The Emergence of Party-Based Political Careers in the UK, 1802-1918

Gary W. Cox*
Tobias Nowacki†

December 3, 2020

Abstract

We document the emergence of a nomination hierarchy within the 19th-century UK parties and the development of norms that ensured incumbent re-nomination and seniority progression through that hierarchy. We offer a property rights theory of why these norms developed; and show that the reform acts, which reduced the influence of patronal peers and increased party-centered voting, were the main drivers of development. The overall effect was to transform a system in which political careers were only loosely organized by the parties into one in which they dominated career prospects.

Key words: nomination control; seniority systems; British political development

*William Bennett Munro Professor of Political Science, Stanford University, Calif., USA. gwcox@stanford.edu

†Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, Stanford University, Calif., USA. tnowacki@stanford.edu

1 Introduction

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, would-be members of the United Kingdom's House of Commons secured their nominations by leveraging family connections and seeking the patronage of landed magnates (Sack 1980). Yet, by the 20th century, nominations were controlled by national and local party organizations (Ostrogorski 1901). How and when did political careers based on family and aristocratic networks give way to party-based careers?

Recent work examining the class and dynastic composition of the House of Commons (e.g. Berlinski, Dewan, and Van Coppenolle 2014; Van Coppenolle 2017; Fresh 2020) has illuminated the *decline* of families and magnates as the main avenues into political careers. In this paper, we look at the flip side, the *rise* of parties as the dominant vehicles structuring political recruitment and advancement.

Focusing on the first century after the union with Ireland (1801-1918), we highlight two consequences of the reform acts (in 1832, 1867 and 1884) that affected politicians' career opportunities. First, after each reform act, the number of constituencies controlled by patronal peers ("patronal constituencies") declined and the number of constituencies where nominations were controlled through local and central party institutions ("partisan constituencies") increased. Second, after each reform act, voters became more party-centered (Cox 1987). This meant that nomination in a district safe for one's own party increasingly ensured victory, while nomination in a district safe for the other party increasingly ensured defeat. We view these two structural shifts as creating a "nomination hierarchy" within each party. At the bottom of the hierarchy were constituencies that were safe for the other party, in the middle were competitive districts, and at the top were constituencies that were safe for one's own party.

Since everyone wanted seats that were safer for their own party, the emergence of the nomination hierarchy should have sparked intra-party competition for nominations. In order to explore the nature of the resulting competition, we exploit two main datasets—one documenting British MPs' electoral and office-holding histories over the period 1835-1918 (Eggers and Spirling 2014) and one providing similar information for the pre-reform era (which we compiled from the History of Parliament Trust and Stookes Smith (1973). The bulk of the paper examines three consequences that the growing number of partisan constituencies, combined with the growing prevalence of party-centered voting, should have produced.

First, increasingly party-centered voting should have increased the proportion of partisan constituencies that were "safe" for one party or the other. We show that the distribution of seats did skew toward "safe", especially after the third reform act.

Second, incumbent re-nomination norms should have emerged—either as spontaneous (Sugden 1986) or leadership-encouraged (Riker and Sened 1991) ways of regulating internecine fights over nominations. To provide evidence for this claim, we rely on regression discontinuity designs to explore how incumbency (past winning) affected politicians' progress through the emerging nomination hierarchy.

Third, first-time parliamentary candidates should have been forced to begin their careers in constituencies where they would have to fight against long odds. The most valuable nominations would be claimed by incumbents and those who were "next in line" to claim winnable nominations. Newcomers should thus have begun their careers in constituencies that were increasingly difficult for anyone from their party to win—thereby getting in line for better spots as they opened up. To show this, we compare cohorts of new candidates just before and just after each reform act, showing that the post-reform cohorts were nominated in significantly less winnable constituencies.

After documenting these three patterns in members' electoral careers, we consider their parliamentary careers. In particular, we show that MPs increasingly served in *some* sub-cabinet office before ascending into the cabinet and that particular sub-cabinet offices, which we dub stepping-stone offices, were particularly associated with later ministerial service. We also show that MPs holding cabinet or stepping-stone posts were increasingly likely to win re-election, consistent with their being increasingly favored in the party-wide competition for winnable nominations. In other words, the modern practice of parties protecting their leaders by giving them safe constituencies appears in the period we study. Finally, we provide evidence that progress through the emerging nomination and office hierarchies was contingent on a member being sufficiently loyal to the party whip.

Our work contributes to several literatures. First, and most directly, it explores the historical development of political parties in the UK (Cox 1987; Eggers and Spirling 2014; Eggers and Spirling 2016; Kam and Newson 2019). A party's ability to control which candidates run as its nominees is a defining feature of modern political parties—yet there is no sustained examination of when and why British parties established this ability and how they dealt with the resulting intra-party competition.

Second, we contribute to the broader comparative literature that examines political "seniority systems." Most of these studies focus on the use of seniority to regulate legislators' access to offices (e.g. Epstein et al. 1997; Jenkins 1998; McKelvey and Riezman 1993; Muthoo and Shepsle 2014). Here, we investigate the relatively under-studied topic of how parties use seniority to regulate candidates' access to nomination spots (cf. Cirone, Cox, and Fiva 2020).

2 The Development of British Political Parties

By the end of the 19th century, Britain's political parties approximated the "Westminster model" familiar to political scientists (e.g. Lijphart 1999; Dewan and Spirling 2011). As we shall use the term, this ideal type entailed party domination of both the electoral and legislative processes. In the electoral arena,

- the two major parties competed in virtually all districts;
- party leaders exerted significant influence over nominations (Ranney 1965); and
- voters reliably supported their parties' nominees (Butler and Stoke 1971).

Within the House of Commons,

- the two major parties competed over virtually all public bills (Dewan and Spirling 2011);
- the majority party's leaders exerted significant influence over the legislative agenda (Cox 1987; Eggers and Spirling 2014); and
- MPs reliably supported their parties' positions on whipped votes (Lowell 1902; Eggers and Spirling 2016).

Thus, in both the electoral and legislative arenas, party leaders had substantial influence in choosing the competitors—whether nominees or bills—and marshalled cohesive voting blocs in support of their favored competitor(s).

In the first three decades of the 19th century, the Westminster features just listed were largely absent. For example, between 1802 and 1830, only 27% of constituencies were contested on average (Mitchell 1967, p. 116); control of about one third of all nominations was decentralized to between 90 and 101 patronal peers (Sack 1980, p. 919); and 22% of voters split their votes between the parties (Cox 1987, p. 105).[1] Similarly, the parties only occasionally competed on public bills, the majority leaders had little grip on the legislative agenda, and party cohesion in the division lobbies was weak (Hawkins 1998, p. 72).

Things began to change in the 1830s. The Great Reform Act of 1832 abolished 57 of the so-called "rotten" or "nomination" boroughs, where the patronal peer's nomination was tantamount to election (Sack 1980). As Figure 1 shows, this reduced the percentage of constituencies that were patronal from over 50% to about 14%. At the same time, local constituency nominating committees began to solicit help in finding candidates from party whips and party-affiliated clubs (Thevoz 2018, pp. 199–200).

Mirroring party leaders' increased influence over nominations, the House of Commons adopted a standing order in 1835 mandating that Wednesdays would henceforth be "Order

[1] The patronal peers used their powers largely to nominate (and elect) their own family members (Rivera 2016), thus illustrating the general point that decentralized nomination procedures promote "dynastic" politicians (Smith 2018).

