

***"Self-Perpetuation of Political Power: Evidence from a Natural
Experiment in Argentina"***

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Self-Perpetuation of Political Power: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Argentina*

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Abstract

I investigate the relationship between tenure length in the House and posterior political success. Since tenure length in the House is potentially endogenous in a model for political success, I exploit a natural experiment in the Argentine Congress—where terms length were assigned randomly in the first Congress after the return to democracy in 1983—that provides a source of exogenous variation to initial political power. I find that having a longer tenure in the House increases both the probability of moving to higher political positions (an intrapersonal effect) and the probability of having a relative in future congresses (dynastic success or an interpersonal effect). I also find evidence that name recognition is a mechanism behind dynastic success. Finally, I explore the consequences of dynastic power and report evidence of negative correlation between being a dynastic legislator and political effort in Congress.

Keywords: political power; self-perpetuation; elites; legislators; political dynasties.

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1. Introduction

Political dynasties are present in many democratic countries. The Kennedys and the Bushes in the US, the Menems in Argentina, the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, the Aquino and Ortega families in the Philippines, and the Bhutos in Pakistan, are just a few examples. The mere existence of political dynasties, however, does not necessarily reflect imperfections in democratic representation. For instance, the presence of political dynasties may be reflecting the optimal response of voters to the fact that certain families have special talents for political activities.

The question is then: do political dynasties exist because some families are somehow more politically able or talented than others or is political power self-perpetuating? This paper contributes to answering this question by studying the hypothesis of self-perpetuation of political power for Argentine politicians. As usual in the literature, I define self-perpetuation as a power-treatment effect, whereby holding political power for longer increases the probability of transferring political power into the future, regardless of family or personal characteristics.

To test the hypothesis of self perpetuation it is necessary to assess whether there is a causal relationship between holding political power for longer and posterior political success. This is a difficult task as holding political power for longer is potentially endogenous in a model of political success. If traits such as ability, connections, good genes, or political vocation run in families, this may yield persistent advantages to some families that are not due to their already occupying positions of authority.

In order to prove a causal relationship between political strength (defined as length in the House) and subsequent political power, I exploit a natural experiment in the Argentine Congress—where terms length were assigned randomly in the first Congress after the return to democracy in 1983—that provides a source of exogenous variation to

initial length in the House. I study two types of effects, an interpersonal (dynastic success) and an intrapersonal (a movement to higher office).

The first paper that provides causal empirical evidence in favor of the hypothesis that political power is self perpetuating is Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder (2009), who report that having a longer tenure in the US Congress increases significantly the probability of establishing a political dynasty. The paper by Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder (2009) triggered a growing body of empirical literature that provides evidence both in favor and against the hypothesis of interpersonal self perpetuation of political power for other countries (see Querubin 2011 for the case of Philippines; Fiva and Smith 2015 for the case of Norway; and Van-Coppenolle 2015 for the UK).

My paper provides various contributions to the existing literature on self perpetuation of political power. First, the literature has focused on the interpersonal aspects (i.e., dynastic success), while here I also explore intrapersonal aspects (i.e., future career prospects). The main findings are that assigning more political power to a person augments his or her own future political prospects and also augments the future political prospects of his or her close relatives.

A second contribution is to provide additional evidence of dynastic transmission of power for Argentine politicians. This is relevant given that the institutional setting faced by legislators in Argentina is quite different to the institutional setting faced by legislators in the US. Representatives in Argentina are elected through a closed party list at the district level (the country is divided in twenty four electoral districts), and not through a uninominal race at the level of a smaller legislative district, as in the US. The similarity between the results found for the US and the ones reported here for Argentina suggests that self perpetuation of political elites is a phenomenon that may arise under different institutional environments.

The third contribution is methodological and it is related to the identification of a causal relationship between previous and posterior political power. In general, the previous literature (see Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder 2009, Querubín 2011, Van-Coppenolle 2015, and Fiva and Smith 2015) identifies causality by exploiting a regression discontinuity design that relies on the outcome of close elections as an instrument for tenure length. This regression discontinuity approach identifies a causal effect under the assumption that winners and losers of close elections have similar (observable and unobservable) characteristics. Identification would be jeopardized, however, if winning a close election depends on personal characteristics that are also correlated with having future relatives in Congress. For instance, selection would arise if corrupt politicians are more likely to win a close election (due to illegal manipulation) and they are also more likely to use their influence to push relatives into office.¹ Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder also use another strategy, in which they instrument for whether a legislator's first re-election attempt is successful using the re-election rate of fellow party Representatives in the same state and year. This approach, however, is likely to violate the exclusion restriction since identification relies on the assumption that an electoral shock affects the probability of having a relative in a future Congress only through its impact on the predecessor's election to another term. Compared to the regression discontinuity and the instrumental variables approaches used before, the empirical strategy used here allows the identification of a causal relationship between previous and posterior political power. The random assignment of terms in the foundational Congress of 1983 provides a source of exogenous variation in which the instrument satisfies the exclusion restriction.

