



Political dynasties and direct elections in bicameralism: Democratisation in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

Do direct elections reduce political dynasties? Or do they displace dynastic continuation to the non-elected chamber in bicameral systems? Using historical data on family links of Dutch legislators, this paper examines a revolutionary change in selection rules for the chambers of the Dutch bicameral parliament after 1848. Before 1848, there were few differences between legislators across chambers. About seventy percent of either chamber would start a political dynasty. In 1848, in response to revolutionary events elsewhere in Europe, these elites had to adapt unexpectedly quickly to direct elections. After the reform, dynastic perpetuation became less likely in the directly elected chamber, but more likely in the senate. Dynastic perpetuation decreased after direct elections were introduced, but some dynasties survived in the senate.

1. Introduction

For many centuries, political power was passed down in families. So did dynasties disappear when direct elections were introduced? The answer to this research question is not obvious. In many electoral democracies today, young and old, political dynasties are still puzzlingly common. Yet data on family links between legislators are not systematically collected. From a cross-national comparison of a selected number of countries and years of democratic elections (Smith, 2018), and from detailed studies of democratic dynasties of one specific country (e.g. Chandra, 2016), we know that dynastic proportions can even increase over time in democratically elected parliaments of very different countries such as Japan, Ireland, and India. Yet whether direct elections reduce dynasties when they are introduced is an open question.

This article considers the asymmetric introduction of direct elections for one chamber of the bicameral parliament of the Netherlands. After its members were directly elected after 1848, the formation and continuation of political dynasties decreased in that chamber. Direct elections do not necessarily affect the immediate election chances of incumbent juniors of political families. Yet, increased competition can make elected legislators less likely to have relatives in politics in the future.

Can bicameral systems then help established dynasties survive, when less competitive selection rules are used for one chamber? This second-order research question is difficult to answer. Additional chambers in parliament are often established strategically to support the

ruling elite (Baturu and Elgie, 2016). In democratising Europe, pressured elites may have struck institutional bargains to preserve access to power or rents after democratisation (Ansell and Samuels, 2010; Mares and Queralt, 2015; Capoccia and Ziblatt, 2010; Boix, 1999; Blais et al., 2005). Yet in the Netherlands where there was no established aristocracy, incumbents across both chambers were very similar. The timing of direct elections was out of their control, and largely driven by revolutionary events elsewhere in Europe (Stuurman, 1991; Aidt and Jensen, 2014). These factors make it particularly interesting to study the dynastic consequences of institutional change in selection rules for its parliament, during early democratisation.

In this bicameral parliament with asymmetric selection rules, introducing competition among directly elected legislators was found to make them particularly less likely to propel their relatives into senate seats, which were not directly elected. These dynamics in dynastic perpetuation after 1848 can only be explained by the asymmetric selection rules, or institutional, and not individual, differences between political elites. There is almost no evidence that shocks to dynastic prospects were softer for older, more politically experienced, or better family-connected incumbents. In sum, direct elections can reduce dynastic perpetuation on average. Yet bicameralism can help some existing dynasties to continue when selection rules are asymmetric, which is still the case in many countries today.

Long term power perpetuation is a typically understudied outcome, but is particularly relevant in a world with an increasing number of electoral democracies, of which about a third has bicameral legislatures (Tsebelis and Money, 1997; Cutrone and McCarty, 2006).

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Whether bicameralism affects the proportion of dynasties in parliaments is important. There are real career benefits from politics to relatives of previous politicians (Folke et al., 2017; Smith and Martin, 2017), and their role in public goods provision is ambiguous (Bragança et al., 2015). Who gets selected into the senate also matters for policy (Heller and Branduse, 2014; Druckman and Thies, 2002; Druckman et al., 2005; Diermeier and Myerson, 1999; Heller, 1997; König, 2001; VanDusky-Allen and Heller, 2014). Direct elections can successfully reduce dynastic perpetuation, yet introducing asymmetric selection rules in bicameral parliaments can have long-term dynastic consequences.

2. Dynasties and elections

What explains the presence of democratic political dynasties? Among several potential explanations, electoral institutions might particularly account for the large and understudied variation in elected dynasties (e.g. Chandra, 2016; Smith, 2018). A stylised fact seems to be that senates house more political dynasties than lower chambers, both historically and today, even under democratic elections (see for example Dal Bó et al., 2009 for the US, and Smith, 2018 for Japan). Of course, this is unsurprising if appointment to one chamber is de jure or de facto hereditary. Senates have historically been the refuge of aristocratic and oligarchic families (Tsebelis and Money, 1997; Cutrone and McCarty, 2006). Ruling elites also have a strategic incentive to introduce additional chambers (Baturó and Elgie, 2016), often with the aim of establishing a separate and supportive, dynastic elite. Therefore, the very different, historical processes that have determined which legislatures are bicameral complicate explanations for dynastic membership in different chambers of the legislature. Comparing the evolution of dynasties across chambers of a bicameral parliament requires that these chambers have non-hereditary selection rules, i.e. that bicameralism did not distinguish a de jure or de facto dynastic elite.² We also need to be able to observe the introduction of direct elections in time for one chamber, so that the time period before elections, and the evolution over time in the other chamber, can serve as a counterfactual.