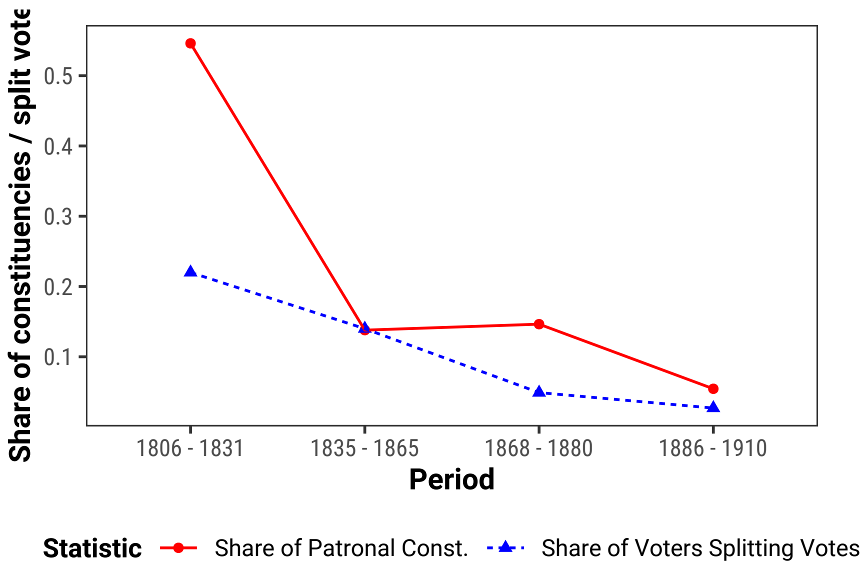

Figure 1: Share of patronal constituencies and share of ballots with votes split between parties over time, by period. Red solid lines show share of patronal constituencies, as coded from Sack (1980) for the pre-reform era, Gash (1977, appendix D) for 1832-67, and Hanham (1959, Appendix iii) for 1867-. Gash covered only boroughs, whereas Sack and Hanham covered both boroughs and counties. If both Sack and Hanham listed a county as patronal, then we coded it as patronal in the intervening period as well. Blue dashed lines indicate average per cent of voters splitting their votes between parties in each era, as reported by Cox (1987, p. 105).

Days," giving the government a third day on which it effectively controlled the legislative agenda (Fraser 1960); and both major parties founded their modern whip organizations (Cox and Ingram 1992; Sainty and Cox 1997). Accompanying these important institutional changes, the percent of English MPs with identifiable party affiliations increased from about 85% to 100%, and the rate at which MPs switched their party affiliations declined from about 9% to 1%.[2]

Despite these important changes in British party politics, the Westminster model was still not closely approximated. In the electoral arena, on average 14 percent of voters continued to split their votes between the parties (see Figure 1), so that "independent" MPs could still run their own campaigns and win partly on the strength of a "personal vote" (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Kam and Newson 2019). In the legislative arena, private members still

[2] Authors' calculations based on party identifications in Craig (1977) and Eggers and Spirling (2014).

controlled two days in the legislative work week and could craft their own, often bipartisan, bills—about 20 percent of which succeeded (Cox and Ingram 1992).

The next two reform acts, however, marked further reductions in independents' opportunities. Figure 1 shows that the share of patronal constituencies declined substantially after the Third Reform Act; and that the average percent of voters splitting their votes fell to 4.9% after the second, and to 2.7% after the third, reform act. Meanwhile, within the House of Commons, the success rate of private members' bills was cut in half after both the second and third reform acts (Cox and Ingram 1992). Thus, MPs increasingly needed their party's support both to gain office and to achieve their legislative goals.

3 Partisan careers and incumbent re-nomination norms

Because candidates faced no residency requirements, they could seek nomination in any constituency. As the number of partisan constituencies increased, the possibility of widespread intra-party competition over nominations arose. What would the resulting competition have looked like?

We can consider nomination in non-patronal constituencies from a property rights perspective. Sugden (1986) models property rights in general as conventions corresponding to the dictum that "possession is nine-tenths of the law." Those in possession of a valuable resource are expected to defend it in equilibrium, thereby raising others' expected cost of attempting to take it. In some cases, this can lead to general respect for property, even with no state enforcement.

Applied to nominations, Sugden's theory predicts that incumbents—those currently "in possession" of the nomination spot they last received—would be expected to defend their spots in equilibrium, thereby motivating potential challengers to look elsewhere. An alternative theory, due to Riker and Sened (1991), views property rights as "top-down" creations. Applied to nominations (as for example by Jenkins (1998)), this theory would predict that party leaders might support incumbents' claims to re-nomination in order to reduce intra-party competition, tie members to their parties (exiting MPs would forfeit their claims on future nomination), and increase whip loyalty (if leaders could make re-nomination conditional on MPs' voting behavior). Here, we do not need to choose between the "bottom-up" and "top-down" theories. We simply argue that incumbent re-nomination norms should have arisen in both major parties—either spontaneously or via leadership promotion—when competition for the two major parties' nominations increased.

Assuming that candidates mainly wanted to win, the value they assigned to being nominated in a given constituency would simply have been their probability of being elected (once nominated). Thus, as candidates came to believe that constituencies could be ranked along a spectrum from "safe" for their own party to "safe" for the other party, and that any credible candidate from their party would have a similar chance of victory in any given constituency, all co-partisans would perceive a clear hierarchy of nominations over which they might compete.

In the next section, we document when this hierarchy emerged. This sets the stage for our analysis of when norms of re-nomination and career progression emerged to regulate intra-party competition.

4 Measuring the Value of Nominations

Focusing just on the partisan constituencies, we measure the value of being nominated in a particular constituency based on past results in that constituency. Our aim is to forecast the Conservative seat share, using simple information that contemporaries would have known. To that end, let C_{ct} denote the two-party share of seats (held by either Liberals or Conservatives) that the Conservatives hold in constituency c after general election t, and U_{ct} be a dummy variable indicating whether c was uncontested at general election t. We then estimate the expected (two-party) share of seats that the Conservatives will win in constituency c at the

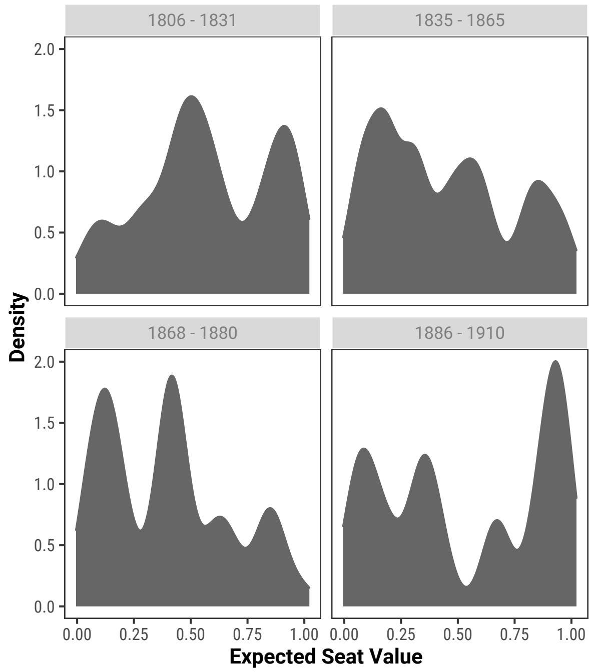

Figure 2: Constituencies became more partisan over time. The figure shows the pooled distribution of expected Conservative seat shares across constituencies, by reform era. We leave out the elections of 1832 and 1885 due to redistricting.

time of election t by fitting a linear regression on every election:

$$\mathbb{E}[C_{ct}] = \beta_{0t} \times \beta_{1t}\ C_{c,t-1} + \beta_{2t}\ U_{c,t-1} + \beta_{3t}\ C_{c,t-1} \times U_{c,t-1} \tag{1}$$

Equation 1 predicts the Conservatives' seat share in election t using an in intercept, the Conservatives' lagged seat share, the lagged contest status, and the interaction of the two.[3] All coefficients are allowed to shift in each year.

We interpret the fitted values, $\hat{C}_{ct}$, as proxies for how contemporaries would have viewed the Conservatives' chances of winning in constituency c in year t based on the last election's result. Conservatives (Tories) would have preferred being nominated in constituencies with higher values of $\hat{C}_{ct}$, while Liberals (Whigs) would have had the opposite preference.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of $\hat{C}_{ct}$ in four different eras: (1) pre-Reform (1806 -

[3]This is equivalent to fitting a regression that is pooled across years, with year fixed effects, and year fixed effects interacted with each of the three main covariates.

