

Political Dynasties in the European Parliament*

Alexandra Cirone[†]

Political dynasties have been documented in many countries around the world, and have significant impacts on both electoral outcomes and elite persistence; however, this phenomenon has primarily been studied in national or subnational contexts. The European Parliament, the only directly elected body in the European Union, has held elections since 1979 and provides a political arena that is multi-level and supranational. An important empirical question follows— does dynastic behavior exist in the same way in supranational politics as it does in national politics? This paper uses a cross national dataset of MEPs in the European Parliament that maps dynastic connections to both legislator careers and electoral outcomes from 1994 until 2014. I document to what extent there are dynastic politics at play in the modern EP by estimating whether elites have created dynastic connections at the EU level, and how this varies across member states. I also analyze if politicians with national dynastic links take advantage of European Parliament elections, and to what extent they have national or supranational career concerns. I find that there are EP dynasties, but that these politicians don't necessarily behave as EU careerists. Further, I find a significant presence of MEPs with national dynastic links, and these members are less likely to participate in legislative activities. MEP dynasts are almost exclusively composed of national political families, demonstrating that these results have important implications for how political families could potentially exploit multi-level political institutions.

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[†]Assistant Professor, Department of Government, Cornell University. Email: aec287@cornell.edu

1 Introduction

A growing literature has documented the prevalence and effects of political dynasties in the context of national politics. Dynastic candidates are typically defined as politicians who are related by blood or marriage to other individuals holding or formerly holding political office.¹ The effects of political families on governance vary widely by country; while dynasties can be a way to transmit useful information across generations and generate career politicians, they can also be an example of nepotism with negative implications for selection and policy outcomes (Geys 2017). Regardless, most studies agree that dynastic candidates have a notable advantage that often translates into long term electoral success (Dal Bo, Dal Bo and Snyder 2009, Querubin 2019, Smith 2018).

Dynasties have been a political force since the establishment of the first democracies. Historically, in the lower and directly elected chambers, dynastic connections comprised 15% of representatives in 1800 in the United States (Smith 2017), to 20% in 1880 in France (Cirone and Velasco-Rivera, 2018), and 37% in 1868 in the United Kingdom (Berlinski et al 2013). Dynasts are also a fixture of contemporary politics, though there is wide variation across time and country contexts. In countries such as Ireland and Japan, the proportion of dynasts exceeded 25% since WWII; though most legislatures in established Western democracies have remained under 10% (for comparative trends, see Smith 2018). Developing countries can have even higher rates; for example, the Philippines is 40% dynastic at the national level (Querubin 2009, Geys et al 2017).

Yet the study of political families has largely been restricted to within the nation state, while international politics is growing increasingly complex. In particular, multi-level governance is becoming more common, in which nation states delegate authority and submit representation to supranational bodies or international organizations. In such systems, politicians could advance their career either at the national or federal level (Hoyland, Hobolt and Hix, 2017; Borchert 2011). The addition of another political arena naturally raises questions about the nature of dynastic politics – are candidates that have dynastic links at the national level better able to project into supranational political positions? And, once there, will we witness the creation

¹This definition can be refined depending on the context, with different implications. Still, this definition is standard, see Dal Bo et al. (2009), Smith (2012), and Chandra (2016).

of supranational political dynasties?

The European Parliament is a novel context in which to study dynastic politics. It is a supranational legislative body with significant powers, consisting of directly elected representations from member states. There have been eight parliamentary elections since 1979, the most recent in 2014, resulting each term in a chamber of 751 members representing now 28 countries. While a relatively young institution, the EU has seen 39 years of democratic representation, and the establishment of careerist politicians at the supranational level. Importantly, this is a sufficient amount of time to analyze to what extent dynastic politics are at play in the EU.

Using a dataset of all the members of the European Parliament since 1989, this paper studies two types of dynastic trends. First, it examines to what extent there are European political dynasties (where an MEP is related by blood or marriage to a previous or current MEP). While there have been high profile political families associated with the EU, most notably Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen from France, the prevalence of dynastic links in the EU has never been systematically documented. I find that there have been 21 European dynastic politicians in the past four terms; a small number, but this demonstrates that there are incentives to create dynastic links within the EP. Second, this paper also looks at the presence of national dynasties within the European Parliament. If national dynastic candidates have a domestic electoral advantage, and European issues are second order, then dynasts could easily dominate MEP elections. I find that 10% of the recent EP term had politicians with national dynastic links, a level which resembles that of modern democracies. Perhaps more surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of EP dynasts were also national dynasts, indicating that political families are projecting their power supranationally.

If strategic political dynasties could place their members at the European level, as a stepping stone to then return to national politics, then such politicians might not invest in EU institutions. As a result, this paper estimates the effect of dynastic links on both career concerns and measures of legislative activity, in the most recent European Parliament. I find no effect on the rates of holding higher office for dynastic politicians, however, I find that national dynasts are less likely to participate in roll call votes (an important duty and signal of effort).

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides a theoretical overview of dynastic politics in multi-level systems, including both the creation of supranational dynasties and the effects of national dynasts in a supranational setting. Section 3 provides a description of the data and research design. Results can be found in Sections 4 and 5, and Section 6 concludes.

2 Dynastic Politics in Multi-Level Systems

In order to extend the analysis of dynastic candidates to the EU, it is important to first understand how career concerns operate in multi-level systems. Historically, political science first conceptualized national career paths as following an ascending trajectory, from local to national politics. Yet in recent years, studies across countries have found a variety of multidirectional career paths; from local to regional to federal, in which candidates strategically move between these levels, ignoring the more traditional order (Borchert and Stolz 2011). Theoretically, entrepreneurial candidates have simply more options in multi-level systems, and the European Union provides a new opportunity to exploit both national and *supranational* levels.