How should different selection rules affect democratic political dynasties? Typically, we would expect that the introduction of elections reduces dynasties. Indeed, appointment helps to insulate existing elites. After abolishing elections in favour of mayoral appointment in Italian municipalities, dynastic candidates have been shown to thrive (Geys, 2017). In contrast to appointment, elections open up power to outsiders, increase competition among insiders, and are therefore antithetical to dynastic power bequests (Van Coppenolle, 2020). Yet dynastic candidates can still be advantaged in elections, being more likely to win them when their families are central in social networks (Cruz et al., 2017). Elections also provide distinct advantages to incumbents, e.g. name recognition and political connections (e.g. Feinstein, 2010). In some contexts these advantages were found to be transferable to family relatives (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Querubin, 2011).³ Therefore, existing literature and common sense leads us to expect that introducing direct elections should decrease the number of new political dynasties, though some existing dynasties may be advantaged. In other words, while junior members of existing families may have important personal or family resources which may explain their continued success in elections, increased competition resulting from elections may make it exceedingly difficult to help relatives into parliament in the future.

² For example, membership was hereditary in the UK House of Lords, while one out of two members of the elected UK House of Commons would have a relative in that chamber (Van Coppenolle, 2017). We cannot deduce that elections made the House of Commons less dynastic than the Lords if that chamber of comparison was dynastic by definition.

³ Yet not where existing elites were strong (Van Coppenolle, 2017) or in party-centred electoral systems (Fiva and Smith, 2018).

When this change occurs in a bicameral system in which only one chamber is affected, it is also plausible that some political dynasties are simply displaced to the chamber that is not directly elected.

Whether the introduction of direct elections reduces dynasties in parliaments has not been directly tested before. Broadening the franchise in election to the UK House of Commons to a broader section of the population did not directly affect the British aristocracy's dynastic control (Berlinski et al., 2014). In line with a displacement effect, placing term limits on electoral tenures further encouraged dynastic capture in the Philippines across offices (Querubin, 2016). In fact, early elite theorists were sceptical about the potential of electoral democracy to effectively break dynastic perpetuation (e.g. Michels, 1968 [1911]; Mosca, 1939 [1896]), and theorists today worry about dynasties as indicators of captured electoral democracies (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Acemoglu et al., 2008). Yet the question of whether elections decrease power perpetuation in dynasties ultimately requires an empirical answer. The Netherlands is a particularly useful setting to study the dynastic consequences of electoral institutional change.

3. Historical argument

The Dutch case forms a uniquely suited context to study the introduction of direct elections in a bicameral parliament. At the time of reform, distinctions within the existing political elite across chambers were arguably less important than in other countries. Below, I first detail how a bicameral system was established almost by accident well before direct elections were introduced. The decision to introduce direct elections was taken by the king more than thirty years later, overnight, in response to escalating revolutionary developments in other countries (Stuurman, 1991; Aidt and Jensen, 2014). This reform was unexpected, and given the limited powers of the parliament, also outside of incumbents' direct control. This combination of historical facts uniquely boosts confidence in the internal validity of the analysis presented in this paper.

After Napoleon's defeat, the future king Willem I returned to the Northern territories, and appointed a commission tasked with drafting a constitution in December 1813. This commission's suggestion to introduce a unicameral parliament was adopted (Kossman, 1976, 68).⁴ Only after the union with Southern territories in present-day Belgium, a commission of elites charged with the development of a revised 1815 constitution advised the king to introduce bicameralism. The senate was primarily created to meet the demands of the existing nobility from the South (Kossman, 1976, 72–73). The so-called First Chamber, a name the senate still carries today, would be formed of individuals appointed by the king for life. The Southern territories seceded in the 1830s reducing the total number of legislators, but the constitution remained largely unchanged until 1848.⁵ After 1840, this resulted in 30 to 40 Northern senatorial appointments at any given time, at the king's discretion. The 58 Northern members of the Second Chamber were indirectly elected, so not elected by voters but by provincial councils, for 3 year terms. The 1848 reform stipulated that members of this chamber were to be directly elected under a limited, property-based franchise. Elections to the senate would be indirect in the same way indirect elections for the chamber were organised before the reform, i.e. by the provincial councils.⁶ Even today, indirect election remains the method of senatorial selection in the Netherlands.