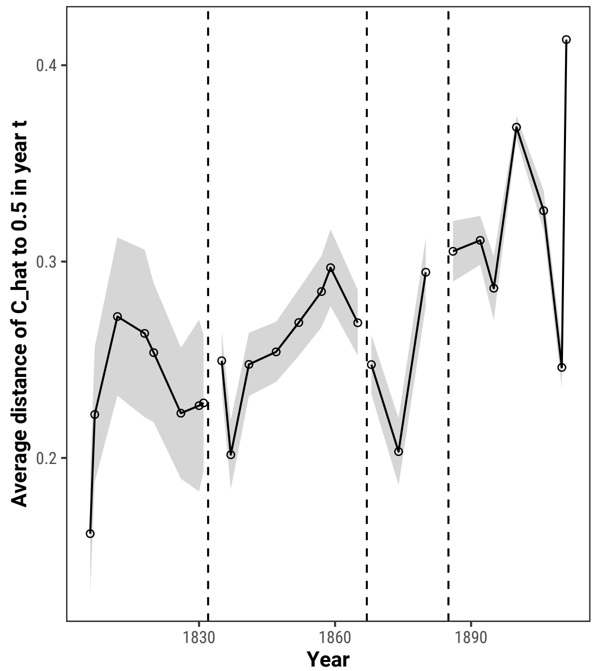

Figure 3: Constituencies became safer over time. The figure shows the average absolute difference to a perfectly competitive seat in each year, computed as: $\sum_c |\hat{C}_{ct} - 0.5| / N_t$, where N_t is the number of partisan constituencies in year t. The following elections were excluded due to missing data associated with redistricting: 1832, 1885.

1831); (2) after the First Reform Act (1835 - 1865); (3) after the Second Reform Act (1868 - 1880); (4) after the Third Reform Act (1886 - 1911).[4] During the first period, there was a substantial "middle mode", corresponding to districts that returned one Conservative and one Liberal. This mode shrank after each reform act, disappearing after the third, when virtually all double-member districts were replaced by single-member districts.

The collapse of the middle mode meant that there was a larger stock of safe Conservative and Liberal seats than there had been previously. Figure 3 illustrates this by graphing the average safeness of districts, measured by $|\hat{C}_{ct} - 0.5|$, across time. Average safeness increased after the First and Third Reform Acts.[5]

All told, the nomination hierarchy within each party should have become significantly

[4] We drop the first election year in each period, as our estimates are based on lagged data and a number of constituencies were redrawn at each reform act. We also restrict the data in this and all subsequent analyses to constituencies (and candidates) standing in non-patronal constituencies in England, Wales, and Scotland, thus excluding Ireland, where the rise of the Home Rule Movement perturbs the two-party system.

[5] (Appendix C reports on the evolution of safeness for patronal constituencies.)

clearer after the first and especially the third reform act. At the same time, the constituencies that remained outside the parties' growing nomination hierarchies -— the remaining patronal constituencies – were declining in number. Thus, we expect increasing pressure to regulate intra-party competition for the valuable nominations that party leaders could influence.

5 Intra-party competition for nominations

To examine the nature of intra-party competition for nominations, we consider the stages of a typical parliamentary career. What were candidates' first parliamentary nominations like? When they won, how did victory affect their prospects for future re-nomination or "promotion" to a better constituency? We tackle these questions in reverse chronological order, beginning in this section with the effects of winning.

5.1 Data

In the analyses that follow, we primarily rely on the British Political Development database (Eggers and Spirling 2014) for the period after 1832. For the period 1801-1831, we compiled similar data from the History of Parliament Trust and Stookes Smith (1973)

A major challenge is that candidates' names do not appear in a consistent manner across time. In addition to facing two clear discontinuities (1832, 1885) in how names were encoded, some candidates' names changed over time even within periods of consistent coding — for example, when they gained additional honorifics. To deal with name changes, we processed names by dropping honorific titles and standardizing their format.[6]

As before, we run our analyses on data from elections in England, Scotland and Wales

[6] We converted all names to lowercase, dropped honorifics, and only retained the initials of every part except for the full surname. *William Eward Gladstone* thus becomes `w e gladstone`. Shortening first and middle names to initials is (unfortunately) necessary because the Eggers-Spirling database only maintains initials for unsuccessful candidates. We can check this procedure's success in the post-1832 period by using the unique IDs that Eggers and Spirling assigned for the time each MP actually sat in parliament. For a random sample of 100 MPs' names whose candidacies and tenures we can compare with the data from the History of Parliament Trust, we only found one mismatch.

(excluding Ireland). We also exclude the two election years preceding the coding and district discontinuity (1831, 1885). Lastly, we exclude candidates who ran for both parties at different points in time.

5.2 Aggregate statistics

We first present some aggregate statistics. Figure 4 shows how winning affected the proportion of candidates running again (left panel) and, conditional on running again, winning (right panel). As can be seen in the left panel, winners were about thirty percentage points more likely to run again than losers, with the gap being fairly stable over the century. In the right panel, in contrast, we see a clear trend, occasionally interrupted by landslide elections (such as 1907). Prior to the first reform act, winners were only slightly more likely to win again, conditional on running, than were losers.[7] But this gap then widens steadily across the century, reaching up to forty percentage points after the third reform act. This is consistent with the idea that incumbents were increasingly favored in the competition to get nominations in winnable constituencies.

5.3 Regression discontinuity designs

The evidence just presented, while suggestive, is muddied by concerns about selection. To mitigate such concerns, we also use regression discontinuity designs to investigate whether bare winners differed from bare losers in their likelihood of running again the next election. To the extent that bare winners and losers are as-if randomly assigned, any advantage that the former enjoyed over the latter will reveal the causal effect of past winning (incumbency) on future re-nomination and winning.[8]

[7] Unlike the following regression discontinuity design, we focus on winning conditional on running again because we cannot identify the causal effect of running again in this setting and would risk including a major confounder.

[8] See a large literature about contemporary incumbency effects and difficulties with causal interpretation (Caughey and Sekhon 2011; Eggers, Fowler, et al. 2015). The causal interpretation of this effect has to be treated with caution insofar as we cannot exclude sorting around the winning threshold in $t-1$. Appendix F provides evidence that candidates do not sort themselves around the threshold.

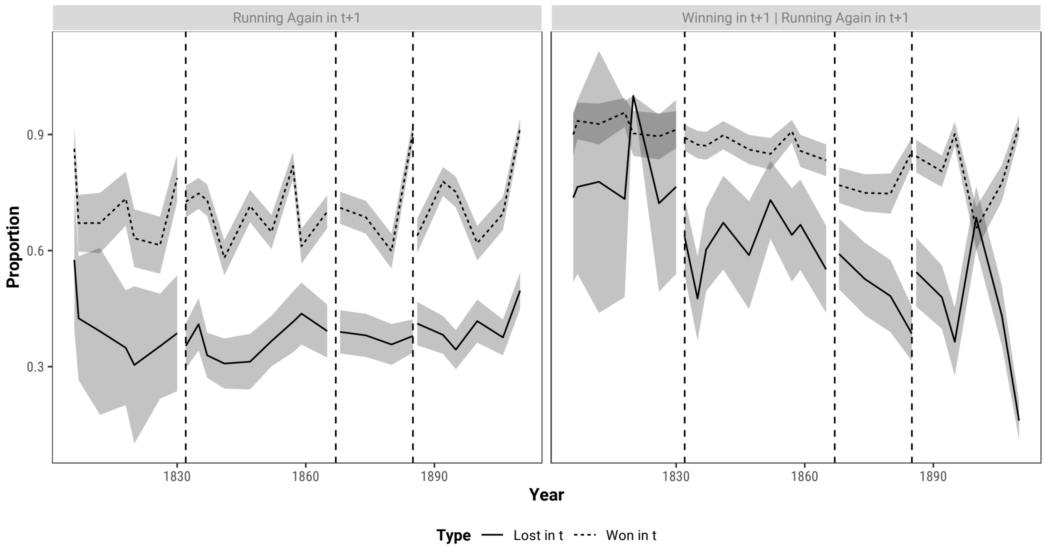

Figure 4: Non-incumbents face a harder time being nominated again, and winning again. The figure shows the proportion of winning and losing candidates who ran again in the next election (left panel); and the proportions winning, conditional on running again (right panel).