The European Parliament is a unique context in which to study supranational political dynasties. It is the lower chamber of the European Union, and has extensive powers – it is responsible for passing EU laws and the primary budget, deciding on international agreements, as well as supervising further enlargement and other EU institutions. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have been directly elected since 1979. Elections take place every five years within member countries, using specially drawn constituencies, and the 751 MEPs carry out their representative function in the parliament located in Brussels. The EU mandates that some form of proportional representation should be used when electing MEPs, and that elections happen simultaneously, but countries are free to decide on many aspects of the voting process. Elections are contested by national parties, but once elected MEPs join European-wide political groups.

Historically, these have often been considered “second-order elections,” either suffering from low turnout and uncontested seats or dominated by domestic partisan issues (Marsh 1998). However, in recent years the expansion of both the EU and the powers of parliament have made this a legitimate target for politicians

wishing for a stable supranational career. The EP is a diverse and new type of political system, and consequently sees wide variation across member states in both the career concerns and the background characteristics of MEPs (Scarrow 1997; Stolz 2003). In particular, it has been characterized by the election of politicians with alternative backgrounds – teachers, lawyers, doctors, actors, and a wide range of non-traditional occupations (Hix and Noury, 2007). This non-elite composition has been a historical feature (and some would argue strength) of the European project.

In this setting, there is a distinct difference between politicians who invest in a supranational versus national career. While the EP is arguably a young institution, a number of scholars have documented the emergence of European political “careerists” who are focused on a permanent career within the EU. In contrast, some politicians simply use the EU as a means to achieve a better position in their home government; either by starting their career in the EP in order to break into national politics, or by using the EU as a “holding area” while they wait out unfavorable electoral prospects at home.² As a result, there is an inherent tension between pursuing a supranational versus a national career, and the corresponding legislative behavior that comes from that choice.

This paper seeks to extend the literature on multi-level governance to consider dynastic candidates, both at the national and supranational levels. Such issues have not been explored using the lens of political dynasties, even though these could be considered a form of long term careerism. This is despite the fact that the EP is home to one of the most visible and notable dynastic links in modern European politics: that of the Le Pen’s in France. Jean-Marie Le Pen was elected to the European Parliament in 1984, and his daughter followed in 2004. Both have been leaders of the far right *Front National* party, which owes its national success in part to its consistent presence in the EP.

This paper looks at both the existence of i) supranational dynasties, and ii) supranational politicians with national dynastic connections, in a multi-level system. A supranational dynastic link is defined as when an MEP is related by blood or marriage to another MEP, or to a high ranking member of the EU Council or Commission. I also consider national dynastic connections; this is when an MEP is related by

²Generally a smaller group of members go to the EP at the end of their career, typically because of domestic “banishment” or impending retirement.

blood or marriage to a national politician, in their home country. In addition to establishing the existence of supranational dynasties and their relationship with national ones, this paper will focus on two outcomes relating to dynastic politicians: career concerns, and legislative activity.

2.1 Why Create a Supranational Dynasty?

While there is variation across countries, prior national studies generally agree that dynastic links confer considerable advantages to candidates. They provide name recognition, access to infrastructures of power, more information about the political process, and often serve as a heuristic for voters (Feinstein 2010). These characteristics often translate into an electoral advantage, and thereby perpetuates the dynasty (Dal Bo, Dal Bo and Snyder 2009, Querubin 2019, Smith 2018). Dynastic politicians can also differ in characteristics from their non-dynastic colleagues. They tend to be younger, and less experienced, and enter politics earlier (Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder, 2009; Smith and Martin, 2017, Geys 2017). In this, scholars hypothesize that family ties help them climb the political ladder more quickly. Women politicians also benefit from being a part of a political dynasty, and women are more likely than men to be dynastic (Dal Bo and Snyder, 2009, Jalalzai, 2013; Basu, 2016; Folke, Rickne, and Smith, 2017).³ Overall, there are many advantages for individual politicians in the creation of a political dynasty. However, across all of these studies, the theoretical advantages are local — often to the dynast’s constituency, let alone their country. How do such mechanisms translate to multi-level politics?

First, there’s evidence to indicate that the same national incentives for creating a dynasty could extend to the supranational level of the European Parliament. For much of the EU’s early existence, second order elections and a lack of focus on politics at the supranational level cast doubt on the viability of a long term EP career. However, this has changed, particularly in the past two decades. Scarrow’s (1997) study first documented career persistence in the EU, showing that a third of politicians had served for 1.5 terms or more, and longer patterns of careerism were being led by Germany and the UK in the years 1979-94.

³For example, in Japan, Smith (2018) showed that legacy candidates are more likely to be women, and that familial links help them overcome obstacles that would otherwise prevent them from being elected. In Sweden, Folke, Rickne, and Smith, (2018) also show that dynastic women have higher observable qualifications than dynastic men.

More recently, scholars like Verzichelli and Edinger (2005) found that newly elected MEPs are younger, and systematic turnover within national parties' MEP representatives is declining. Beauvallet and Michon (2010) also found that careers in the EP have become more stable and lengthier over time. From 1979 to 2009, approximately 60% of MEPs have served a 5 years or less, another 23% have served up to 10 years, and the remaining 16% of MEPS have served for at least a decade or more (Whittaker 2014). While this varies by country, on average supranational career paths are becoming much more durable, and suggests a European Parliamentary elite is emerging. These are necessary, though perhaps not sufficient, conditions to support the creation of dynasties at the European level.

There are a number of potential advantages associated with EU-wide parliamentary dynasties. Navigating multiple levels of government, and a new and often technocratic European Union, requires specialized information (Hix and Noury, 2007). For example, a large proportion of the MEPs elected at one point served as a parliamentary assistant within the European Parliament, in order to learn the ropes. Links to a previously or currently serving MEP could be useful in both becoming elected, and then having a successful career within the EU. Dynasts are also highly competitive candidates. Interestingly enough, in the past, elections for the European Parliament were regarded as second-order national elections, because campaigns were fought on domestically divisive issues and voters were uninformed about European candidates or issues (Hix, Noury, Roland 2007). However, the presence of second order elections could also pave the way for dynastic success; dynastic politicians with resources and name recognition in general have an electoral advantage, and this advantage would only be amplified in less-competitive electoral environments. Further, Hoyland and Hobolt (2017) found that in European elections from 1979-2014, voters rewarded national parties with a very politically experienced candidate on their list, such as a former government minister. While they didn't consider dynastic connections, a similar logic might apply to experienced political families.