Fourth, I explore the mechanisms through which political power is transmitted to future relatives, with a focus on the brand-name recognition channel. The current

¹ Besides, the regression discontinuity design estimates a local treatment effect, in this case a treatment effect for a small subpopulation of the sample: those politicians that barely win or lose an election. It may be argued that these politicians are likely to be of lower quality than the average politicians.

literature on mechanisms is narrow. Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder (2009) explore the mechanism of political competition and present evidence that dynastic legislators are less common in more competitive environments. They also conjecture that name recognition may play a role. Here, I provide evidence that family name recognition is an important mechanism behind dynastic transmission of political power.²

Finally, I explore the consequences of dynastic power. There is a small and recent literature that has focused on the consequences of political dynasties. Braganca, Ferraz, and Ríos (2015) explore whether dynastic politicians implement different policies compared to non-dynastic politicians. They conclude that dynastic politicians spend more resources without a correlate in an improvement in the quality of public services. Geys (2015) reports that a political selection process controlled by politicians, rather than the electorate, favors dynastic individuals with relatively lower levels of education. Labone, Parsa, and Querubín (2015) study the impact of dynastic female politicians on policy, economic, or electoral outcomes in the Philippines, and find no effects of female dynastic politicians on any of these outcomes. Here I took a different approach, and explore the behavior of dynastic legislators *vis a vis* non dynastic ones in terms of their legislative performance or effort. I report a negative correlation between dynastic legislators and performance or effort.

Aside from the descriptive literature on political dynasties (Camp 1982; Hess 1997), my paper is closely related to the literature on the persistence of political elites (Mosca 1939; Michels 1911; Acemoglu and Robinson 2008; Asako et al. 2010). It is also related to the literatures on the link between wealth and posterior political power (Rossi 2014), on the link between political power and posterior earnings (either by the politician, as in Querubín and Snyder (2013), or by a relative of the politician, as in Folke, Persson, and

² Feinstein (2010) reports that dynastic politicians enjoy “brand name advantages” in open-seat House elections in the US.

Ricke (2015)), on legislative careers (Scarrow 1998; Diermeier, Keane, and Merlo 2005; Padró I Miquel and Snyder 2006; Mattozzi and Merlo 2008) and incumbent advantage (Gelman and King 1990; Levitt and Wolfram 1997; Lee 2001).

The rest of the paper is as follows. Section 2 describes the electoral system in Argentina. Section 3 presents the data and the natural experiment. Section 4 reports the econometric model and the results. Section 5 explores potential mechanisms, with a particular focus on family name recognition. Section 6 presents evidence on the consequences of political dynasties. Section 7 concludes.

2. Argentine electoral system

Argentina is a federal republic consisting of twenty four legislative districts: twenty three provinces and an autonomous federal district. The National Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies (i.e., the House) and the Senate.

The electoral system in Argentina is closed-list proportional representation. In this type of system voters can only vote for political parties as a whole and thus have no direct influence on the party-supplied order in which party candidates are elected. This implies that candidates have two distinct constituencies, one are the voters that determine the party's vote share and thus seats allocated to parties, the others the party leaders that determine the candidate's position on the list. In this type of systems political careers typically take place within parties. That is, a member rises through the party ranks based on leader assessments. In general, members are asked by the party authorities to rotate, which explains the much lower reelection rates found in Argentina compared to that in candidate-centric systems like in the US. As documented in Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin (1999) and Jones et al. (2007), the careers of argentine legislators are short and most of argentine legislators spend just a single term in Congress. For instance, during the 1983-

2001 period the average deputy served only one term in office, and only 20 percent of incumbents were reelected.

The candidate names do appear on the ballot. In Argentina, making it into the party list depends strongly on the standing of the legislator among constituents, as this determines the load of votes the legislator brings to the party list. This explains why in Argentina legislators remain very much interested in appearing active in the eyes of constituents even under a party list system. Then, the presence of political dynasties in Argentina may reflect a combination of voter and party choices.

3. Data and natural experiment

I use three databases. The first database has information for all House representatives (254 legislators) for the period December 1983 to December 1985. This is the first Congress after the return to democracy on December 10 of 1983, and for most legislators this was the first experience in politics at the national level (93 percent of legislators entering Congress in 1983 were first time national legislators). As explained below, about half of the legislators left Congress in December 1985; thus, I restrict the sample to the two-year period in which all legislators were working side by side.

The database was constructed based on official registries of the Congress, on the *Directorios Legislativos* published by CIPPEC, and on personal communications with members and staff of the legislature.