We define the forcing variable in each constituency by averaging the vote share of the last winner and the first runner-up, and then subtracting this average from each candidate's vote share. For example, in a four-candidate two-seat constituency in which the vote shares were $V_1 > V_2 > V_3 > V_4$, we compute $T = (V_2 + V_3)/2$ and $e_j = V_j - T$ for $j = 1, 2, 3, 4$. The running variable e_j indicates how how many percentage points above (or below) the threshold T candidate j's vote share is.

The response variables we investigate are whether a candidate runs again in the next election in any constituency and whether a candidate wins a seat in the next election. In all cases, we restrict attention to candidates who remained in the same party (either Conservative or Liberal) at time t and $t - 1$, and ran in non-patronal seats in England, Scotland and Wales.[9]

Since fitting the regression discontinuity on every election separately would yield noisy

[9] We restrict our analysis to non-patronal seats given that the remaining patronal constituencies were rarely contested. In contrast to other parts of the paper, our results here include a longer time span (until 1923) to investigate whether any changes in the effect towards the end of our sample period.

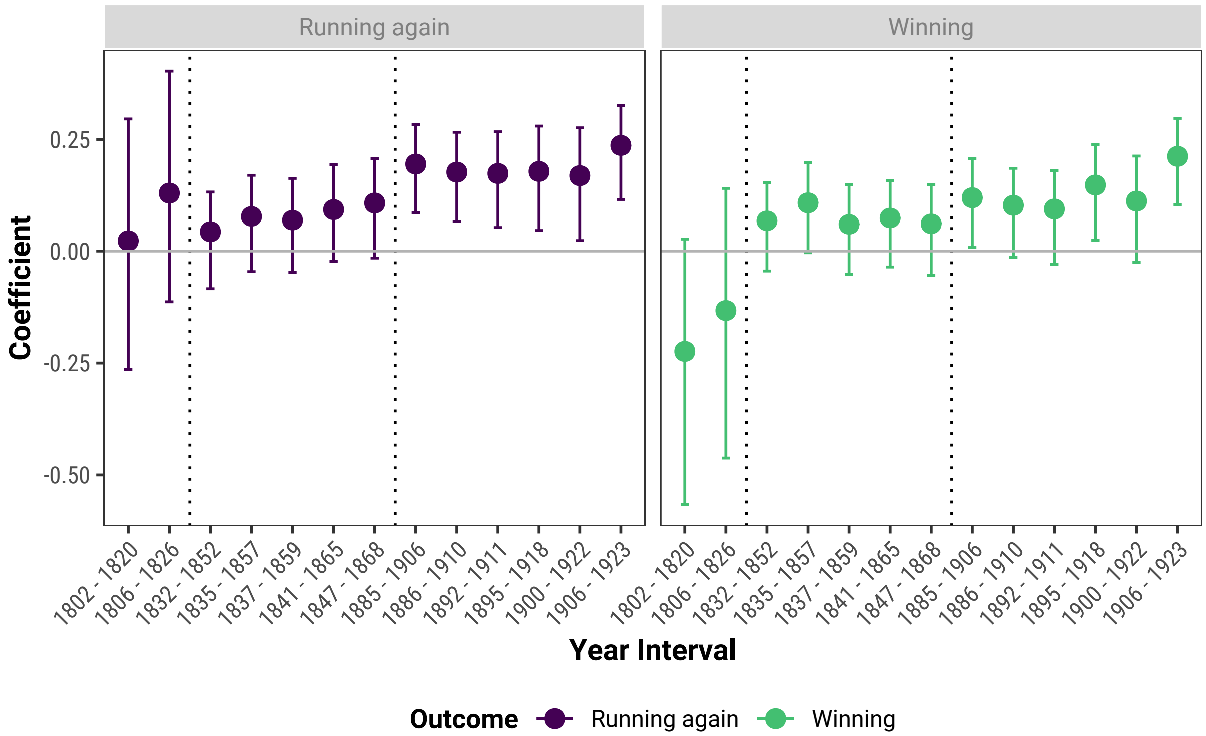

Figure 5: Incumbents develop an advantage in re-nomination and winning over time. Figure shows regression discontinuity estimates in a moving window spanning 5 elections. Error bars indicate 95% robust confidence interval around point estimates.

estimates, we group the data into a moving window covering five general elections.[10] The window moves incrementally within three periods: pre-reform (1802-1826), between the first and third reform acts (1832-1874), and after the third reform act (1886-1923). We exclude years in which the outcome in $t+1$ maps onto the first election *after* a reform act. That is, the last pre-1832 window is 1806-1826, while the first post-1832 window is 1832-1852, and there is a similar jump in 1885. Figure 5 shows our results for running again (left panel) and winning (not conditional on running) (right panel).

5.3.1 Winning and running again

Bare winners and losers should have differed in their probability of re-running for two main reasons. First, the losers should have been more likely than the winners to voluntarily

[10] Appendix **??** reports the results of the regression discontinuity run on each year separately.

drop out of electoral politics. Regardless of the stage of their career, almost winning would probably have encouraged many politicians to try again; but actually winning would have encouraged them even more. Second, in the non-patronal constituencies, bare losers of seats perceived as winnable should have been more likely than bare winners of such seats to be de-selected, since the sin of under-performance was less pardonable if it cost a seat.

Looking at the left panel of Figure 5, we see a more consistent and more precisely estimated incumbency effect after the first reform, and especially after the third reform act. The effect reaches almost a twenty-five percentage point advantage near the end of the time series.

5.3.2 Winning and winning again

Our discussion thus far has focused only on the probability of dropping out of politics (voluntarily or via deselection). But winners can be rewarded by their parties' nominators in two ways—by being re-nominated; and by being given a "better" constituency. Thus, we should also consider whether bare winners secured more winnable spots than bare losers. To address this, we examine the probability of winning at t as a function of performance at $t-1$.

Note that both bare losers and bare winners self-select whether to run again. Thus, the composition of unobservables among bare losers *who run again* may differ from the composition of unobservables among bare winners *who run again*, even if the sets of all bare winners and all bare losers are balanced. This selection issue has been increasingly widely recognized in the recent literature and has motivated several scholars to recommend that RD analyses focus on *unconditional* incumbency effects (De Magalhaes 2015; Dahlgaard 2016; Hyytinen et al. 2018). Instead of conditioning on re-running, which is causally downstream from the treatment (and risks creating imbalance), these scholars include all bare losers and bare winners at $t-1$ in their samples and ask whether winning at $t-1$ affects winning at t. We follow this procedure here.

To explain our approach further, let z_{t-1} denote lagged win margin and p_{jt} (z_{t-1}) be a candidate's probability of securing a nomination in constituency j at time t, conditional on their lagged win margin. Let q_{jt} be the probability of winning, if nominated in constituency j at time t. We view candidates who fail to secure any re-nomination as receiving a nomination in constituency 0, conferring a probability $q_{0t} = 0$ of winning; and denote their probability of receiving that "nomination" by $p_{0t}(z_{t-1})$. A candidate can end up in constituency 0 through death, voluntary withdrawal from electoral politics, or by seeking but failing to secure a nomination. Otherwise, they receive a nomination in constituency $j \in \{1, ..., J\}$.[11]

Given the notation just introduced, the unconditional probability of winning at time t can be written $\sum_{j=0}^{J} p_{jt}(z_{t-1})q_{jt}$. Our RD recovers the change in $\sum_{j=0}^{J} p_{jt}(z_{t-1})q_{jt}$ at the discontinuity $(z_{t-1} = 0)$.[12] This change summarizes how winning affects a candidate's chances of securing nominations in constituencies 0, 1, ..., J, while weighting each constituency by the candidate's probability of winning a seat if nominated there. The more that winning depresses p_{0t}, raises the probability of re-nomination in the same constituency, and improves the chance of securing nomination in a better constituency, the larger the effect of winning at $t-1$ on winning at t will be. Thus, an unconditional analysis of winning allows us to assess the combined effects of incumbent re-nomination (in the same constituency) and seniority progression (to better constituencies).[13]

Our results, shown in the right-hand panel of Figure 5, show that winning had a positive but insignificant effect on winning again after the first reform act, with the effect becoming

[11] We ignore the possibility that candidates run simultaneously in more than one constituency, something that about 5% of candidates did in the pre-reform era, and about 1% of candidates did after the first reform act. To be more precise, Appendix E plots the share of candidates with multiple nominations in any given election year.