Even if the conditions are such that dynasties might be advantageous, however, it's possible that periodic uncertainty surrounding EP elections might make establishing dynasties more difficult. Depending on the country, apathetic voters or the fact that niche parties do better in EP elections could disadvantage dynastic candidates. Further, the experience and skills needed to exceed at one level may not translate to the next,

so any dynastic advantage could be potentially diminished. A well known local politician could be obscure at the federal or supranational level; or the accomplishments of a supranational politician could be ignored by local voters, eliminating the advantage and incentive to form dynastic links. The EP has existed for less than a single politician's lifetime; a lack of dynasties could simply be a function of time.

The relationship between national dynasties and supranational dynasties has yet to be examined in the context of multi-level systems. Dynastic politicians exist in all member states of the EU, and as this paper will show, supranational dynastic politicians are emerging. Are national political dynasties using EP elections as a way to project their power internationally? Or have supranational dynasties been created separately, by different politicians with different political concerns? Importantly, the ability to compare the overlap between national and supranational dynasts is unique to the European Union. More research is needed both to understand the nature and characteristics of multi-level dynasties, and how national dynastic politicians may be exploiting multiple political arenas.

2.2 Career Concerns and Legislative Effort

Just because political dynasties exist, doesn't necessarily mean they are beneficial for voters or the political system as a whole. On the one hand, some studies have suggested that there may be benefits to political dynasties. In terms of quality, if leadership competence is transmitted across generations, dynastic candidates can potentially be highly skilled (Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2018). Women are more likely to be dynastic, and in Sweden, Folke, Rickne, and Smith, (2018) also show that dynastic women have higher observable qualifications than dynastic men. On the other hand, more studies than not have found negative effects of political dynasties. Dynastic candidates are often entrenched and can exert less effort (Dal Bo et al 2009). They can also be of lower quality than their peers, as measured by education (Geys, 2017). Still, these effects tend to vary widely by both time and context (Geys and Smith 2017).

As motivation for studying dynastic persistence, this paper will focus on two outcomes relating to politician effort: career concerns, and legislative activity. In the European Parliament, we care to what extent politicians have career concerns at the national or supranational level. Politicians will prioritize and exert

effort at the level they are most likely to have a durable career. There are many ways to measure effort; here, I look at legislative behavior, in the form of attendance, leadership positions, and voting behavior. MEPs who are exerting effort and representing voters at the supranational level should prioritize at least one, of not all, of these dimensions. Further, career concerns can be measured by level hopping, or looking to what extent MEPs go back and forth from national to supranational. Here, our expectations about the types of dynasts once again diverge.

European dynastic politicians should prioritize the European level in terms of their distribution of effort; their advantage and long term career focus is theoretically here. Conditional on being a supranational dynast, expectations about careers and legislative activity are straightforward. Supranational dynasts are an extreme form of careerism, and advantages of dynastic candidates (information, recognition) would most likely remain at the supranational level of politics. Such politicians should be active and invested in the EP. We know that generally, non-dynastic EP careerists are more active than their counterparts. van Geffen (2016) looked at MEPs in the 6th EP and found that EU careerists are more active in legislative activities than politicians; they attend more plenary votes than any of the other types of MEPs and also table more motions than any of their colleagues. The same logic should hold for supranational dynastic politicians.

In contrast, MEPs with national dynastic ties are by definition rooted to domestic politics. Here, their advantage is inevitably local, and these politicians may be more likely to have domestic instead of supranational career concerns. This is similar logic to that of the electoral connection and how structural institutions incentivize a candidate to pursue a personal vote above that of their party (Mayhew 1974, Ames 1995, Bowler and Farrell 1993; Shugart 2001). Except here, politicians with dynastic ties are more likely to pursue national over supranational concerns. If that is the case, this could have consequences for the functioning of the parliament; Hoyland, Hobolt and Hix (2017) found that MEPs who plan to return to the national level participate less in legislative activities than those who plan to stay at the European (federal) level. Expectations for national dynasties could be the same – if dynastic links confer a national advantage, then these MEPs might be more likely to seek a career back home. They might also be less interested in investing in the EP than their non-national dynastic counterparts.

3 Data

To explore questions of dynastic existence and effort, I use a dataset of MEP characteristics, behavior in the EP, and dynastic links. The initial data was generously shared by Hoyland, Hobolt, and Hix (2018), and consists of data on 2,094 MEPs who were elected to serve in any period between the 4th and the 7th sessions of the EP (1994–2014). This includes information on the MEP’s country, party, background characteristics of the deputy (such as age), and the electoral law of the national and EP elections. It also includes data on post-EP careers, coding whether the MEP returned to national politics, the EP, or left politics.

To this I added dynastic information, at the national and supranational level. Often dynastic links are coded using empirical name matching methods, to check for within family links; however, this can return false positives (two or more individuals who share a name but are not related). To mitigate this problem, all dynastic links were coded using extensive biographical research. Sources included official webpages of the EP and national parliaments, webpages of individual MEPs, and coverage by Politico and the EU Who is Who. While time intensive, this ensures that both supranational and national dynasties reflect existing familial ties. As is standard in this literature, dynastic politicians are coded as 1 who are related by blood or marriage to other individuals holding or formerly holding political office (either national, or supranational, depending on the specification). In the case of the EU, I also coded 1 if the individual was related to a member of the Council or the Commission (the other organs of the EU).