⁴ The proposal was adopted on 29 March 1814 by a meeting of notables, appointed by the provincial governors, that had convened for the purpose in Amsterdam. The next day they legitimised the appointment of king Willem I. He would hold the right to appoint the first members to the national and provincial parliaments, serving until 1817 (Kossman, 1976, 69).

⁵ In 1840 the judicial accountability of ministers was introduced, as well as the requirement that every royal decree had to be countersigned by a minister.

⁶ Only the chamber was directly elected, but the same electoral constituency was linked to both chambers: The franchise restrictions defining the relevant electorate were the same for elections to the chamber, as for electing representatives to the provincial councils who appointed the senators.

When reform finally happened, the timing was unexpectedly sudden. Having resisted most reform attempts of the previous decades successfully, Willem II seems to have felt increasingly threatened by the violent revolutionary events across Europe in 1848. In 1848, popular revolts also occurred in the Netherlands. The decision to introduce direct elections was taken in what is described as a change of mind about reform overnight. The disillusioned king Willem II abdicated, and died, soon after. He was succeeded by his son Willem III (van den Berg and Vis, 2013). Therefore, the arrival of democracy in the Netherlands in 1848 has been viewed as a typical case of democratic diffusion (e.g. Aidt and Jensen, 2014). The revolution in the Netherlands was non-violent, and largely driven by the escalation of events outside of the country (e.g. Stuurman, 1991).

If they did not control the timing, did elites at least control the process shaping the reform proposals? Elections could be a credible commitment device to redistribution in the future for elites under revolutionary pressure (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Aidt and Jensen, 2014), yet changes in electoral institutions are often influenced by intra-elite competition (Ansell and Samuels, 2010; Mares and Queralt, 2015). Elites may shape or use institutions (Capoccia and Ziblatt, 2010) to ensure their survival. By preserving elite access to office in the future, bicameralism could sweeten the deal of democratisation for elites because a senate's veto powers may simultaneously promise to limit its future redistributive effects.⁷

The influence of most incumbents was limited, given the limited powers of the parliament at the time. The role of senators in policymaking was even more limited, their main right being the ability to veto proposed legislation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, absenteeism was high, and the veto right was almost never used.⁸ The chamber held slightly more political power, with the right to initiate legislation, and review two-yearly budgets after 1840. Yet lawful, and real legislative initiative continued to belong to the king. The king had committed to direct electoral reform overnight, and the incumbents studied here could not and did not rewind this revolutionary commitment.

Direct elections were eventually introduced only for one chamber. For the first time in the existence of this parliament, the electorate could vote directly for a single candidate who would represent their district in the chamber. Before the reform, provincial councils elected members of the chamber. Provincial council members themselves were not directly elected either. First, a small set of voters who were adult, propertied, male citizens, had to vote for a college of electors. These men had to meet a higher property threshold than the voters. Moreover, only some of these electors then joined other electors in the provincial council, who had been elected by different town or rural councils or by the province's nobility. Next, these provincial councils elected a number of their members to serve in the chamber. Senators were appointed by the king. After the 1848 reform, senators were indirectly elected by provincial councils, as chamber members had been before the reform. Yet these members of the chamber were now directly elected by a group of adult, propertied, male citizens which was of almost exactly the same size as the group that had qualified to form the electorate before reform. So, the electorate was really widened after the reform, from those elected by voters in a first stage – under a slightly larger, but still small property franchise – to everyone who met the higher property threshold. However, because of the remaining restrictions on participation, some have debated whether the introduction of direct elections was a move towards more, rather than less, democracy. Yet, for the first time voters could hold their representative directly accountable for his actions. For that reason, this paper considers the introduction of direct elections in 1848 as a crucial institutional reform on the path to democratisation in the Netherlands.

⁷ Similar to how a move to PR may have been aimed at preserving elite access to office in the future (Boix, 1999; Blais et al., 2005).

⁸ Except in a few cases where it appears that the financial interests of the members of the Senate had been directly under threat.

Elections shifted the balance of legitimacy between chamber and senate. Concurrent with a boost in legitimacy from direct elections, the Second Chamber further established itself as the main legislative chamber after 1848, with rights of interpellation, investigation and amendment. The latter right of amendment was not granted to the senate.⁹ Therefore, the chamber should have become more attractive compared to the senate after 1848. This paper's main hypothesis is that direct elections increased competition for entering the more powerful chamber. Such increased competition should then make controlling future dynastic continuation more difficult. Direct election should have led to less dynastic perpetuation from the directly elected chamber.