[12] Our regression discontinuity estimation follows Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014) for optimal bandwidth selection. All estimates are fitted with first-order polynomials. Appendix G replicates the analysis with second-order polynomials and finds no substantive difference.

[13] Our view of how winning at $t-1$ affects winning at t differs substantially from studies of the incumbency advantage in the US, which have typically assumed that (a) candidates can only run in a single district and (b) voters are candidate-centered. Given those assumptions, the incumbency advantage has been viewed as stemming mainly from incumbency improving a candidate's expected vote share in the general election. In our case, assumptions (a) and (b) do not hold: candidates could run in any constituency and voters were increasingly party-centered. Thus, the mechanisms thought to be at play in the US case are largely absent in the post-1832 UK, so that our RD estimates can be interpreted mainly as showing re-nomination effects.

larger and statistically significant at conventional levels after the third reform act. Between the first and third reform acts, re-nomination was not tantamount to re-election. The reasons for this included poor coordination between co-partisan candidates (Kam and Newson 2019), variations over time in whether a constituency was actually contested, and relatively high levels of split voting. After the third reform act, almost all districts were of single-member magnitude, many more were regularly contested, and almost all voters were party-centered. Thus, each party's incumbents typically sat in districts that were safe for their party, so that re-nomination meant re-election.

6 Humble Beginnings

As incumbent re-nomination norms emerged, other patterns should have become more evident in members' careers. First, each party might have sought to reduce intra-party competition for 'open' spots, created by the retirement of incumbents, by outlining conventional career paths. Writing in the early 20th century, Lowell (1902, p. 51) noted that if multiple Conservatives sought the same nomination, party leaders sought to "persuade all but one of them to withdraw," with "the disinterestedness of the man who withdraws naturally [giving] him a certain claim to future consideration."

Second, those wishing to begin a parliamentary career should increasingly have found that the winnable spots for their party were already occupied by incumbents and those on conventional career paths, motivating them to begin their careers by contesting "unwinnable" seats. Lloyd (1965, p. 265) has claimed that "by 1910 contesting a hopeless seat was accepted as a way for a politician to earn the gratitude of his party." In this section, we consider when new politicians began to accept "humble beginnings" in the form of "unwinnable" initial assignments.[14]

[14] Members' pre-parliamentary careers are beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, we can make one observation. In some countries, local offices are common stepping-stones toward a parliamentary career (Cirone, Cox, and Fiva 2020). In the 19th century UK, however, Lowell (1902, p. 50) reported that there were no feeder offices, tenure of which predicted receipt of (first-time) parliamentary nominations.

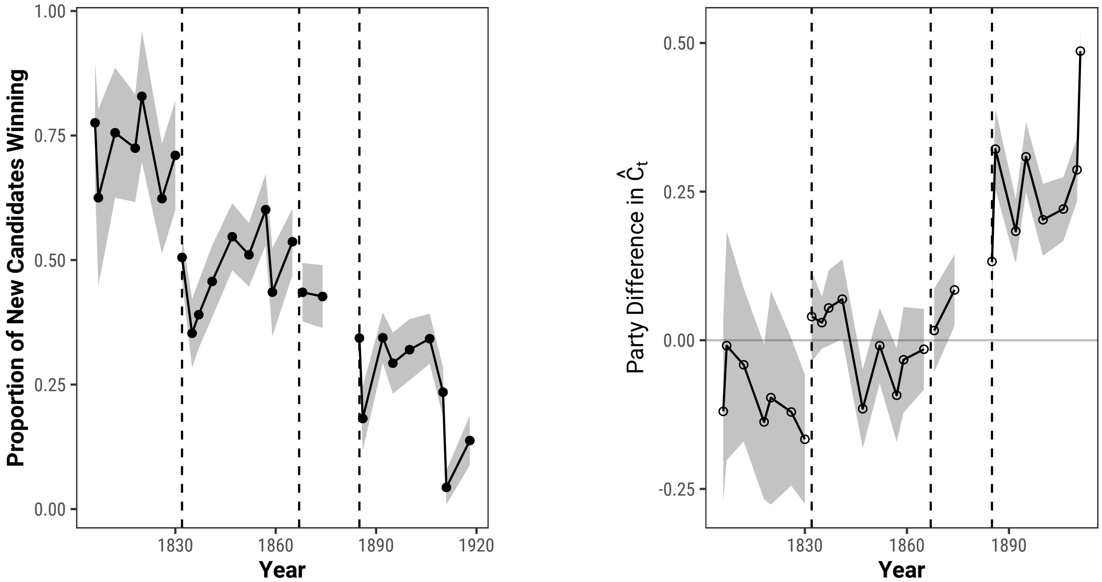

Figure 6: New candidates become less successful and start in worse seats over time. The figure on the left shows the proportion of first-time candidates winning, by election year. The figure on the right shows the difference in predicted Conservative seat share between Conservative and Liberal first-time candidates, by election year. The following elections were excluded due to missing data associated with redistricting: 1832, 1885

The left panel of Figure 6 shows the proportion of each new cohort winning. For both first-time Conservative and first-time Liberal candidates, the probability of winning steps down considerably after each of the first three reform acts. Whereas a clear majority of first-timers won before the First Reform Act, only a third did so (on average) after the Third Reform Act.[15].

The right-hand panel of Figure 6 presents the data in a somewhat different way. Let $\hat{C}_{Lib,t}$ denote the mean predicted conservatism of the constituencies in which the new Liberal cohort ran in year t, and $\hat{C}_{Con,t}$ be the corresponding figure for the new Conservative cohort. The right-hand panel plots the difference, $\Delta_t = \hat{C}_{Lib,t}$ - $\hat{C}_{Con,t}$, across time. In the pre-reform era, both new Liberals and new Conservatives appear to have gravitated toward winnable constituencies, producing a negative value for Δ_t. We then see a jump up in Δ_t after passage of the first reform act, consistent with new candidates finding it necessary to

Indeed, "a man frequently goes into the House of Commons without holding previously any elective office. This might, in fact, be considered the general rule."

[15]Note that landslide elections, like the Liberal win in 1907, are outliers.

begin their careers in more difficult terrain. The Peelite Schism (1847) appears to "reset" the party system insofar as new candidates' incentives were concerned, and the two parties' entering cohorts were very similar from 1847 until 1865. Both the second and third reform acts then produce further jumps up in Δ_t.

These reform act effects can be explored further by running two-way fixed effects models in a window including the three elections before and after each reform act. The unit of analysis is a new candidate (running for the first time) Our regression specification is as follows:

$$y_{it} = \beta_1 P_{it} + \beta_2 T_{it} + \beta_3 P_{it} * T_{it} + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{2}$$

where the main dependent variable is $\hat{C}_{it}$, the expected Conservative share of the seats in candidate i's constituency in election t. The two independent variables are the P, the candidate's party (a dummy variable indicating Liberal or Conservative) and T – a dummy for whether the election was before or after the respective reform. Our estimate of interest is the interaction between these two variables. The coefficient on the interaction indicates whether new Liberals tended to differentiate from new Conservatives after each reform act. We expect a positive coefficient, indicating each party's entering cohort forged into enemy territory more extensively after each reform. The specification also includes a constituency fixed effect and year fixed effects. This model has some of the flavor of a differences-in-differences analysis, although the data do not constitute a proper panel. The results in Table 1 show positive jumps at each reform act, with the jump after the third act being statistically significant.

Although our analyses do not admit causal interpretations except under strong assumptions, we think that cumulatively the evidence can be interpreted as follows. After each reform act, party leaders had a relatively high demand for candidates who would contest the other party's seats, and entering cohorts perceived that they would ultimately be rewarded for doing so. Thus, despite the fact that individual candidates bore most of the cost of

Table 1: Two-way Fixed Effects Model Estimates. Estimates show the effect of being a Liberal candidate on the seat value compared to a Conservative candidate.