This dataset also includes information on legislative behavior while in the European Parliament, from 1994 to 2014 (EP4 to EP7). For this paper, I focus on both legislative participation (voting), and political office (serving as a committee or group leader). While not the only way to exert effort in the European Parliament, these are the main activities and established as primary drivers in the literature. To measure behavior, I consider two types of legislative participation: voting, and leadership roles in the EP. Voting is one of the main activities in which legislators engage in the plenary sessions, and is a standard proxy for legislative effort. Participation is measured using roll call votes, and is the proportion of votes in which the MEP participated in, out of all possible roll call votes. Group Role and Committee Role are dummy variables that capture whether the MEP had a leadership role in the EP group, and a chair or vice chair

in a committee. Both leadership positions, either as a EP party group leader or a role on a committee, are highly desirable and important for both career and future policy success.

Career trajectory is measured in two ways. First, I use two dichotomous variables that measure an MEP's background prior to the term in question; whether they held a national elected office, or whether they were an MEP before. Second, the dataset includes information on post-EP careers (see Hoyland, Hobolt and Hix 2017). Using this as a dichotomous dependent variable, I estimate whether the individual remained at the European level (either members of the EP or became European commissioners) in the future. I also look at whether the MEP first entered politics using the national or European level; these are measured by two dichotomous variables measuring whether the politician was a national politician or European politician prior to the term in question.

I include a number of controls. Member country and European Party group are always included in all specifications, as well as MEP age. It is well-documented that electoral law has a direct effect on both career incentives and legislative behavior, as well as dynastic formation. In particular, electoral laws that foster candidate-centered voting incentivize a politician to cultivate a personal reputation over partisan by investing in their constituency (Farrell and Scully, 2018); dynastic candidates would be particularly advantaged in this setting. I control for open versus closed list electoral law in the national and European elections. I also control for the number of years since the country joined the EU.

The regressions presented for national dynasts are OLS or simple linear probably models, controlling for individual characteristics (age and background), country-level variables (electoral law, country dummies), and EP party group. The sample consists of the 7th EP, which was 2009-2014, and typically contains 889 observations (including both MEPs elected in 2009 and replacements during this period). As a result, all observations in the data set are of individuals who ran and won their respective office, so sitting MEPs. Background data includes pre and post MEP experience, either a national or MEP position, but does not include attempts at either position.

3.1 Research Design Using EP Elections

Notably absent from this analysis is the district-level electoral results for European and national elections. This data would allow us to understand to what extent dynasties provide a safety net for either uncompetitive dynasts, or narrowly losing dynasts. Anecdotally, the MEP biographies indicate that many MEPs run for national office first, fail, and then run in the European elections. If this is systematic, the choice to move to the supranational level could have less to do with long term career concerns or effort, and might be driven instead by poor or unexpected electoral performances back home. Further, identification is a significant challenge in studying political behavior as a result of dynastic connections. Political dynasties are not randomly allocated across MEPs, and even more importantly, districts that elect either candidates with dynastic links also to differ markedly from those that elect less resourced candidates. One worry is that unobserved variables are driving legislative behavior.

To mitigate both these concerns, I am currently matching electoral results to candidates across time. This is a time intensive process, because it involves incorporating data over different elections in all 28 member states. It also requires collecting information on the losers of both national and European races, a non-trivial task. However, once this data collection is complete, it would allow for extensions to mitigate some causality concerns. In particular, following a growing literature in American politics (Lee 2008, Caughey and Sekhon 2011, Eggers et al. 2014, Fang 2016 among others), this project could incorporate a regression discontinuity design in the context European Parliament legislative elections. As EP elections are conducted under PR, this would involve a modified regression discontinuity design (see Fiva and Smith 2016). This would allow for estimating the effect of a district electing a specific type of candidate (ie, a dynast) to the EP, instead of a counterfactual candidate without such links, on legislative outcomes for that district. This will be incorporated in future versions.

4 Results: Supranational Dynasties in the EP

The first goal of this paper is to establish the existence of supranational dynasties, and the data shows that in fact, they do exist at the European Parliament. Since 1994, there have been 21 MEPs that were related by blood or marriage to another member of the European Parliament or high ranking official in the EU.⁴ This means that on average 8 people in the EP a term are dynastic at the supranational level. Of these individuals, 14 are male and 7 are female. Further, these supranational dynasties are concentrated in a handful of member states: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and the UK. MEP dynasts appear in both new member states and founding countries; there is no observable difference between new democracies and older ones, or country wealth. This strategy of supranational dynasties seems to be driven by other factors.

Importantly, all EP dynasts save one have national dynastic links. In other words, the politicians creating supranational dynasties are already members of political families in the member states. The rationale could be that these families are extending their influence across multiple arenas, or it could be simply that the same advantage that comes with national dynastic links better enables such politicians to elections supranationally. What is perhaps more interesting is that EP politicians who are activists or with untraditional backgrounds are not passing on their links via new familial connections; that remains the exclusive practice of preexisting political families in their home countries. In this way, supranational politics directly reflects national concerns. While not addressed directly in this paper, if national dynastic candidates have an electoral advantage, and are more likely to succeed across both levels, this potentially could further entrench dynasties or even affect national politics.

For example, some of these European political dynasties are well known. The most famous is that of Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen, in France. Jean-Marie Le Pen began his career in national politics, founding the now infamous *Front National*. Characterized by extremism and far-right ideology, the FN was historically unsuccessful in national politics, but found traction in municipal elections and then European elections by

⁴Two members are related to national commissioners or council members. While such positions aren't within parliament, they are effectively cabinet-like roles. Similarly, when calculating national dynastic links, the literature typically includes ministers or appointed positions that are high ranking.

taking advantage of the largely uncontested MEP races. Jean-Marie Le Pen joined the European Parliament in 1984 and has been reelected since then. His daughter, Marine Le Pen, was elected to the European Parliament in 2004 and eventually took over leadership of the FN. While a savvy politician in her own right, there is no doubt that Marine Le Pen benefited from her familial links. This dynasty also affected national politics, because for years the *Front National* has been a national party legitimized by its presence in the European Parliament.