Political power is measured by *Tenure*, a variable recording the total number of years the legislator served in the House (until 2015). To characterize future political success I create two dummy variables: *Better Career Prospects* and *Post-Relatives*. *Better Career Prospects* takes the value of one if the legislator obtained an improved political position after 1985, and zero otherwise. Improved political positions in the sample include Governor (2 cases), Senator (2), candidate to President or Vice-President (obtaining more

than 5 percent of the votes in a national election, 2 cases), National Minister (9), President of the majority or first minority party (4), Ambassador to the US (1), Ambassador to the OEA (1), Major of an important city (1), Secretary (6), Member of the Supreme Court (1), and Province Minister (1). Approximately twelve percent of House representatives obtained an improved political position between 1985 and 2015. *Post-Relatives* takes the value of one if the legislator has a relative entering Congress after him or her, and zero otherwise. Approximately nine percent of House representatives have relatives entering future congresses (1985 to 2015).

This first database includes legislator characteristics such as age (as of November 1983) and a set of dummy variables equal to one when the legislator: is male, is a lawyer, is a first time national legislator, holds a university degree other than lawyer, belongs to the majority party, belongs to the minority party, and belongs to a small block (less than four legislators).

Under the party list system, the degree of political weight depends on how high up in the party ticket a legislator finds herself. Therefore, I use a legislator's placement in the party list plus the number of representatives in the district in order to assess her political weight at the time of being elected into the House (*Slackness*, a variable that captures "political weight"). More specifically, I define *Slackness* as $(1 - \text{Order}/\text{Size})^{0.5}$, where *Size* is the total number of legislators that entered the House representing the district and *Order* is the position in which the representative entered the House in her district.³

The Argentine Congress made available six objective measures of legislative effort by a legislator for the period December 1983 to December 1985, and I use all of them. These measures are floor attendance (as percentage of legislative floor sessions),

³ The variable *Slackness* has some desirable characteristics: (i) takes a value equal to zero for those legislators that entered in the last position in their district (24 legislators); (ii) decreases in *Order*; (iii) increases in *Size*; (iv) the difference between the first and the second legislators in the party list is lower than the difference between the second and the third legislators, and so on.

committee attendance (as percentage of committee sessions), the number of committee bills in which the legislator participated (as reflected by the committee bills bearing the legislator's signature), the number of times the legislator spoke on the floor on a legislative topic, the number of bills introduced by the legislator, and finally, the number of those bills that were approved. These metrics, while noisy, do serve as proxies for different and relevant dimensions of legislative effort. Using the six measures of legislative effort or performance, I follow the procedure used in Kling, Liebman, and Katz (2007) and Dal Bó and Rossi (2011) to construct an index of performance/effort at the legislator level (*Performance*). The index is the equally weighted average of z-scores of its components. The z-scores are levels standardized by using the mean and standard deviation for the two year legislators. In all cases higher effort measures have higher z-scores.

The second database has information on all the 353 women that entered into the legislature between 1983 and 2008. I create three dummy variables: *Use Husband Surname* takes the value of one if the women legislator uses her husband surname for her political activities and zero otherwise (25 percent of married legislators use their husband surname for political activities); *Husband Recognized Surname* takes the value of one for those women whose husband has a recognized surname (a recognized surname is defined as one linked to someone with previous national Congress experience, or previous experience as president, vice president, governor, or vice governor; 6.5 percent of legislators are married to someone with a recognized surname); and *Own Recognized Surname* takes the value of one for those women who hold a recognized surname on their own (6.5 percent of the sample).

The third database has information at the legislator level that includes individual legislative performance in the House between 1983 and 1995 (the number of bills

introduced by the legislator and the number of those bills that were approved). It also has information on age, gender, *Slackness*, and on whether the legislator is dynastic (*Pre-Relatives*, 4.2 percent of the sample), in the sense of having a previous relative in Congress.

Summary statistics on the three databases are presented in Table 1.

Natural experiment

At the time of the return to democracy after seven years of dictatorship, on December 10 of 1983, all 254 deputies entered Congress at the same time. In Argentina deputies have four-year terms and the Constitution requires the renewal of half the chamber every two years. In order to get the staggered renewal mechanism going it was necessary to allocate half of the representatives elected in 1983 to two-year terms. The allocation of two- and four-year terms in this foundational Congress was done through a well documented random assignment.

In order to assign terms, the 254 House representatives were first divided into two groups of 127 representatives each. The allocation of individual legislators into the two groups was done at the level of the party-district delegation, which implies that all districts and political parties were, whenever possible, proportionally represented in each group. The procedure for the random allocation of terms, set by the *Comisión de Labor Parlamentaria* (the equivalent of the Rules committee in the US) involved dividing the representatives in two groups of equal size. Each party-district delegation apportioned an equal number of its members to each group. In the case that a party had an odd number of representatives from one district the imbalance was corrected with the analogous surplus from another district where the party also had an odd number of representatives. The lottery draw was performed during a public legislative session in January 1984.⁴

⁴ The same natural experiment was first exploited in Dal Bó and Rossi (2011).