	1832 Reform Act	1868 Reform Act	1885 Reform Act
Liberal	0.011	0.033	0.054
	(0.033)	(0.015)	(0.013)
Liberal * post-Reform	0.013	0.038	0.043
	(0.035)	(0.021)	(0.020)
Constituency FEs	Y	Y	Y
Year FEs	Y	Y	Y
Num.Obs.	802	1384	1519

All estimates are with robust standard errors clustered at the constituency level. Each observation is a first-time Conservative or Liberal candidate running in a non-patronal constituency in England, Scotland or Wales in one of the three elections round the respective Reform Act. Liberal is a binary variable set to 1 if the candidate ran for the Liberal party. Post-reform is a binary variable set to 1 if the candidacy occured in the three elections after the reform act.

campaigning, and those costs were high and stable (see Kam and Newson 2019), we see a systematic trend toward first-time candidates running increasingly hopeless campaigns. Since the immediate return to these inaugural campaigns was an increasingly good approximation of zero, candidates must have been receiving some other form of compensation for their efforts. The most obvious such compensation would be a promise of securing a more winnable nomination in future.

7 Career paths within parliament

In this section, we consider the emergence of an "office hierarchy" within the House of Commons and of conventional "career paths" through the combined nomination-and-office hierarchy. In the unreformed polity, members sometimes vaulted immediately into the cabinet – as Pitt the Younger did, when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer barely a year and a half after his first election (and then Prime Minister a year and a half later, at the age of 24). By the 20th century, however, MPs typically advanced from the back benches to one or more sub-cabinet posts, and thence to a cabinet post (Kam 2009, pp. 190–191): a hierarchy of offices was in place. Moreover, each party used its increasing influence over nominations to give office-holding MPs safe seats, thereby protecting its parliamentary leaders.

As with our study thus far, we ask some basic questions. When did an office hierarchy emerge? When were office-holders first favored in the competition for nominations? Was the quid pro quo for advancement loyalty to the whip?

7.1 The office hierarchy in the House of Commons

In this section, we consider the extent to which holding certain offices heralded future promotion into the cabinet. Our data are from Eggers and Spirling (2014), who document MP's parliamentary offices in the post-1832 era.[16] Figure 7 lists all the sub-cabinet offices in the dataset on the horizontal axis, showing for each whether the office was more likely to be held by MPs who served in the cabinet at some point in their careers than those who never did. As can be seen, about half the offices (those listed on the right) are equally likely to be held by ever-cabinet and never-cabinet MPs. We define offices with a difference in probability greater than 2 percentage points as stepping stones offices. As can be seen, parliamentary secretaries and under-secretaries of various sorts are the most common stepping stones.

In Figure 8, we plot the decadal values of Pr[ever cabinet|stepping-stone office]. That is, for all MPs holding a stepping-stone office in a particular decade, we calculate the proportion who eventually serve in the cabinet. This is the upper curve in the figure. The lower curve gives the proportion of MPs not holding a stepping-stone office (either no office or an office on the right-hand side of Figure 7) who eventually serve in the cabinet. The difference in the two curves provides a simple bivariate estimate of whether holding a stepping-stone office predicted promotion into the cabinet. The horizontal axis is arranged so that 1840 refers to the decade 1840-49 and similarly for the other years reported. We drop the 1830s because we have incomplete and scanty data.[17]

[16] Unfortunately, offices are not coded in a uniform way – for example, some under-secretaries are spelled out with their full office titles, while others only include the general type of office.

[17] The Eggers-Spirling data begin reporting MP's office affiliations starting in 1836. Especially in the early years, the worry is that only the most notable offices (those occupied by politicians later ascending to

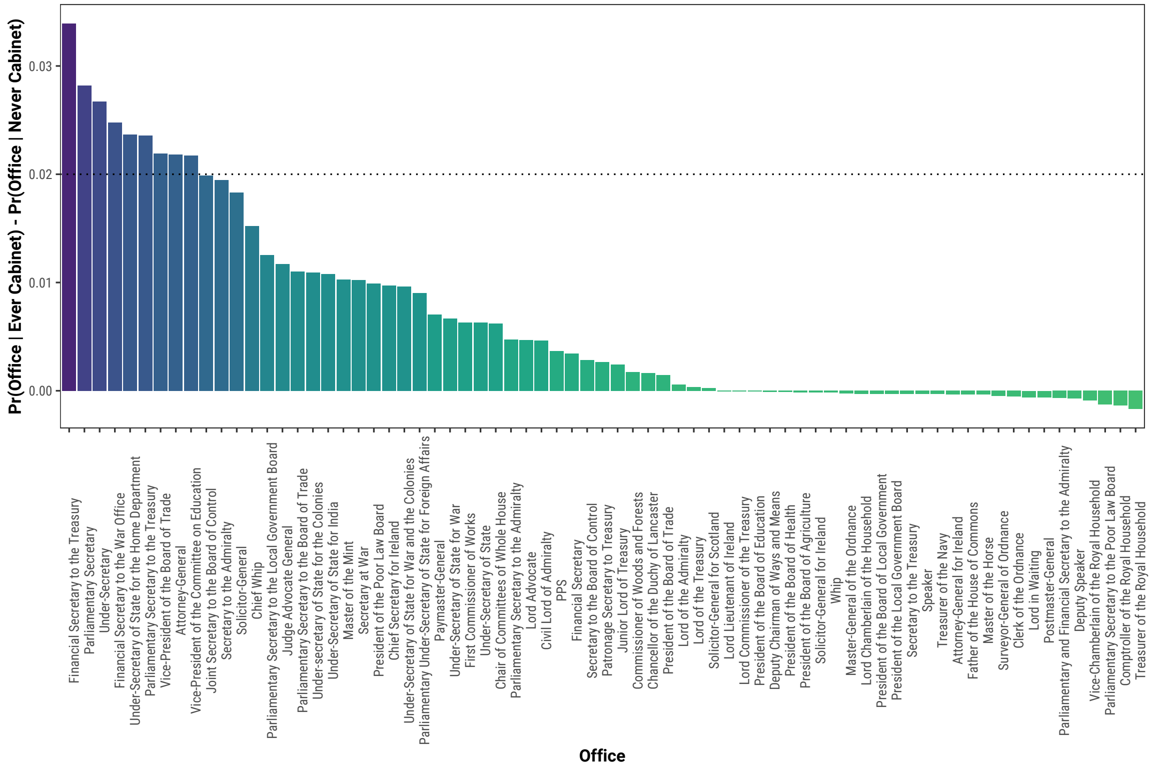

Figure 7: Which offices were most predictive of future Cabinet positions? The figure shows sub-cabinet offices recorded in the Eggers-Spirling dataset sorted by whether its holders were more likely to acceed to a Cabinet position in the future.

Figure 8 demonstrates two main points. First, those not serving in a stepping-stone office rarely reached the cabinet (the lower curve never exceeds about 1 percent). From that perspective, it appears that a conventional route into the cabinet already existed by the first decade for which we have complete data (the 1840s).

Second, those holding a stepping-stone office were substantially more likely to see future service in the cabinet than their counterparts who held no such office. We interpret the over-time pattern in the upper curve as follows, with the caveat that the scarcity of stepping-stone office holders renders these estimates noisy. The decline from the 1840s to the 1850s reflects the impact of the Peelite schism (1847). After this schism, MPs were less sure which parties would survive and more likely to switch parties. This made any deal whereby an MP served in a lower office in order to get in line for the cabinet less credible on both sides. From

Cabinet) have been recorded.