4. Data and empirical strategy

The data for this project builds on work by van den Berg (1983), Cramer (1978) and Secker (1991), and relies on legislator biographies that trace a legislator's lineage, via their father and mother. The data covers all politicians in both chambers between 1815 and 1860, and holds information about their birth and death, their entry and exit into parliament, and dynastic links within parliament.¹⁰ Legislators from the South (present-day Belgium) have been identified and dropped from the sample of Dutch parliamentarians. These incumbents were no longer present in parliament beyond 1830 and not subject to the 1848 reform. Previous political experience was identified by comparing the list of legislators to a broad list of national political officeholders, and is reported by a dummy *Pre-1815 experience*.¹¹ A dummy variable *Senior* indicates whether a legislator has a relative in parliament after his first entry, i.e. starts or continues a political dynasty. Similarly, a dummy *Junior* reports whether a legislator was part of an existing political dynasty, having entered parliament after at least one of his relatives. I make a further distinction between juniors from political dynasties, by defining a dummy variable *Largest dynasty*, which is one if a politician forms part of the political dynasty with the most members, as defined over the entire sample (1815–1860). I also create a dummy for those who had relatives with pre-1815 political experience, *Relatives Pre-1815 experience*. While these legislators were politically connected, they are not defined as a junior political dynasty member. I only consider such legislators dynastic if they also had a relative before them in any chamber of the bicameral parliament established after 1815, in which case the dummy junior takes a value of one. Other relevant individual characteristics include *age*, and political experience in years after 1815, *Exp years*. Finally, *Exec. exp Years* indicates the number of years of individual ministerial experience. If the individual had a relative with

⁹ The senate did receive the right to ask ministers for clarification, and both chambers received control over yearly (as opposed to two-yearly) budgets after 1848. Therefore, the senate may have increased its influence over legislation compared to before 1848, which has led some authors to suggest that it may have become a more attractive institution for ambitious politicians compared to before (van den Berg and Vis, 2013).

¹⁰ To build a picture of the background characteristics of parliamentarians, data of the PDC has been used. For more information, contact 170@pdc.nl. A licence to use this data for this article was purchased on 19 November 2018, and on 14 October 2021. For replication purposes these data have been anonymised. Intellectual property over the original data collection relies with the PDC.

¹¹ This list contains individuals who held a legislative or executive role before 1815. The legislative institutions considered were: Eerste Nationale Vergadering (1796–1797), Tweede Nationale Vergadering (1797–1798), Verteenwoordigend Lichaam (1798), Intermediair Wetgevend Lichaam (1798), Verteenwoordigend Lichaam (1798–1801), Wetgevend Lichaam (1801–1805), Wetgevend Lichaam (1805–1806), Wetgevend Lichaam (1806–1810), while all individuals with executive roles in the Batavian republic were considered as well as members of the “Uitvoerend Bewind”, and those serving between 1813 and 1815, as well as members of the Staatsraad (similar to a privy council).

ministerial experience, the number of years since their first ministerial service is indicated by *Years since first Relative with Exec. exp.*

To test whether the introduction of elections changed the dynastic perpetuation of the existing political class in the bicameral parliament, I consider the change between dynastic continuation in both chambers before and after the 1848 reform. How did their dynastic chances respond to the new selection rules? If elections make dynastic perpetuation less likely, we should see that elected members were less able than senators to start or continue dynasties as seniors. I estimate the following equation:

$$Senior_{i,c,t} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 Z_{i,c,t} \times after1848_t + \beta_3 Z_{i,c,t} + \tau_t + X_i + \epsilon_{i,c,t} \quad (1)$$

where Z is membership of the chamber that was elected after 1848. β_2 is the effect of interest, and estimates how a seat changed dynastic prospects after democratisation, i.e. after electoral reform (*after1848*). The dependent variable, *senior*, can be further refined, for seniors who have relatives starting their careers in the senate or the chamber (binary dependent variables *Senior of Senate Starter* and *Senior of Second Chamber Starter* respectively). Errors are clustered at the individual level.

The data is structured as a yearly cross-section of observations representing *rookie* individual politicians i , new to that chamber c , in a given year t . Therefore, the sample includes only individuals at their first entry to the chamber. This sample can be further restricted to legislators' first career entry. In some years, more individuals enter, so as a robustness check I also estimate a model that provides equal weight to each chamber and year. All models include year dummies, τ_t . A second model with individual controls includes a vector of individual characteristics for the legislator, X_i . These characteristics are age, political experience in years, pre-1815 political experience, having relatives with pre-1815 political experience, executive experience in years, years since the first relative with executive experience, junior, and whether the individual is a member of the largest dynasty, as defined above. Summary statistics for the variables over the estimation sample can be found in Table A1 in the appendix. I also estimate a third model, that adds the interaction of each characteristic with the dummy *after1848*. Finally, I include the three-way interaction term to the last set of models, i.e. with an interaction between the chamber, and each of the individual characteristics in turn, as well as the corresponding three-way interaction term with *after1848*, and controlling for all other characteristics. In this way, I test for heterogeneous treatment effects, so whether the value of chamber membership differs depending on the characteristics of those who make up the chamber. I now take a closer look at how these legislator characteristics were distributed across chambers before the reform.