Although the duration of terms was randomly assigned, it is useful to examine whether, *ex post*, legislators' characteristics are balanced between the different groups. As shown in Table 2, there are no statistically significant differences in observables across the two groups of legislators according to a difference in means test, suggesting that the randomization was successful in ensuring orthogonality between covariates and treatment assignment.⁵

The first row in Table 2 (and also column (1) of Table 4) reports first-stage estimates, which indicate that total tenure in the House is 35 percent higher for those representatives originally assigned to the long track compared to those assigned to the short track. Given the closed-list proportional representation system in Argentina, a potential concern would arise if “unlucky” legislators (those receiving two-year terms) were compensated by their parties and re-nominated in the following election. Even though the reelection rates were higher for legislators in shorter tracks (29 percent against 22 percent, the differences are statistically not significant), the first-stage estimates confirm that, on average, those legislators awarded longer initial terms ended up having longer tenures in Congress.⁶ The first-stage result is interesting by itself, since it indicates that a random shock to the initial term length in the House has a real effect on legislators' total tenure. The constant term in the first-stage equation indicates that the average tenure length for those that were assigned an initial term of 2 years is 3.76 years. The coefficient on the Long-term dummy (the instrument) indicates that average tenure increased in about 1.43 years for those legislators that were assigned an initial term of 4 years.

The second and third rows in Table 2 reports reduced-form estimates (i.e., Intention to Treat) of the random assigned term on *Better Career Prospects* and *Post-Relatives*. The

⁵ Similar conclusions are obtained from a regression of the probability of being randomized into the four-year term group on the set of individual characteristics. As expected given randomization, the pre-treatment characteristics are individually and jointly not significant predictors of eligibility status. All results mentioned but not shown are available from the author upon request.

⁶ Re-nomination rates were also higher for legislators in shorter tracks (40 percent against 25 percent).

proportion of House representatives with posterior improved political position is 13.4 percentage points higher for those assigned to the long track (18.9 percent against 5.5 percent, the difference is statistically significant at the 1 percent level). The proportion of House representatives with posterior relatives in Congress is 11.8 percent for those assigned to the long track compared to 6.3 percent for those assigned to the short track. This difference of 5.5 percentage points is important but only significant at the 12 percent level.

4. Econometric model and results

To explore the hypothesis of self perpetuation of political power, I estimate the following regression model for the probability of having future political success:

$$Y_i = \rho + \beta \text{Tenure}_i + \alpha X_i + u_i \quad (1)$$

where Y_i is the outcome of interest for legislator i (*Better Career Prospects* or *Post-Relatives*), β is the parameter of interest, X_i is a matrix of legislators' characteristics, and u_i is the error term.

Table 3 presents OLS estimates of equation (1) using *Better Career Prospects* as the outcome variable. Columns (1) and (2) report OLS and Probit specifications without controls. Columns (3) and (4) report specifications controlling, respectively, for district dummies and party dummies, and district dummies, party dummies, and the set of legislators' characteristics. In all specifications *Tenure* has a positive and significant coefficient indicating that longer tenure in the House is associated to an increase in the probability of holding an improved political position in the future. The coefficient on *Tenure* is not only statistically significant but also important: one additional year in the House increases the probability of legislators moving to higher office by approximately 4.5 percentage points.

As documented in Dal Bó and Rossi (2011) and shown in Table 2, longer terms are associated with higher legislative performance. A potential concern would arise if legislators awarded with longer terms in the foundational Congress of 1983 ended up having more relatives entering the legislature in the future not because of the extra number of years they stayed in Congress but because of the higher performance induced by the longer terms. As suggested by the estimates in column (4) in Table 3, this is not the case: legislative performance is not a significant predictor of success in transferring political power into the future. I will come back to this finding in Section 4.

OLS results suggest that having a longer tenure in the House increases the probability of getting an improved political position, thus providing evidence in favor of the hypothesis of self perpetuation of political power. To address potential endogeneity concerns arising from OLS estimates, in Table 4 I report Two Stage Least Squares (2SLS) estimates of equation (1), using the randomly allocated term variable as instrument for *Tenure*. 2SLS estimates indicate that being in the House for a longer tenure has a positive impact on the probability of gaining an improved political position in the future. Results are robust to controlling for *Age*, *Male*, *Slackness*, *Lawyer*, *University*, and the set of party and district dummies.

The 2SLS parameter can be interpreted as the impact of an additional year of tenure for those legislators that stayed longer in the House due to the random assignment of an initial longer term. This is a specific subset of politicians that excludes, for example, politicians that would have had a long tenure in the House regardless of the initial term assignment.

