcomes. A study from the Philippines compares legislative districts won by dynastic politicians with those won by non-dynastic politicians and finds that dynasties are associate with lower per capita income, higher rates of poverty, and more severe poverty. For example, 24.15% of people live below the poverty line in dynastic districts, while only 18.95% do in non-dynastic districts (Mendoza, Beja, Venda, and Yap 2012). Similarly, a study in Japan finds that, even though dynastic MPs secure more fiscal transfers for their districts, prefectures with higher percentages of dynastic MPs experience lower levels of economic growth (Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, and Ueda 2015). These findings are consistent with a theoretical understanding of dynastic politicians as more likely to engage in clientelistic politics, including things such as corruption, vote buying, and favoritism in supplying government services. However, economic growth and poverty are complex processes, and one may question whether a

legislator actually has that much impact or is a proxy for some other, more important factor. While these two studies are suggestive, it is probably too early to conclude that dynasticism causes corruption, lower economic growth, and poverty.

Political dynasties impact descriptive representation. A number of studies in many different countries, including India, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Ireland, and Sweden, have pointed out that women are disproportionately drawn from political dynasties. That is, without dynasties, there would probably be fewer women in politics (Basu 2016; Batto 2018; Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin 2017; Marques 2018; Folke, Rickne, and Smith 2017). However, there are two caveats to this notion. First, the effect tends to disappear over time. The dynastic gender gap is largest when women politicians are relatively scarce, and it tends to shrink as more women enter the political arena (Folke, Rickne, and Smith 2017). Second, if women are simply a stand-in for a husband or father and do not personally control their own power resources, the higher number of women in office may not imply that women actually have more power (Basu 2016; Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin 2017). Moreover, even if one only looks at purely descriptive characteristics, it is not necessarily the case that dynasties tend to promote inclusiveness. In India, higher status castes tend to be advantaged by dynastic politics while lower status castes are less likely to establish or maintain dynasties. As a result, the already privileged higher castes tend to have even more clout in party politics, while their lower status counterparts are even more disadvantaged (Chauchard 2016; Chandra 2016b).

In general, the existing literature provides only weak reasons for us to care about political dynasties. There are, of course, some studies that suggest that dynasties produce different – and perhaps worse – political outcomes. However, these studies are far from conclusive. There are many studies that argue that dynasties are evidence that elites can entrench themselves in power, and this is incompatible with democratic ideals. However, for all the hand-wringing about the same families staying in office, if they continue to win elections and do not necessarily produce worse outcomes, why should we care that they do not conform to abstract scholarly visions of democracy?

**Bringing the Voter Back In**

The existing literature on political dynasties is almost entirely grounded in New Institutional logic. It looks at the incentives and constraints facing politicians, and suggests that strategic actors react to that context to maximize their interests. The voter is relegated to a decidedly secondary role. It may be helpful to step back from an instutionalist mindset and indulge in a bit of behavioral thinking by considering how individual voters feel about dynastic politicians.

There are two major topics to explore, both of which draw on the questions raised in the previous literature. First, do voters like dynastic politicians? Do they feel that dynasties are unfair or that dynasties represent a flaw in the democratic system? In short, do everyday citizens share scholars' unease with political dynasties? Second, do voters expect that dynastic politicians will act differently from their non-dynastic counterparts? That is, do citizens actually associate dynasticism with any particular brand of politics?

The first topic involves whether voters have positive or negative feelings toward dynastic politicians. We know that many scholars feel somewhat uneasy about the prevalence of political dynasties, but we know very little about how ordinary citizens feel. Abstractly, there are two different ideas involved in this question. One involves fairness, and the other involves affect. For example, a person may think there is nothing unfair or undemocratic about voting for a candidate from another town, he simply prefers voting for candidates from his hometown. In practice, these two ideas are probably intertwined, and it may be hard to disentangle them. That is, people who viscerally dislike dynastic candidates probably also consider them to have unfair advantages, and people who like dynastic candidates probably don't think there is anything wrong with the idea of politics as the family business. Nonetheless, fairness and affect are theoretically different and should be treated separately.

As noted above, there are several reasons to suspect that political dynasties are not entirely consistent with democratic ideals. The idea of an entrenched political class is problematic. Democracy, unlike aristocracy, is supposed to be open to all citizens, so it is troubling if the same people always win. This may be especially true in new democracies which have recently transitioned from hereditary rule by an aristocratic class. For example, in post-independence India many family members of traditional ruling families ran for office in the first elections, and there were concerns that the ruling caste, which

had just been removed from power, might be voted right back in. In fact, those candidates did not do well in the elections, and the traditional princely families were, for the most part, excluded from elected office. India's many political dynasties were almost entirely founded after the establishment of the democratic system (Randolph and Randolph 2016). Nonetheless, even if dynastic politicians belong to "democratic" dynasties and not "traditional" dynasties, they may still be troubling. To use Hess's (1996) moniker, "the People's Dukes" may not be descended from actual dukes and earls, but they still perpetuate themselves in power. If power really does beget power, it is reasonable to suspect that this will have a detrimental effect on the quality of democracy and governance. It is troubling if there is an unfair playing field. Some aspirants to office – those from families already holding office – hold systematic advantages over challengers. One of the premises of democratic elections is that voters have an opportunity to reject lousy politicians. However, if dynastic candidates hold significant electoral advantages, the electoral incentive to respond to public opinion may be dulled. Instead of pursuing popular policies, dynastic politicians may be freer to pursue their own interests (Geys and Smith 2017).