4.1. Parallel trends in dynastic perpetuation

When the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was established in 1815, the limited number of noble families that were left in the North had to first be officially ennobled and titled under the new regime. The relative absence of such a titled and privileged nobility resulted from the long history of republican government. There were of course a few exceptions, such as foreign families who had recently immigrated, but their numbers were small (Moes, 2012; Secker, 1991). The selection pool of nobility for senate appointments was defined in the North under the rule of kings Willem I and Willem II between 1815 and 1848. Most newly recognised aristocrats were recruited from the long established, city-ruling patrician families (Moes, 2012).¹² In the period 1815–1848,

¹² A family was considered patrician (i.e. a family of regents) if they had provided the mayor (or important councillor) of one of the prominent cities during the Dutch Republic for at least three generations. Ennoblement remained common up to 1848, when the nobility lost their formal privileges. After 1848 the number of new families declined sharply (Secker, 1991; Moes, 2012).

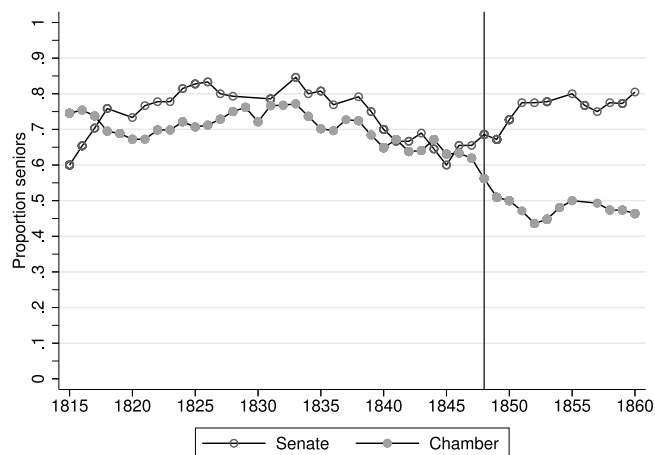


Fig. 1. Evolution of Dynasty Seniors. Note: Proportion of individuals present in each year in the chamber, who started or continued a political dynasty, 1815–1860.

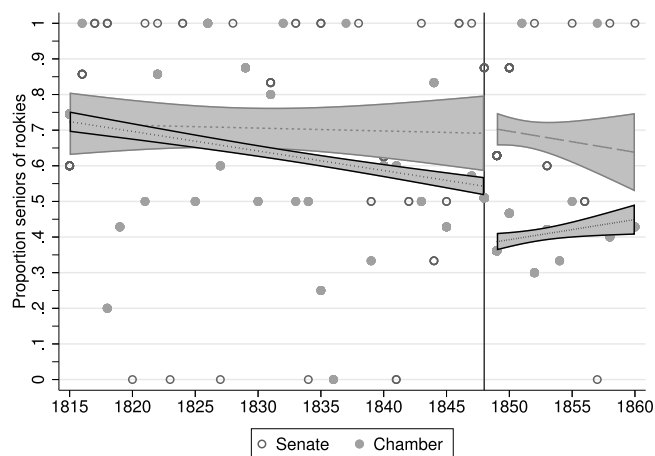


Fig. 2. Evolution of Rookie Dynasty Seniors. Note: Proportion of rookie legislators in each year in the chamber, who started or continued the dynasty, 1815–1860. Individuals at first entry to chamber, simple linear regression fitted lines with 95% confidence intervals at either end of 1848, for each of the parliament's chambers.

senators formed a select group of about 20 to 30 individuals from the North, appointed for life from among the recently delineated aristocracy. The chamber housed at least 55 members elected by provincial councils for 3 year terms, and recruits came from much the same selection pool of local elites. In the absence of direct elections for either chamber, I expect that the selection rules for and the roles of the two chambers were not sufficiently important or different from each other that the senate would offer greater incentives or opportunities for dynastic power perpetuation than the chamber. An important assumption of the research design is indeed that both groups were on parallel trends before 1848 with respect to the outcome of interest, i.e. their propensities to start or continue political dynasties, though they do not need to have been exactly the same in other characteristics.

Fig. 1 confirms that before 1848, dynastic perpetuation was very high with about 70 to 80% of the pre-democratic parliament having a relative in parliament afterwards. There were few differences between both chambers: Similar proportions would be a dynastic senior, particularly between 1840 and 1848.