Some EP dynasties were created very recently, as in the case of Estonia. Indrek Tarand, currently an MEP, followed his father into supranational politics in 2009. Formerly a game show host and museum director, he unexpectedly stood as an independent candidate and won, then joining the Greens in the EPP. Two years later in 2011, he ran and lost the indirect presidential elections in Estonia. Just a term before, his father first served in the national parliament of Estonia and was Prime Minister, before serving a term as a member of the Socialists in the EP in 2004. In contrast, the United Kingdom holds the longest dynasty in the EU. Baroness Elles, a lawyer and former WWII codebreaker, won a Conservative seat in the European Parliament's first election in 1979. Her son followed her into the European Parliament in 1984, five years after his mother. She left in 1989, after a decade of service and a stint as Vice President; but James Elles stayed and served six terms in the EP, for thirty years, only standing down in 2014. This dynasty has existed for the duration of the existence of the directly elected EP.

Overall, the number of European dynasts is admittedly small, given the size of the chamber is 751. It's worth recalling that this only includes data from 1994 onwards; if an MEP had historical links, that is reflected in this data, but dynastic MEPs that entered and exited before 1994 would not be included. Further, while this data covers 20 years, it only reflects four distinct terms in the European Parliament, which is a low number when thinking of the establishment of a dynasty. Still, this demonstrates that supranational dynasties are perhaps as attractive as national ones.

Using this data it is difficult to analyze the effect of EP dynasts on legislative outcomes. The small number of observations makes statistical analysis unreliable; however, descriptive statistics can still shed useful light on this new political phenomenon. Table 1 looks at European dynasts and measures of effort.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Committee	Leader	Participation
MEPs	0.18	0.28	0.73
European Dynasts	0.15	0.20	0.72

Table 2: **Legislative Behavior.** Committee and leadership positions are dichotomous, participation is the proportion of votes attended.

In terms of legislative activity, the participation of EP dynasts in role call votes almost identical to non-dynastic MEPs. The standard MEP participates in 73% of the possible roll call votes; the EP dynasts participate in 72%. In terms of leadership, less than a fifth of MEP dynasts have served as a chair or vice chair of an EP committee in their career or have held a leadership role in the EP group. Given the size of the chamber, and the very small number of dynasts, this is most likely a numerical artifact more than a suggestive pattern; such positions are highly competitive. However, there is no overwhelming descriptive or anecdotal evidence than EP dynasts are more active or exert more effort than other members.

In terms of career, there are some surprising patterns. One defining characteristic is that nearly all of the EP dynasts had their first elected office in the MEP, as opposed to being elected to a national (or state level, in federal systems) position. Some had tried to run at the national level and failed, but most entered politics via the EU. That's not to say they are unskilled; the majority of EP politicians, dynast or not, have experience in local politics and/or party machines prior to election. In terms of their career concerns, EU dynasts should be oriented towards a long term career in the EU. Figure 1 shows the distribution of post-career outcomes for European dynasts. While more EU dynasts are likely to stay in the European Parliament (35%) than pursue a national career (only 5%), the majority of these individuals leave politics. Given all we know about dynastic electoral bonus, and the informational advantage for the complicated workings of the European Union, this is perhaps a lower number than we might expect.

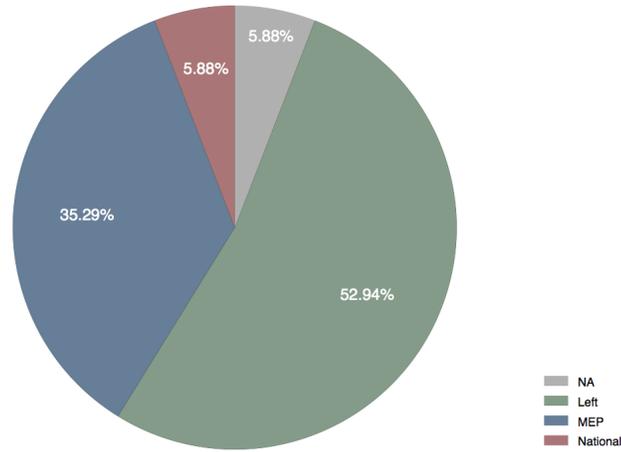


Figure 1: **Career Trajectories, EP Dynasts.** For the years 1994-2014, note that N=17.

5 Results: National Dynastic Links in the EP

Next, I examine the existence and activities of members of the European Parliament who have national dynastic links. Using extensive biographical research of the 7th EP term, I find that 10% of MEPs also hold national dynastic links. It is perhaps surprising that this number is so high – in fact, it is comparable to many modern democracies. Figure 2 shows national dynast by country; naturally there’s a slight weighting towards older members (and older democracies). One interesting finding is that, anecdotally, a large number of these national dynasts attempted to enter national politics but failed. There is naturally variation by country, but for example, almost the entire UK delegation had been unsuccessful at national politics before running for the EP. This might indicate that the EP serves as a backup for dynastic politicians, who are able to utilize their resources to win the less competitive European elections but perhaps aren’t competitive enough for the national arena.