On the other hand, there is also a powerful normative argument that, when it comes to democratic legitimacy, dynastic status is irrelevant. After all, in democratic systems, offices are allotted based on electoral results. If you can't win enough votes, you will not win a seat, regardless of your dynastic status. In democracy, votes are the only source of legitimacy. If voters legitimize a dynastic candidate by giving him or her their votes, who can question that candidate's democratic credentials?

Which of these perspectives better represents how ordinary citizens feel? As noted above, there is far more normative theorizing about whether dynasties are unfair than empirical investigation into what normal people think. What ordinary people think – whether or not it conforms to abstract normative ideals or democratic theory – is important. If people generally think that dynasties demonstrate that the system is unfair and yet the system continually churns out dynasties, this may have an effect on how those citizens evaluate how well their democracy is operating and perhaps even their preference for democracy in the abstract.

I thus propose the following hypothesis:

*H1: Citizens believe political dynasties are unfair.*

Turning to the question of affect, is it the case that voters feel positively or negatively about dynastic politicians. To some extent, the argument for name recognition rests on the assumption that voters will look favorably on familiar names. The survey data from India cited above suggests that, at least in that case, a large percentage of the population does indeed view dynastic politicians favorably. However, as important as India is, there is a need to see more data from other parts of the world before wholeheartedly accepting this result as representative of voters all over the world.

*H2: Citizens have a positive preference for dynastic candidates.*

One possibility is that preferences are conditional on other attitudes such as party identification. Party identifiers tend to look at the world through a perceptual screen, and they see the other party's flaws as extremely serious while dismissing their own party's flaws as less damning (Campbell et al 1960). Partisan identifiers who think that dynasties are unfair may thus be extremely critical of dynastic candidates from parties they do not like but rather indulgent toward dynastic candidates from their own party.

*H3: There is an interaction effect between party ID and preference for dynastic candidates in which citizens are more critical of dynastic candidates from the other party but less critical of dynastic candidates from their own party.*

The second set of topics involves whether citizens expect that dynastic and non-dynastic politicians will behave differently in office. The existing literature suggests several ways in which voters might have different expectations. Drawing on the idea of brands, voters might see dynastic status as a sign of overall quality and competence in the same way that they expect Toyota or Honda to experience fewer problems than a car made by some obscure company.

*H4: Citizens expect dynastic candidates to generally perform better in office.*

Alternately, the family brand could stand for a more specific set of policy goals. A dynastic candidate who pursues the same sorts of policies or represents the same groups in society as his or her preceding family members might be seen as more credible or more capable of attaining those goals than a non-dynastic candidate running on the same platform. On the other hand, a dynastic candidate who goes against the family brand, perhaps by switching parties or taking the other side in a policy fight, might be seen with more suspicion than a non-dynastic candidate making similar campaign appeals. For example, if a father has fought for the rights of a minority ethnic group for many years, his daughter's promises to also fight for that minority ethnic group might be seen as highly credible. However, if the father has been convicted of corruption, the daughter's promises to clean up politics might be viewed with skepticism.

*H5: If a dynastic politician's appeals are consistent with those of preceding family members, they will be seen as more credible.*

The supply-side literature also suggests that dynastic candidates will behave in systematically different ways from non-dynastic candidates because they have different resource endowments and different opportunities. Asako et al theorize that dynastic legislators have an advantage in the insider game of networking and bargaining, so they will be more likely to engage in backroom money politics. This propensity for rent-seeking is the reason they expect places with high proportions of dynastic politicians to get higher levels of fiscal transfers from the central government but also to experience lower levels of economic growth (Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, and Ueda 2015). This perspective suggests that dynastic legislators will put their advantages to use on their own behalf or on the behalf of their financial allies. A different possibility is that dynastic legislators will use those connections to help ordinary citizens in their districts. Because their families have amassed connections in the bureaucracy, citizens might expect dynastic legislators to be particularly effective at constituency service.

*H6: Dynastic legislators are expected to be more corrupt than non-dynastic legislators.*

*H7: Dynastic legislators are expected to be better at constituency service than non-dynastic legislators.*

The point in this section is not necessarily to theorize exactly which areas citizens expect dynastic and non-dynastic legislators to behave differently in. Rather, it is simply to point out that citizens might have different expectations and evaluate their performance based on different criteria. When a citizen voters for a dynastic candidate, he or she might be expressing a preference for a different style of democracy.

**Conclusion**

The extant literature has focused mainly on the question of what causes dynasties to form and persist. There is much less research on why it matters that dynasties exist. While there are theoretical reasons and some empirical evidence to suggest that political dynasties create worse social and economic outcomes, this is by no means a settled debate. There are also theoretical reasons to think that dynasties are perfectly compatible with democratic ideals, and the empirical evidence is hardly conclusive at this point.

I argue that changing the focus from the incentives facing politicians to the attitudes of ordinary people can move this literature forward. If ordinary citizens feel differently about dynastic and non-dynastic politicians, this, in and of itself, would provide a strong justification for studying political dynasties. On the one hand, if ordinary people think that dynasties are evidence of an unfair or undemocratic system, it hardly matters which scholars win the theoretical debate. An increase in dynastic politicians will create unease with the way the regime is operating. On the other hand, if ordinary people expect dynastic and non-dynastic politicians to pursue different goals in office, this is also important. People voting for dynastic candidates might be expressing a preference for a different type of politician or even a different type of political system. In short, it is time to start asking ordinary citizens what they think about dynastic politicians.

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