Differences in tenure length meant that the pre-democratic period saw less turnover among senators. Therefore, Fig. 2 shows the proportions in each chamber each year that were new entrants, i.e. *rookie*

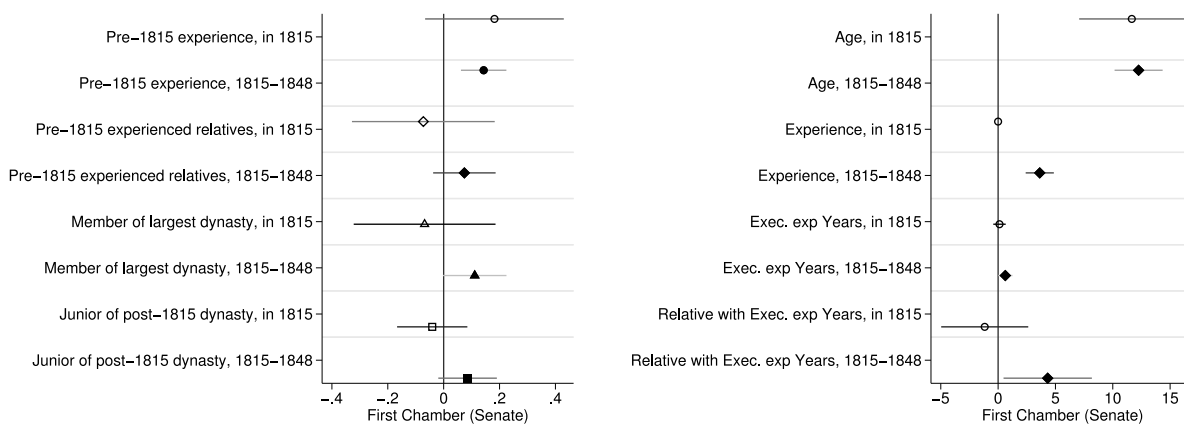


Fig. 3. Pre-treatment Differences between Senate and Chamber Members. Note: Characteristics regressed on Senate (First Chamber), in 1815 and in 1815 to 1848. Individuals at first entry to chamber, year fixed effects included, and standard errors clustered by individual. Estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Full results in Table A2.

legislators new to that chamber in that year, consistent with the main estimations, and including the estimated pre-reform trends. Fig. 2 too suggests that dynastic perpetuation followed parallel trends before the 1848 democratisation, as supported by the overlap in the confidence intervals around the estimated trends of seniors among the rookie legislators.

4.2. Descriptive statistics of the political elites

Conditional on the parallel trends in dynastic perpetuation of the chambers, other differences between the two chambers do not threaten the internal validity of the design. However, differences between individuals in both chambers may still matter for external validity, if they encourage selection into the treatment of sudden exposure to direct election. Appointment to the senate from the broader political class was not random. There may therefore still be differences in characteristics of members of both pre-reform chambers. To what extent did political elites differ across both chambers in observable individual characteristics before reform, i.e. X_i in Eq. (1)?

The newly appointed senators were more likely to be politically experienced at the national level before 1815, particularly in the early days (see Fig. A1 for the evolution over time), but they were not necessarily more likely to be relatives of those who had such experience (see Fig. A2). Moreover, as time went on and fewer people held pre-1815 political experience, the difference in experience between the elites in both chambers narrowed and disappeared (Fig. A1).

What matters most for selection into treatment is that among those from prominent families that had some chance of being selected, the eventual choice was quite haphazard. I find support for this assumption in two ways. First, none of the characteristics, except for age, significantly differed between the senate and the chamber, at least initially in 1815 (see hollow symbols in Fig. 3). There is some evidence that pre-1815 political experience, and executive experience, were somewhat important in predicting senator selection over the entire time period up to 1848. Yet most legislators with pre-1815 experience had disappeared by 1848. A second piece of empirical support relies on a closer study of the competition among dynasties that developed immediately after 1815. Junior relatives of senators and legislators who served in the new parliament quickly captured both chambers (see Fig. 4). While the senate was captured more quickly, the steady trend in juniors in the chamber confirms that dynasty entry there quickly caught up. By the time of the reform, both chambers were on parallel and constant trends in allowing entry to juniors from existing political dynasties.¹³

¹³ Among these early dynasties, one family was particularly prominent, but several families entered both chambers (see Figs. A3) and A4 in the appendix.

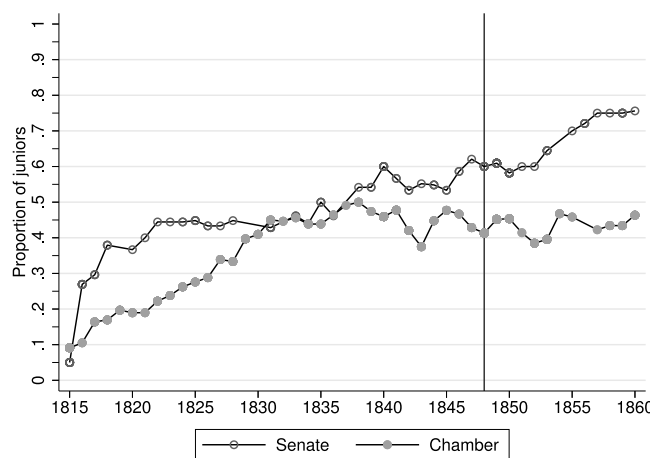


Fig. 4. Legislators from Political Dynasties: Juniors. Note: Proportion of individuals present in each year in the chamber who followed a relative into politics after 1815, 1815–1860.