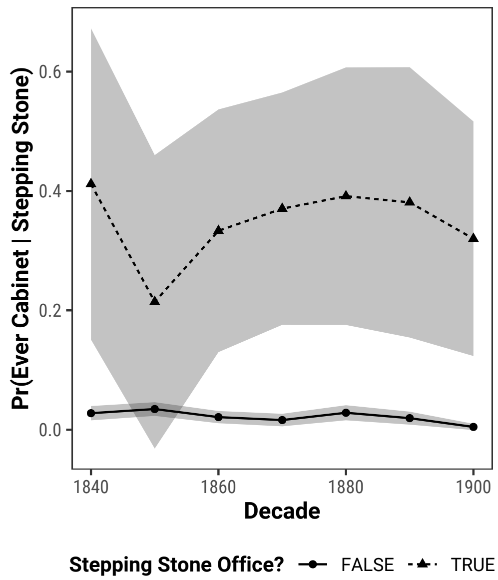

Figure 8: The probability of attaining a cabinet-rank office, by whether the MP held a stepping-stone office. Datapoints show MPs' average probability on attaining a Cabinet office position conditional on having held a stepping stone office, by decade. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals.

this perspective, it is not surprising that the predictive association between stepping-stone offices and the cabinet is at its nadir in the 1850s. As the British party system returned to its two-party mold beginning in the 1860s, the bivariate association between holding a stepping-stone office and eventually reaching the cabinet returned to a higher level.

7.2 The quality of office-holders' nominations

Finally, we investigate whether MPs entering the "office pipeline" display additional characteristics that distinguish them from their backbench peers. We group MPs from parties that served in government during any time in a given Parliament into two categories. The first are MPs who are either holding a stepping-stone office in the current parliamentary term and/or will hold a stepping stone or cabinet office in the future. The second group of MPs has never held a stepping-stone or cabinet office and will never do so. This binary

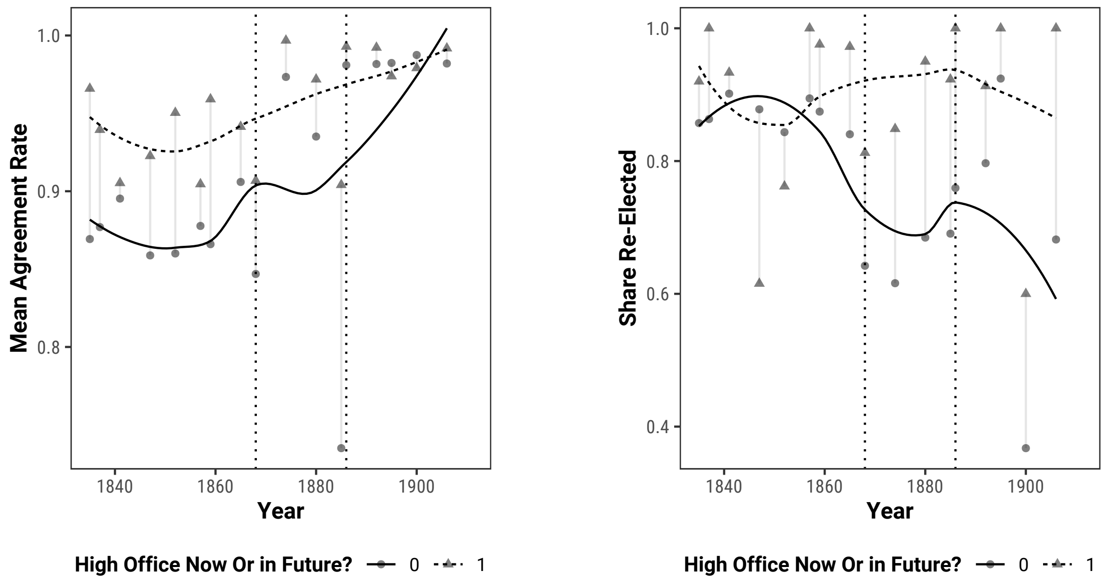

Figure 9: MPs ascending to more senior positions tended to be more loyal and enjoyed higher re-election rates. The left panel shows the mean cohesion score for all government MPs grouped by whether they will serve in the Cabinet or a stepping stone office in the future or already are in a stepping stone office, versus those never to serve in a high office. The right panel retains the same grouping, but shows the share of MPs successfully running for re-election instead.

categorization drops MPs who are serving in Cabinet in a given election term. [18] Figure 9 plots MPs' whip loyalty and re-election rates depending on whether they are in the office pipeline or not. In this section, we summarise the over-time trajectory of these statistics using smoothed local linear regression estimates, as there is considerable election-on-election variation in the baseline agreement and re-election rates.

Whip loyalty. First, we explore the extent to which those on a ministerial career track were more loyal to their party's whip. Scholars have been interested in whether party leaders use nomination control to discipline their parliamentary troops since Ostrogorski (1901), Lachapelle (1911), and Schattschneider (1942). The issue has been more recently examined in the British context by Cox (1987) and Eggers and Spirling (2014) and Eggers and Spirling (2016).

[18]We drop these observations since Cabinet members, who already reached the top, are overwhelmingly loyal and would skew our estimates of ambitious politicians who seek to 'move up the ladder'.

The left panel of Figure 9 shows that MPs slated for the office pipeline were about 4 or 5 percentage points more loyal than their backbench colleagues until the third reform act, after which backbenchers and frontbenchers were equally loyal and parties started to exhibit very high cohesion. The smoothed curve somewhat obscures how quickly backbenchers caught up with frontbenchers after the third reform act but the reader can see this by looking at the raw data in the graph.

Re-election. The right panel of Figure 9 shows that MPs holding cabinet or stepping-stone posts became more likely to win re-election, relative to other MPs within the governing party. While there is a period in the 1840s in which no advantage appears, beginning in the 1850s a systematic advantage for office-holders appears and grows sharply in the 1860s. It appears that the modern "norm" that those on a ministerial career track be nominated in safe districts was established after the Peelite schism was resolved, when the modern Liberal and Conservative parties emerged, and reached a mature form soon after the second reform act.

8 Conclusion

The early 19th-century British party system was nothing like the "Westminster" system for which the country became famous over the next century. One of the most important differences concerned the parties' *lack* of control over who could run for election under their labels. Nomination was highly decentralized, with patronal peers—not selected in any way by the parties themselves—choosing party nominees in many constituencies (Sack 1980). While it is well known that the parties' local and central leaders did eventually come to control nominations, no one has systematically analyzed how increasing party control affected members' careers. In this paper, we consider the processes by which parties extended their control over nominations and test several predictions about how careers changed as a consequence.

We have argued that the parties took over nominations in part by the direct tactics of abolishing the "rotten" boroughs (first reform act) or expanding electorates so that aristocrats could no longer control outcomes (second and third reform acts). In other words, the parties put their chief competitors, the patronal peers, out of business.

Another important part of the story, however, is that voters became increasingly party-centered over the course of the century, especially after each reform act. More party-centered voting increased the proportion of constituencies that were safe for one party or the other, and raised the likelihood that co-partisans would compete to be nominated in constituencies that were safe for their own party. Most of the paper presents a "property rights" theory of how such competition might have been regulated, either by the spontaneous or leadership-promoted emergence of seniority norms, and provides evidence consistent with the hypothesis that such norms strengthened after each reform act.

In particular, we present evidence that each reform act increased adherence to incumbent re-nomination and seniority progression norms. As incumbents and those next in line to become incumbents took the best spots, newcomers were forced to accept increasingly unwinnable initial assignments. At the top of the hierarchy, cabinet ministers increasingly received safe nominations; and the path into the cabinet increasingly went through specific stepping-stone offices. After the third reform act, all of these patterns were clearly evident in the relevant statistics.

It is hard to pick out one of the reform acts as crucial. All of them reduced the influence of patronal peers and increased party-centered voting, so they can be viewed as three doses of the same medicine. The first reform act was clearly the largest single attack on the patronal peers; and led to the birth both of local party associations and centralized party clearinghouses for nominations in the London clubs. The 1860s and the second reform act stand out as when newcomers first began accepting tough initial assignments and cabinet ministers first began receiving a consistent leg up in the competition for nominations. The third reform act stands out in terms of affecting the distribution of safe districts and when party careerism reached modern levels.

References

Berlinski, Samuel, Torun Dewan, and Brenda Van Coppenolle (2014). “Franchise Extension and the British Aristocracy”. In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 39.4, pp. 531–558.