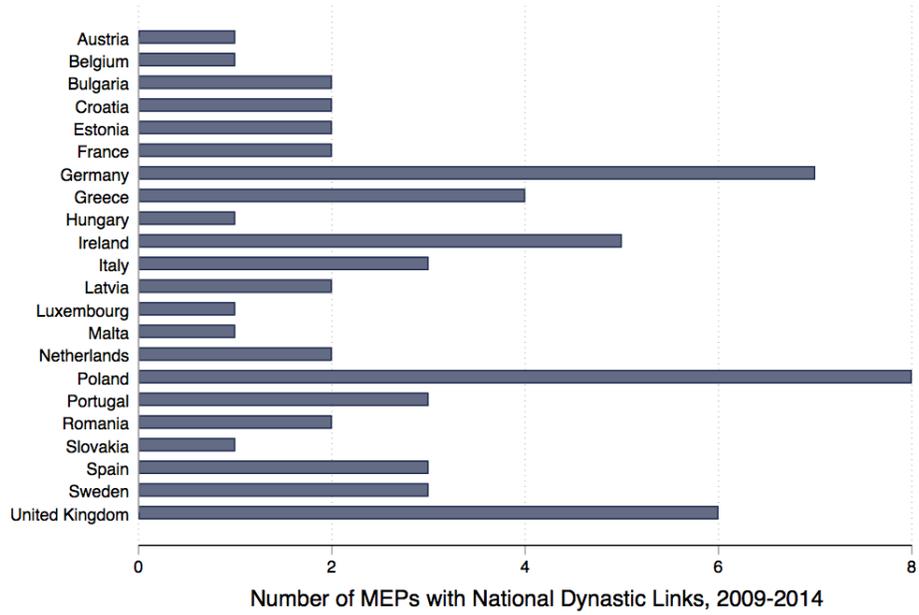


Figure 2: **MEPs with National Dynastic Links, by Country.** Covering the 7th EP, from 2009-2014; N=889.

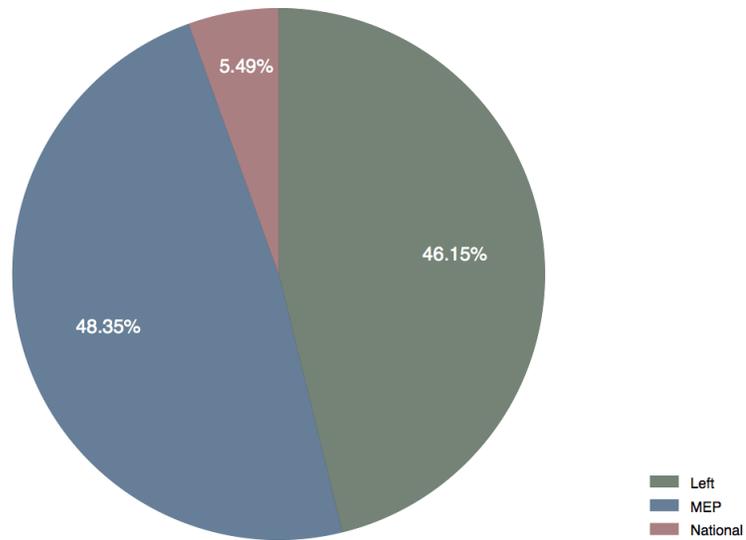


Figure 3: **Career Trajectories, MEPs with National Dynastic Links.** Covering the 7th EP, from 2009-2014; N=889.

In terms of career concerns, national dynasts should be more likely to return to national politics. Yet descriptively, only 5% of them return to the national political arena, and controlling for politician and country characteristics there seems to be no difference. This is similar to the EP dynasts, where increasingly their future is not in national politics. MEPs leave for a wide variety of positions, both business, private, and nonprofit; it's unclear how this is linked to dynastic ties. Table 4 looks at this in a more rigorous way, and estimates the likelihood of returning to a national post, using a dichotomous outcome variable where 1 is returning to the national level and 0 is leaving politics or back to the EP.

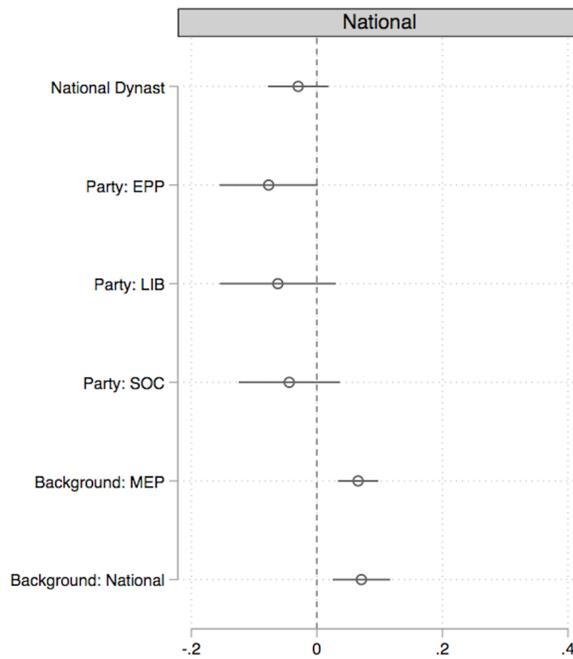


Figure 4: **Post-EP Career, MEPs with National Dynastic Links.** Covering the 7th EP, from 2009-2014; N=889. Models control for age, electoral law, country, and the full set of EP party groups. Dependent variable is returning to national politics in the future.

We might expect to see a positive effect, in that national dynasts are less likely to have supranational career outcomes; however, there is no effect. The wide variety of politician types in the EP, who might have more varied career paths than domestic politics, could also be driving these results. It's worth noting that this is measuring successful reelection, which always incurs uncertainty; electoral race data is not included in this analysis. Here, we also see unsurprisingly that MEPs with traditional political experience (at either

levels) are more likely to return to the national level; the base case here represents alternative backgrounds of politicians (teachers, business, etc).

In terms of legislative activity, voting is one of the most essential functions of an MEP. One finding that emerges is that MEPs with national dynastic links are less likely to participate in roll call votes. From a descriptive perspective, politicians in the 7th EP with national dynastic links on average participate in voting 79% of the time, compared to the average for non-dynastic at 83%. This is also born out in the statistical analysis. Table 5 analyzes voting participation as a function of national dynastic ties, and then individual and country characteristics. Here, even controlling for age, country, background, and EP party, national dynasts are less likely to participate in roll call voting.

These results mirror other studies about MEP career politicians and voting behavior. MEP careerists are more likely to attend and participate in legislative activity (van Geffen 2016), and politicians with close links to their constituency (as measured by candidate-centered electoral systems) are less likely to participate (Hoyland, Hobolt, and Hix 2007).