In support of the analysis presented in the next section, and against the selection-into-treatment concerns, it was not the case that junior relatives clearly targeted and monopolised only one specific chamber before the reform. The next section details this analysis' results.

5. Results

What happened to legislators' chances for dynastic continuation after direct elections were introduced? Table 1 presents the main result, i.e. the value of serving in the chamber rather than in the senate for dynastic perpetuation after the reform, or β_2 in Eq. (1). New, elected entrants to the second chamber were on average between 16 to 24% less likely to start a political dynasty after 1848, than newly entered senators, see models 1 to 3. The results are similar, and somewhat stronger, if we only consider legislators at their very first career entry, and disregard their later moves to a different chamber: Directly elected rookies were 24% (model 4 and 5) to 27% (model 6) less likely to perpetuate a dynastic line in power. This is consistent with direct elections having inhibited dynastic perpetuation from the reformed and elected second chamber, and tilting the dynastic balance between both chambers in favour of establishing dynasties from the senate. Moreover, the average 16% to 27% reduction in the dynastic value of a chamber seat after the reform did not differ greatly among types of legislators (see the interaction effects in Table A3 in the appendix). An analysis of

Table 1
Direct election effect on dynastic advantage, Second chamber vs. Senate seats after 1848.

DV: Senior	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Second chamber	-0.237**	-0.161**	-0.197**	-0.237**	-0.246***	-0.268***
× (Elected) after 1848	[0.098]	[0.079]	[0.095]	[0.116]	[0.094]	[0.101]
Second chamber	-0.052	0.026	0.038	-0.034	0.075	0.083
	[0.056]	[0.049]	[0.058]	[0.072]	[0.057]	[0.059]
After 1848	0.008	-0.119	0.080	-0.032	-0.033	0.124
	[0.199]	[0.131]	[0.288]	[0.230]	[0.137]	[0.292]
Time dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
and after 1848 interactions	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	First Entry to Chamber			First Career Entry		
Observations	576	569	569	520	514	514

Note: Senior, indicating those who started or continued dynasties, regressed on serving in the second chamber (vs. in the senate), and its change after the 1848 electoral reform which introduced direct elections for the second chamber (model 1, 4), and including other characteristics as controls (model 2, 5), as well as their interactions with after 1848 (model 3, 6). Individuals between 1815 to 1860, at first entry to chamber (models 1–3), or at first career entry (models 4–6). Year fixed effects included, and standard errors clustered by individual. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

such three-way interactions, or heterogeneous treatment effects, shows that only new entrants to the chamber (senate) who formed part of the largest dynasty, or dynasties with executive experience, became significantly more (less) likely to continue the dynasty after reform.

The main finding that legislators become less likely to form dynasties is robust in several checks, including in the weighted regression (see Table A6 in the appendix), or after excluding the largest dynasty from the sample (see Table A7) when the effects are even stronger. I found no evidence that an additional outcome was similarly affected (Table A8 in the appendix), nor that a placebo-reform, i.e. at a placebo time before the actual reform, produces the same results (Table A9 in the appendix).

In which chamber did the future junior relatives start their careers? While we saw that junior members of existing dynasties were not affected by the introduction of elections (Fig. 4 and Table A8 in the appendix), we can ask what the first destination was of any new dynastic perpetuation after elections were introduced. Did such future junior relatives enter the appointed senate immediately at the start of their careers, or were they endorsed in direct elections? First, consider dynastic perpetuation in the senate after 1848. After direct elections were introduced, legislators were less likely to see relatives immediately enter the senate at the start of their careers, compared to before. Both new, junior and new, non-junior legislators in the chamber were on average about 19% less likely to have a relative start their career in the senate after the reform.¹⁴ So, for legislators elected after 1848 it was harder to help relatives obtain future senate appointments compared to before. Next, consider dynastic perpetuation into the elected chamber. Our hypothesis was that helping relatives enter the elected chamber should have become more difficult after 1848 as a result of increased competition. Yet, elected chamber members were not significantly less likely to have relatives start in the directly elected

chamber, see Table A5 in the appendix. The dynastic value of an elected chamber seat in propelling relatives to the elected chamber in the future was no different for juniors of existing dynasties or members of the largest family (see columns 3 and 6 of Table A5 in the appendix). Hence, after chamber seats became elected, the holders became less likely to perpetuate dynastic lines. Yet, they were specifically less likely to help relatives enter the senate.¹⁵ So increased competition made dynastic perpetuation more difficult, but this primarily affected perpetuation in the unelected chamber.