2SLS coefficients are greater than the OLS coefficients, suggesting that OLS estimates are biased downwards. In principle, one may have expected the OLS coefficients to be upwardly biased. Under the assumption that OLS suffers from omitted

variable bias by excluding unobservable ability, then OLS should be biased upwards if ability and tenure are positively correlated. A possible conjecture to explain the opposite finding is that, in Argentina, the best politicians (i.e., those with better un-observables) are selected by party leaders into higher office and thus they end up having a shorter tenure in the House. This is compatible with previous literature describing Argentine Congress (see Jones et al. 2007). If that were the case, abilities would be negatively correlated with tenure in the House. If, as expected, abilities are positively correlated with the possibility of having future relatives with political power, this could explain the downward bias in OLS estimates.

Overall, results in tables 3 and 4 provide evidence that is consistent with the hypothesis of self perpetuation. The cohort analyzed in this paper, however, is a peculiar cohort, so there is a potential caveat here in terms of external validity.⁷

Dynastic success

Column (1) in Table 5 reports OLS estimates of equation (1), using *Post-Relatives* as the outcome variable. In this model, *Tenure* has a positive and significant coefficient suggesting a positive correlation between total tenure in the House and the probability of having relatives entering future congresses: an extra year of tenure increases 2.4 percentage points the probability of having a posterior relative in office. Results from the OLS specification provide evidence that is consistent with the hypothesis of self perpetuation. Similar results are obtained when I use an alternative probit specification, as reported in Column (2). The main result remains also unchanged when I include the set of party and district dummies as additional controls (column (3)).

⁷ This cohort is peculiar because it is the first Congress after a long dictatorship. Coming out of dictatorship and the need to randomize legislators' term length is not a common event in democracies and as such the estimates that event generates may have little to do with the "usual" effects. In other words, the variation in tenure length generated by the randomization for that cohort has little to do with the usual variation in tenure.

The model in Column (4) controls for *Age*, *Male*, *Slackness*, *Lawyer*, *University*, *Pre-Relatives*, and *Performance*. In this model all the control variables, except *University* and *Pre-Relatives*, are statistically not significant. In particular, legislative performance is not a significant predictor of success in transferring political power to other family members. The coefficient on *Tenure* remains positive and significant in this specification, and its value is similar to the one obtained in the models without controls. In addition, the positive and significant coefficient for *Pre-Relatives* indicate that having previous relatives in office is an important predictor of the probability of having relatives entering a future Congress, a result that is in line with previous evidence from the US.

Overall, the results indicate that having a longer tenure in Congress increases the probability of having relatives in future congresses thus providing evidence in favor of the hypothesis of self perpetuation of political power. OLS estimates of *Tenure* indicate that five additional years in office (the average term for current Argentine legislators) increases the probability of having a relative in future congresses by approximately 11 percentage points.

Again, *Tenure* may be endogenous in a model of political dynasties thus potentially biasing OLS estimates. In order to try to address this potential problem of endogeneity in Table 6 I report Two Stage Least Squares using the randomly allocated term variable as instrument for *Tenure*. 2SLS estimates indicate that being in Congress for a longer tenure has a positive impact on the probability of having a relative in future congresses. The 2SLS estimates, however, are only marginally significant (p-value equal to 0.12), indicating that results on the interpersonal effects are less robust than results on the intrapersonal effects.

5. Potential mechanisms on dynastic success

This section presents additional results that may provide some evidence on the channel by which relatives of previous members of the Congress are more likely to be elected into office. I explore three channels: (i) family name recognition; (ii) control of party machine by a relative; and (iii) voters expectations that abilities are positively correlated between relatives.

I follow two strategies in order to explore the family-name-recognition channel. First, if the channel behind self perpetuation is family name recognition, then one will expect this channel to be less important for those legislators with a common surname since there is no brand-name advantage of using a surname shared with a significant proportion of the population. To test this implication I construct a dummy variable, *Common Surname*, that takes the value of one for those legislators with a surname that is among the five most frequent surnames in Argentina and zero otherwise (4.7 percent of the sample). As reported in Table 7 the interaction between *Total Tenure* and *Common Surname* is negative and significant, and its absolute value is similar to the coefficient of *Total Tenure* (*Common Surname* is not significant by itself). This indicates that the advantage from holding a longer tenure in terms of the probability of establishing a political dynasty disappears for politicians with a common surname. This result is robust to alternative definitions of common surnames (such as being among the ten or twenty most frequent surnames in Argentina) and to the inclusion or not of the set of controls.

Second, I collected information on all the 353 women that entered into the legislature between 1983 and 2008, and kept in the sample those that were married at the time they entered into Congress. From these 353 legislators, 310 were married at the time they entered Congress. Since women in Argentina can choose whether or not to use their husband surname for political activities, the decision is informative on the belief of a potential benefit from doing so.