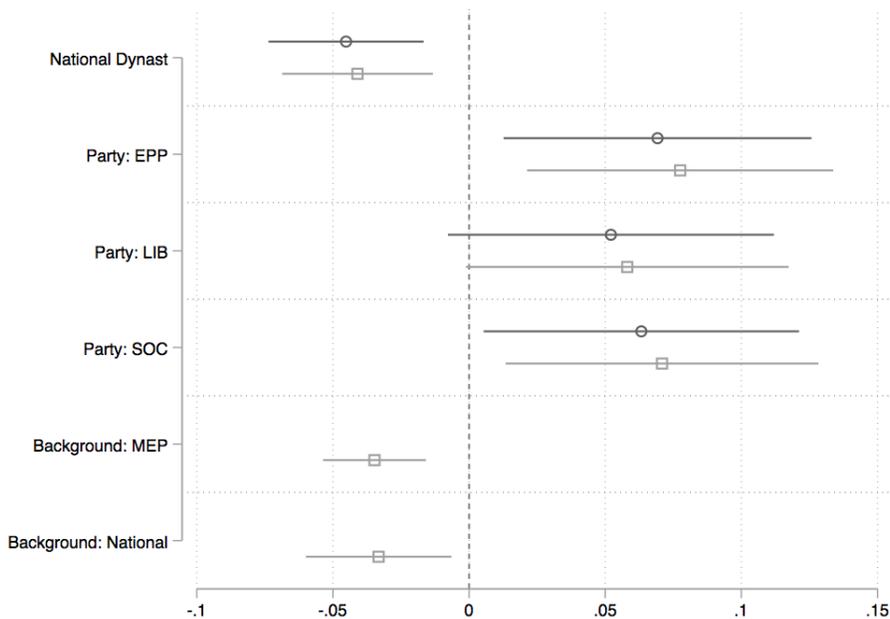


Figure 5: **Voting Participation, MEPs with National Dynastic Links.** Covering the 7th EP, from 2009-2014; N=889. Models control for age, electoral law, country, and the full set of EP party groups. The second specification adds national and MEP experience controls (pictured).

Finally, it is also useful to look at leadership positions. These models look to what extent national dynasts are likely to hold a leadership position, either in their European party group or by serving as head or VP of a committee. Here, we have no effect. MEPs with dynastic links are neither more nor less likely to hold leadership positions than their non national dynastic counterparts. The only effects here that are statistically significant are that for select EP party groups, and for MEP background. This follows, for the larger party groups are more likely to control leadership posts, and members with prior experience as MEPs would be more competitive in vying for such desirable positions.

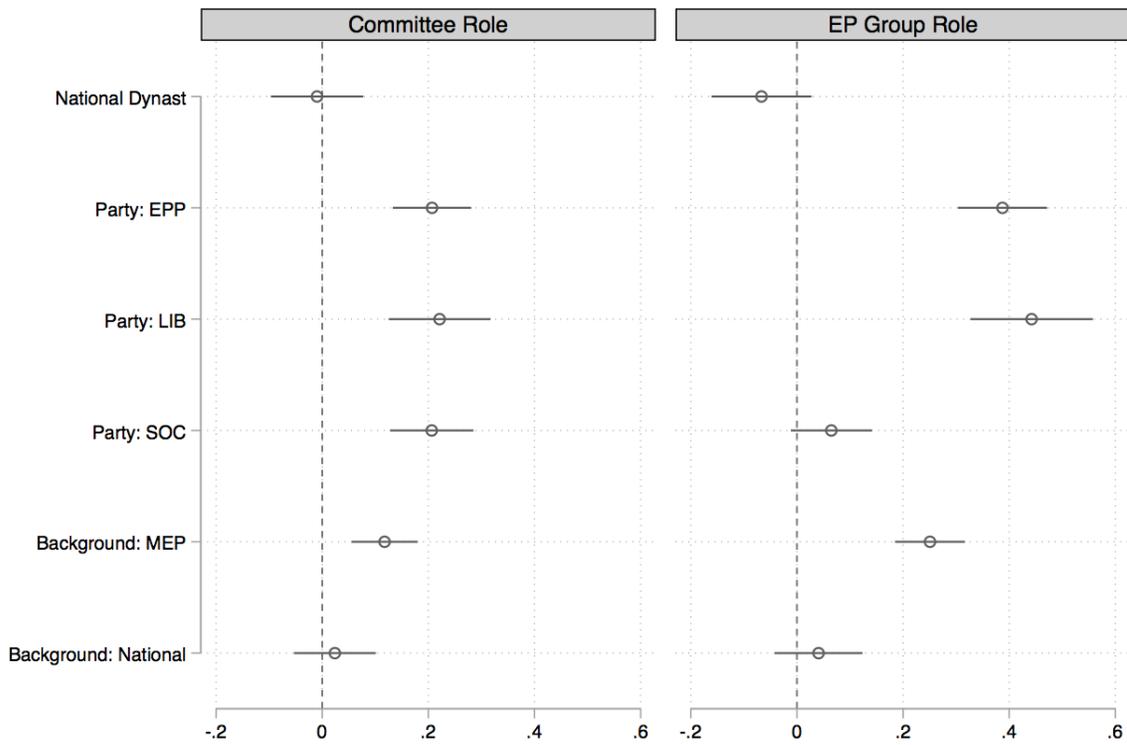


Figure 6: **Leadership, MEPs with National Dynastic Links.** Covering the 7th EP, from 2009-2014; N=889. Models control for age, background, electoral law, country, and the full set of EP party groups.