6. Interpretation and alternative explanations

Elections decreased dynastic perpetuation among members of the directly elected chamber. Dynasties were henceforward less likely to be formed by elected members than by senators, particularly among unconnected newcomers.¹⁶ Increased competition meant elected legislators were specifically less likely to help relatives enter the unelected chamber.

Could senate seats have become more valuable for dynastic continuation? Entry to the senate in 1848 was restricted to top tax payers. Yet, the evidence does not support this alternative, eligibility-restriction explanation. The largest family was overall less likely to send relatives immediately to the senate after the reform, compared to before.¹⁷ It is improbable that the largest dynasty would have lacked wealthy members (connected to their senators), given how common and valuable intermarriage was (Moes, 2012). If wealth restrictions formed the only mechanism explaining why new, elected members were less likely to see relatives enter the senate, we would not have found such differential effects for already politically powerful, and wealthy, families. Therefore, the differential competition resulting from different selection rules, direct election versus indirect election, must explain why future dynastic entry to each chamber was more difficult to sustain and control for such families compared to before, and compared to unconnected newcomers.

¹⁴ Table A4 in the appendix presents heterogeneous effects by types of legislators. On average, all elected chamber members were less likely to see a relative enter the senate at the start of their careers. Elected junior dynastic members were no more likely to see a relative start in the senate as non-juniors (column 3). Only members of the largest dynasty became significantly less likely to see a relative start their career in the senate after reform (see column 6 Table A4), except if they were members of the elected chamber (see triple interaction in column 6 Table A4). None of the other individual characteristics altered the dynastic value of a chamber seat (columns 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). The largest family was particularly successful before the reform in the senate, and significantly less so after the reform. Their elected members' dynastic senatorial prospects were not necessarily negatively affected by the direct elections as they were for unconnected elected members. Overall though, the dynastic prospects of the family declined after the reform.

¹⁵ Vice versa, holding a senate seat, rather than an elected one, was valuable for perpetuation in the senate, but did not hold any advantages in helping relatives enter the directly elected chamber.

¹⁶ The average decrease in dynastic chances was off-set for the already-connected, see the positive three-way interaction coefficients on junior (column 3) and on the largest family (column 6) in Table A3 in the appendix.

¹⁷ This overall negative effect of the reform on the power-hold of the largest dynasty holds regardless of the fact that their elected members became more dynastic than their senators after the reform.

Three other concurrent changes took place, yet like the eligibility restriction, they are not consistent with the results presented, and therefore do not offer a credible, alternative explanation for the dynasty-reducing effect of electoral selection rule changes put forward in this paper. First, the elected chamber increased slightly in size, while there was almost no change in the number of senators. If dynastic perpetuation is driven mainly by the availability of additional seats (e.g. [Baturó and Elgie, 2016](#)), we would expect the chamber to have become more dynastic than the senate. Yet, we observed the opposite here: The reform did not affect how juniors entered either chamber, and dynastic continuation decreased for new entrants in the chamber after the reform. If increased seat availability drives dynastic perpetuation, it means we have underestimated the effect of direct elections disturbing such perpetuation. Second, the term length of members of the chamber was increased from 3 to 4 years, while that of senators was reduced from life to 9 year terms. As we know from past work that longer tenure is associated with a higher probability of observing relatives in parliament under democratic elections ([Dal Bó et al., 2009](#); [Querubin, 2011](#)), this should have reduced dynastic perpetuation in the senate, and if anything increased perpetuation from the directly elected chamber, after the reform. This is not what we found, so if such tenure effects were at play, we underestimated the effect of the introduction of direct elections. Finally, a rule dating from before 1848 that relatives from the same province could not serve concurrently was removed ([Secker, 1991](#)), but of course affected both chambers equally after 1848. Therefore, this rule change cannot explain the change in the dynastic balance between chambers after 1848.

7. Conclusion

Do direct elections reduce political dynasties, if elites can survive in a senate employing a different selection rule? This paper studied the introduction of direct elections in the bicameral parliament of the Netherlands using historical data on dynastic links of parliamentarians. Direct elections decreased dynastic perpetuation, and diversified the number of families in power. These insights of how direct elections reduced political dynasties, from a historical, bicameral context, help to set expectations of introducing elections today. In bicameral systems in which asymmetric selection rules are in place, increased competition can displace power perpetuation to and from the less competitive chamber.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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Role of the funding source, Data Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the PDC. For more information, contact 170@pdc.nl. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under licence for this study.

Appendix A. Supplementary information

Supplementary material related to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2022.102454>.

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