To explore the family-name recognition hypothesis I run a regression of *Husband Surname* on *Husband Recognized Surname* and/or *Own Recognized Surname*. The hypothesis of family name recognition implies a positive coefficient for *Husband Recognized Surname* and a negative coefficient for *Own Recognized Surname* (there are no women with a recognized surname of their own married to someone with a recognized surname). As shown in Table 8, this is exactly what I find: a woman married to someone with a recognized surname is 48 percent more likely to use her husband surname for political activities.^{8 9}

The evidence presented in Tables 7 and 8 is consistent with the hypothesis that family-name recognition is an important mechanism behind political dynasties. Of course, these are mere correlations and cannot be interpreted as causal findings.

A second possibility to explain self perpetuation of political power is that being in power creates more power inside the party, a power that is used to help close relatives to get into Congress. To test this hypothesis I use an extended database at the legislator level that includes legislative activity in the House between 1983 and 1995, as described in Section II. I use this extended database to check whether family members (that is, representatives with previous relatives in Congress) that enter the House for the first time (811 legislators) are placed in a higher position (i.e. better position or more likely to be elected) in the party list than candidates that do not have a dynastic connection. As shown in columns (1) and (2) of Table 9, the coefficient on *Pre-Relatives* is negative and statistically significant in the model for the position in the party list. This is consistent with the control-of-party-machine hypothesis. The coefficient, however, is much smaller and become not significant when I include the full set of controls (see column (3) in Table 9). Thus, the evidence is not conclusive on the operation or not of this mechanism.

⁸ Given that these data consider only women that won an election (which is a selected sample) the estimates may be capturing a combination of wife's and voters' behavior.

⁹ Similar results are obtained when I use a probit specification instead of OLS.

A third possibility is that voters expect abilities to be positively correlated among relatives. If voters' choice is based on perceptions of ability, and voters use past performance of a member of the family as a proxy for future performance, then the performance of the previous relative should explain the probability of getting a seat in Congress. As reported below, performance is not correlated with the probability of having posterior relatives in office thus providing evidence against that this mechanism. Indeed, as reported in Table 10, the no correlation between performance and posterior relatives in Congress holds when I use the six measures of performance, instead of the index. In all cases, the six measures of legislative performance are individually and jointly not significant in the model for posterior relatives in Congress.

6. Consequences

There are still important questions that need to be answered. Do political dynasties really matter? For instance, do dynastic politicians have a lower performance than non dynastic ones?

To explore the link between dynastic power and legislative performance I use the extended database (legislative activity between 1983 and 1995) to compare the performance/effort of legislators with and without previous relatives in politics. To measure performance I use the principal component (which accounts for 62 percent of the total variance) of the two measures of legislative performance available in this database (the number of bills introduced by the legislator and the number of those bills that were approved).

The coefficient on *Pre-Relatives* in the model reported in column (1) in Table 11 is negative and statistically significant thus providing evidence on a negative relationship between being a dynastic legislator and performance. The finding is robust to clustering standard errors at the legislator level.

To determine whether the effects are wide ranging or just concentrated in one outcome, I estimate and report in columns (2) and (3) of Table 11 the effects on each separate performance metric. In the two cases, the negative coefficient on *Pre-Relatives* suggests that dynastic legislators have a lower performance than non dynastic ones. The magnitudes of the differences are important: dynastic legislators present 26 percent fewer bills than non-dynastic ones. The proportion of bills approved to bills presented is 43 percent lower for dynastic legislators. In the specifications for the individual metrics of performance, however, the coefficient on *Pre-Relatives* is not always very precisely estimated (p-values are in the range of 0.17-0.20 for the individual metrics when standard errors are clustered at the legislator level; p-values are much lower for un-clustered standard errors).¹⁰

7. Conclusions

I report causal evidence that political power is self-perpetuating: legislators who hold power for longer become more likely (i) to move to higher political positions and (ii) to have relatives entering Congress in the future.

Instrumental Variables estimates indicate that five additional years in office (the average term for Argentine legislators) increases the probability of moving to higher political positions in about 45 percentage points, and the probability of having a relative in future congresses in about 20 percentage points.

I explore possible mechanisms and I find evidence consistent with the hypothesis that family-name recognition is an important mechanism behind political dynasties. First, the advantage from holding a longer tenure in terms of the probability of establishing a political dynasty disappears for politicians with a common surname. Second, I exploit the

¹⁰ Given that the number of bills introduced by the legislator and the number of those bills that were approved take discrete values and are strongly skewed to the right with many observations at zero, I also estimate the models in columns (2) and (3) using a negative binomial model for count data. Results are similar to the OLS estimates reported here.

fact that women in Argentina can choose whether or not to use their husband surname for political activities and I find that those legislators married to someone with a recognized surname are more likely to use their husband surname for political purposes.