5.1 Alternative Channels

One interesting mechanism that is perhaps unique to the EU is the role of parliamentary assistants. These jobs entail drafting policy briefings or press releases, administration and event planning, organizing and attending meetings in Brussels, and working closely with members of the national delegation. While not a dynastic mechanism, per se, there is a dynastic quality in the transmission of information and career prospects from an established MEP to an up-and-coming potential candidate. Further, an overwhelming number of MEPs first served time as a parliamentary assistant for MEPs from their home country. While generally members' profiles are have enormous variation in terms of the experience prior to entering the EP (from national politics to being a stuntwoman in Hollywood), the common thread is that they all fulfilled this role. If the gateway to a future MEP post is through this type of training, and this must come from preexisting and established MEPs, then this is an important and understudied part of European political selection. Future data collection will explore this channel.

6 Conclusion

Political dynasties have always been a feature of democratic politics, but until recently they were confined to the national arena. As international politics grows more complex, the opportunities for political dynasties to expand to multi-level and supranational politics abound. This paper looked at the role of dynastic connections in the European Parliament, focusing on both supranational and national dynastic politics.

This paper's findings indicate that EU political dynasties exist. While not comprising a large proportion of the parliament, this still demonstrates that supranational dynasties are feasible and perhaps desirable. Given the uncertainty of both the second order European elections and evolving EU institutions, this is most likely a lower bound on dynastic creation. The European Parliament is a young institution, and has existed for less than a lifespan. As time goes on, it will be important to see if supranational dynasties persist. I also found that European dynasties are synonymous with national ones; dynasts beget dynasts. This has important implications for arguments regarding entrenchment of politicians. While dynasties exist in the

EU, they are not established by the non-traditional European activists. Instead, initial evidence suggests that European dynasties are populated by less-competitive national dynasts, which could have negative implications for politician selection in the European Parliament.

Further, this paper documented a substantial presence of politicians with national dynastic links serving in the European Parliament. While data collection on the electoral fortunes of such politicians is ongoing, the existing data demonstrates that national political families also exploit the supranational political arena. Further, while the EP has always had a tension between national and European representation, MEPs with national dynastic links are less likely to participate in voting activities. Qualitative research also indicates that a notable number of these politicians were also unsuccessful at the national level, before moving to the European level, though such politicians don't seem to return to compete in national politics post-EP. This has implications for political selection in the European Parliament. Generally, these results have important implications for how political families could potentially exploit multi-level elections.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Participation Results

	(1)	(2)
	Participation	Participation
National Dynast	-0.045***	-0.041***
	[0.015]	[0.014]
Age	-0.000	0.000
	[0.000]	[0.000]
EU CLPR	0.001	-0.001
	[0.010]	[0.010]
Nat CLPR	-0.065**	-0.063*
	[0.033]	[0.033]
Party: EFD	0.005	0.009
	[0.041]	[0.041]
Party: EPP	0.069**	0.078***
	[0.029]	[0.029]
Party: ERC	0.038	0.045
	[0.034]	[0.034]
Party: EUL-NGL	0.037	0.040
	[0.034]	[0.033]
Party: Green	0.079***	0.079***
	[0.029]	[0.029]
Party: LIB	0.052*	0.058*
	[0.031]	[0.030]
Party: SOC	0.063**	0.071**
	[0.030]	[0.029]
Background: MEP		-0.035***
		[0.010]
Background: National		-0.033**
		[0.014]
Observations	889	889
R-squared	0.158	0.172

Table 3: Dependent variable is proportion of roll call votes the MEP participated in. Base case for EP party groups is non affiliates. All models include country dummies.

8.2 MEP Role Results

	(1)	(2)
	Committee Role	Leadership in EP Group
National Dynast	-0.010 [0.044]	-0.067 [0.048]
Age	0.002 [0.001]	0.000 [0.001]
EU CLPR	0.077* [0.045]	0.127*** [0.044]
Nat CLPR	0.030 [0.086]	0.234** [0.092]
Party: EFD	0.081 [0.053]	0.215*** [0.067]
Party: EPP	0.207*** [0.038]	0.387*** [0.043]
Party: ERC	0.129** [0.059]	0.530*** [0.071]
Party: EUL-NGL	0.265*** [0.076]	0.590*** [0.081]
Party: Green	0.254*** [0.059]	0.202*** [0.061]
Party: LIB	0.221*** [0.049]	0.442*** [0.059]
Party: SOC	0.206*** [0.040]	0.065* [0.039]
Background: MEP	0.118*** [0.032]	0.251*** [0.034]
Background: National	0.024 [0.039]	0.041 [0.042]
Constant	-0.236*** [0.086]	-0.015 [0.102]
Observations	889	889
R-squared	0.118	0.259

Table 4: LPM model. Dependent variables are dummies. Base case for EP party groups is non affiliates. All models include country dummies.

8.3 Career Concerns, National Dynast

	(1) MEP in Future
National Dynast	0.057 [0.041]
Age	-0.002* [0.001]
EU CLPR	1.002*** [0.009]
Nat CLPR	-0.003 [0.016]
Party: EFD	0.257*** [0.088]
Party: EPP	0.276*** [0.061]
Party:ERC	0.380*** [0.077]
Party:EUL-NGL	0.252*** [0.077]
Party:Green	0.311*** [0.070]
Party: LIB	0.165** [0.067]
Party: SOC	0.247*** [0.063]
Background: MEP	-0.009 [0.029]
Background: National	0.038 [0.038]
Constant	0.328*** [0.109]
Observations	889
R-squared	0.546

Table 5: LPM model. Dependent variables are dummies. Base case for EP party groups is non affiliates. All models include country dummies.

9 Descriptives

Age	EU CLPR	Nat CLPR	Years in EU	Post: Left	Post: MEP	Post: Nat	Pre: MEP	Pre: Nat
49.23295	.22	.03	34.1	.50	.42	.071	.27	.23

Table 6: **Means for Key Variables.** Age is deputy age. CLPR measures electoral law in member state. Pre and Post career variables include MEP within 5 years, national within 5 years, or left politics. Years in EU measures number of years a country was a member state. N=889, for 2009-2014.