Finally, I explore the consequences of dynastic power and find evidence of a negative correlation between being a dynastic legislator and political performance/effort in Congress.

The evidence presented here suggests that exogenous shocks to political power (as the one provided by the random allocation of terms in the foundational Congress of 1983 in Argentina) can have long lasting effects in terms of the composition of the future political class. The findings are of importance as they help to understand the determinants of political success and the composition of the political class stressing the importance of dynamic effects.

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Table 1. Summary statistics

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Database 1: House representatives between 1983 and 1985</i>				
Post-Relatives	0.090	0.288	0	1
Better Career Prospects	0.122	0.328	0	1
Tenure	4.839	3.477	1	20
Age	50.661	10.615	27	77
Male	0.957	0.204	0	1
Slackness	0.613	0.279	0	0.99
Lawyer	0.323	0.468	0	1
University	0.169	0.376	0	1
Fresher	0.933	0.250	0	1
Majority	0.508	0.501	0	1
Minority	0.437	0.497	0	1
Small block	0.055	0.229	0	1
Pre-Relatives	0.055	0.229	0	1
Common Surname (5 most frequent)	0.047	0.213	0	1
Common Surname (10 most frequent)	0.059	0.236	0	1
Common Surname (20 most frequent)	0.079	0.270	0	1
Floor Attendance (in %)	82.50	7.918	52	100
Committee Attendance (in %)	54.84	20.97	5	97
Number of Committee Bills	88.42	70.41	0	385
Number of Floor Speeches	10.95	17.72	0	159
Number of Bills Introduced	11.68	17.04	0	123
Number of Bills Ratified	0.409	0.813	0	6
<i>Database 2: All women legislators between 1983 and 2008</i>				
Use Husband Surname	0.248	0.433	0	1
Husband Recognized Surname	0.065	0.246	0	1
Own Recognized Surname	0.065	0.246	0	1
<i>Database 3: House representatives between 1983 and 1995</i>				
Pre-Relatives	0.042	0.201	0	1
Position in Party List	4.502	5.754	1	37
Age	49.096	10.045	26	84
Male	0.917	0.276	0	1
Number of Bills Introduced	3.702	6.080	0	104
Number of Bills Ratified	0.160	0.477	0	6

Table 2. Summary statistics by term assignment

	Short track	Long track	Difference of means
Tenure	3.764 (0.273)	5.197 (0.267)	-1.433*** (0.382)
Better Career Prospects	0.055 (0.020)	0.189 (0.035)	-0.134*** (0.040)
Post-Relatives	0.063 (0.022)	0.118 (0.029)	-0.055 (0.036)
Performance	-0.013 (0.046)	0.270 (0.057)	-0.282*** (0.073)
Age	51.024 (0.929)	50.299 (0.957)	0.724 (1.334)
Male	0.969 (0.016)	0.945 (0.020)	0.024 (0.026)
Slackness	0.590 (0.024)	0.635 (0.025)	-0.045 (0.035)
Lawyer	0.276 (0.040)	0.370 (0.043)	-0.094 (0.059)
University	0.157 (0.032)	0.181 (0.034)	-0.024 (0.047)
Fresher	0.937 (0.022)	0.929 (0.023)	0.008 (0.031)
Majority Party	0.441 (0.044)	0.433 (0.044)	0.008 (0.062)
Minority Party	0.504 (0.045)	0.512 (0.045)	-0.008 (0.063)
Small Block	0.055 (0.020)	0.055 (0.020)	0.000 (0.029)

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. The long track corresponds to a four-year term. The short track corresponds to a two-year term. Freshman is a dummy equal to 1 for representatives without any previous legislative experience at the national level. University is a dummy equal to 1 for representatives with a non-law degree. Slackness is equal to $(1 - \text{Order}/\text{Size})^{0.5}$, where Size is the total number of legislators that entered the House representing the district and Order is the position in which the representative entered the House in her district. Small block is a dummy equal to 1 when the legislator belongs to a party holding three or fewer seats. The number of observations is 254 (127 in the short track and 127 in the long track). ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 3. OLS estimates of the effect of tenure on future career prospects

	Better Career Prospects			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Tenure	0.045*** (0.007)	0.030*** (0.005)	0.048*** (0.007)	0.039*** (0.009)
Age				-0.004* (0.002)
Male				-0.018 (0.078)
Slackness				0.147** (0.065)
Lawyer				0.046 (0.049)
University				0.070 (0.056)
Fresher				-0.155* (0.092)
Performance				0.033 (0.040)
Pre-Relatives				-0.031 (0.11)
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	254	254	254	254
Method	OLS	Probit	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The coefficient on Total Tenure in the probit model in column (2) corresponds to marginal effects at the mean of the independent variable. *Significant at 10 percent level. **Significant at 5 percent level. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 4. 2SLS estimates of the effect of tenure on future career prospects

	Tenure	Better Career Prospects		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Long track	1.433*** (0.382)			
Constant	3.764*** (0.270)			
F-statistic	14.09			
Tenure		0.093*** (0.029)	0.094*** (0.028)	0.104** (0.046)
Age				0.001 (0.005)
Male				0.047 (0.101)
Slackness				0.051 (0.104)
Lawyer				0.045 (0.055)
University				0.025 (0.070)
Fresher				-0.141 (0.010)
Performance				-0.061 (0.074)
Pre-Relatives				-0.105 (0.162)
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	254	254	254	254
Method	OLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The model in column (1) corresponds to the first-stage. Tenure in the models in columns (2) to (4) is instrumented by Long track (a dummy variable that takes the value of one if the legislator was randomly assigned a four-year term).

*Significant at 10 percent level. **Significant at 5 percent level. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 5. OLS estimates of the effect of tenure on posterior relatives in office

	Post-Relatives			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Tenure	0.024*** (0.009)	0.015*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.009)	0.022*** (0.009)
Age				0.002 (0.002)
Male				-0.005 (0.072)
Slackness				-0.006 (0.062)
Lawyer				-0.013 (0.044)
University				-0.090* (0.050)
Fresher				0.006 (0.080)
Performance				0.014 (0.037)
Pre-Relatives				0.415*** (0.130)
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	254	254	254	254
Method	OLS	Probit	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The coefficient on Total Tenure in the probit model in column (2) corresponds to marginal effects at the mean of the independent variable. *Significant at 10 percent level. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 6. 2SLS estimates of the effect of tenure on posterior relatives in office

	Post-Relatives		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Tenure	0.038 (0.025)	0.038 (0.025)	0.043 (0.040)
Age			0.004 (0.004)
Male			0.017 (0.079)
Slackness			-0.036 (0.084)
Lawyer			-0.013 (0.045)
University			-0.104* (0.057)
Fresher			0.010 (0.077)
Performance			-0.016 (0.076)
Pre-Relatives			0.391*** (0.138)
Party dummies	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	254	254	254
Method	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. Tenure is instrumented by Long term (a dummy variable that takes the value of one if the legislator was randomly assigned a four-year term). *Significant at 10 percent level. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 7. Further results: common surnames

	Post-Relatives			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Tenure	0.026*** (0.010)	0.027*** (0.010)	0.026*** (0.009)	0.026*** (0.009)
Common Surname	0.005 (0.050)	0.004 (0.050)	0.022 (0.039)	0.021 (0.040)
Total Tenure*Common Surname	-0.026*** (0.010)	-0.021** (0.009)	-0.026*** (0.009)	-0.026*** (0.009)
Additional controls	No	Yes	No	No
Party dummies	No	Yes	No	No
District dummies	No	Yes	No	No
Observations	254	254	254	254
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The set of additional controls includes Age, Male, Slackness, Lawyer, University, and Fresher. In the models in columns (1) and (2) Common Surname is defined as being among the five most frequent surnames in Argentina. In the models in columns (3) and (4) Common Surname is defined as being among the ten and the twenty most frequent surnames in Argentina, respectively. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 8. Further results: women legislators

	Use Husband Surname		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Husband Recognized Surname	0.483*** (0.106)		0.477*** (0.107)
Own Recognized Surname		-0.105 (0.084)	-0.077 (0.091)
Observations	310	310	310
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 9. Further results: dynastic legislators and their position in party list

	Position in Party List		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-Relatives	-0.757* (0.445)	-2.307*** (0.455)	-0.077 (0.385)
Additional controls	No	Yes	Yes
Party dummies	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	yes	No	Yes
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	811	719	719
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The set of additional controls includes Age, Male, and Slackness. *Significant at 10 percent level. ***Significant at 1 percent level.

Table 10. Performance and posterior dynastic success

	Post-Relatives		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Tenure	0.021** (0.009)	0.021** (0.009)	0.021** (0.009)
Floor attendance	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Committee attendance	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Number of floor speeches	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Number of committee bills	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Number of bills introduced	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Number of bills ratified	0.025 (0.040)	0.028 (0.041)	0.032 (0.036)
Additional controls	No	No	Yes
Party dummies	No	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	248	248	248
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. The set of additional controls include Age, Male, Slackness, Lawyer, University, Fresher, and Pre-Relatives. **Significant at 5 percent level.

Table 11. Consequences of dynastic power

	Performance	Bills introduced	Bills ratified
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-Relatives	-0.0198 (0.092)** [0.131]*	-0.966 (0.525)* [0.749]	-0.068 (0.040)* [0.049]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
District dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of legislators	651	651	651
Number of Observations	2,638	2,638	2,638
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All regressions include a constant. Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are in brackets. The controls are Age, Male, and Slackness. *Significant at 10 percent level. **Significant at 5 percent level.