Butler, David and Donald Stoke (1971). *Political Change in Britain: Basis of Electoral Choice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cain, Bruce, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina (1987). *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Calonico, Sebastian, Matias D. Cattaneo, and Rocio Titiunik (2014). “Robust Nonparametric Confidence Intervals for Regression-Discontinuity Designs”. In: *Econometrica* 82.6, pp. 2295–2326.

Caughey, Devin and Jasjeet S. Sekhon (2011). “Elections and the Regression Discontinuity Design: Lessons from Close US House Races, 1942–2008”. In: *Political Analysis* 19.4, pp. 385–408.

Cirone, Alexandra, Gary W. Cox, and Jon H. Fiva (2020). “Seniority-Based Nominations and Political Careers”. In: *American Political Science Review*, pp. 1–18.

Cox, Gary W. (1987). *The Efficient Secret*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cox, Gary W. and James W. Ingram (1992). “Suffrage Expansion and Legislative Behavior in Nineteenth-Century Britain”. In: *Social Science History* 16.4, pp. 539–560.

Craig, Frederick Walter Scott (1977). *British Parliamentary Election Results*. Springer.

Dahlgaard, Jens Olav (2016). “You Just Made It: Individual Incumbency Advantage under Proportional Representation”. In: *Electoral Studies* 44, pp. 319–328.

De Magalhaes, Leandro (2015). “Incumbency Effects in a Comparative Perspective: Evidence from Brazilian Mayoral Elections”. In: *Political Analysis*, pp. 113–126.

Dewan, Torun and Arthur Spirling (2011). “Strategic Opposition and Government Cohesion in Westminster Democracies”. In: *American Political Science Review*, pp. 337–358.

Eggers, Andrew C., Anthony Fowler, et al. (2015). "On the Validity of the Regression Discontinuity Design for Estimating Electoral Effects: New Evidence from over 40,000 Close Races". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 59.1, pp. 259–274.

Eggers, Andrew C. and Arthur Spirling (2014). "Ministerial Responsiveness in Westminster Systems: Institutional Choices and House of Commons Debate, 1832–1915". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 58.4, pp. 873–887.

— (2016). "Party Cohesion in Westminster Systems: Inducements, Replacement and Discipline in the House of Commons, 1836-1910". In: *British Journal of Political Science* 46.3, p. 567.

Epstein, David et al. (1997). "A Comparative Approach to Legislative Organization: Careerism and Seniority in the United States and Japan". In: *American Journal of Political Science*, pp. 965–998.

Fraser, Peter (1960). "The Growth of Ministerial Control in the Nineteenth-Century House of Commons". In: *The English Historical Review* 75.296, pp. 444–463.

Fresh, Adriane (2020). "Industrial Revolution and Political Change: Evidence from the British Isles." Unpublished Typescript. Unpublished Typescript. Duke University.

Gash, Norman (1977). *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation, 1830–1850*. Hassocks, Sussex, UK: Harvester Press.

Hanham, Harold John (1959). *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Company.

Hawkins, Angus (1998). *British Party Politics, 1852–1886*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Hyytinen, Ari et al. (2018). "When Does Regression Discontinuity Design Work? Evidence from Random Election Outcomes". In: *Quantitative Economics* 9.2, pp. 1019–1051.

Jenkins, Jeffery A. (1998). "Property Rights and the Emergence of Standing Committee Dominance in the Nineteenth-Century House". In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, pp. 493–519.

Kam, Christopher (2009). *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Kam, Christopher and Adlai Newson (2019). “The Economic Origins of Political Parties: Party Slates at Nineteenth-Century Parliamentary Elections in England and Wales”. In:

Lachapelle, Georges (1911). *La Représentation Proprotionnelle En France et En Belgique*. F. Alcan.

Lijphart, Arend (1999). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press.

Lloyd, Trevor (1965). “Uncontested Seats in British General Elections, 1852-1910”. In: *The Historical Journal* 8.2, pp. 260–265.

Lowell, Abbott Lawrence (1902). *The Influence of Party upon Legislation in England and America*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

McKelvey, R. and Raymond Riezman (1993). “Initial versus Continuing Proposal Power in Legislative Seniority Systems”. In: *Political Economy: Institutions, Competition, and Representation*, pp. 279–292.

Mitchell, Austin (1967). *The Whigs in Opposition, 1815–1830*.

Muthoo, Abhinay and Kenneth A. Shepsle (2014). “Seniority and Incumbency in Legislatures”. In: *Economics & Politics* 26.1, pp. 13–37.

Ostrogorski, M. La (1901). *Democratic et l’organisation Des Partis Politiques. 2 Vol., 2e Edit.* P.

Ranney, Austin (1965). *Pathways to Parliament: Candidate Selection in Britain*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Riker, William H. and Itai Sened (1991). “A Political Theory of the Origin of Property Rights: Airport Slots”. In: *American Journal of Political Science*, pp. 951–969.

Rivera, Carlos Javier Velasco (2016). “Essays on Elite Persistence, Accountability, and Representation”. Unpublished dissertation. Princeton University.

Sack, James J. (1980). “The House of Lords and Parliamentary Patronage in Great Britain, 1802-1832”. In: *The Historical Journal* 23.4, pp. 913–937.

Sainty, John and Gary W. Cox (1997). “The Identification of Government Whips in the House of Commons, 1830-1905”. In: *Parliamentary History* 16.3, p. 339.

Schattschneider, Elmer Eric (1942). “Political Parties”. In: *New York: Holt, Riehart, and Winston*.

Smith, Daniel M. (2018). *Dynasties and Democracy: The Inherited Incumbency Advantage in Japan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Stookes Smith, Henry (1973). *The Parliaments of England*. Political Reference Publications, Chichester, UK.

Sugden, Robert (1986). *The Economics of Rights, Co-Operation and Welfare*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Thevoz, Seth Alexander (2018). *Club Government: How the Early Victorian World Was Ruled from London Clubs*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris.

Van Coppenolle, Brenda (2017). “Political Dynasties in the UK House of Commons: The Null Effect of Narrow Electoral Selection”. In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42.3, pp. 449–475.

Appendices

A Descriptive Statistics

First, we report some descriptive statistics on the number of candidates and the share of successful candidates, by party and year, in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of candidates by year and party. Cand (Opp) refers to the number of candidates in contested constituencies. Share Win is the share of successful candidacies in contested constituencies. Cand (Unopp) refers to the number of candidacies that were not opposed by other candidates.

	Conservative			Liberal		
Year	# Cand (Opp)	Share Win	# Cand (Unopp)	# Cand (Opp)	Share Win	# Cand (Unopp)
1802	101	0.68	139	77	0.51	88
1806	89	0.63	165	59	0.68	122
1807	102	0.75	190	83	0.47	120
1812	79	0.73	193	69	0.51	112
1818	135	0.70	169	130	0.52	103
1820	98	0.61	204	100	0.69	119
1826	153	0.63	198	123	0.59	107
1830	146	0.66	186	126	0.60	129
1831	118	0.53	149	132	0.70	184
1832	284	0.38	66	526	0.64	109
1835	283	0.54	121	349	0.59	144
1837	364	0.53	121	371	0.58	100
1841	282	0.55	212	273	0.57	113
1847	205	0.53	205	257	0.61	136
1852	300	0.56	159	349	0.54	87
1857	202	0.58	148	330	0.61	176
1859	196	0.52	194	283	0.61	181
1865	264	0.55	143	355	0.59	160
1868	341	0.51	93	472	0.57	121
1874	381	0.59	125	422	0.45	52
1880	461	0.39	58	451	0.68	40
1885	587	0.40	10	458	0.47	7
1886	284	0.75	87	388	0.36	37
1892	396	0.57	24	485	0.50	11
1895	340	0.65	101	402	0.39	10
1900	311	0.60	126	349	0.43	22
1906	435	0.26	2	474	0.73	23
1910	458	0.45	6	487	0.54	NA
1911	380	0.41	50	412	0.55	32

B Measuring $\hat{C}_{ct}$

In this section, we summarise the predicted (two-party) Conservative seat share ($\hat{C}_t$) in each election year t for a fully contested constituency that had no Conservatives elected in $t-1$ versus one that had only Conservatives elected. Figure 10 plots these predicted shares over time.

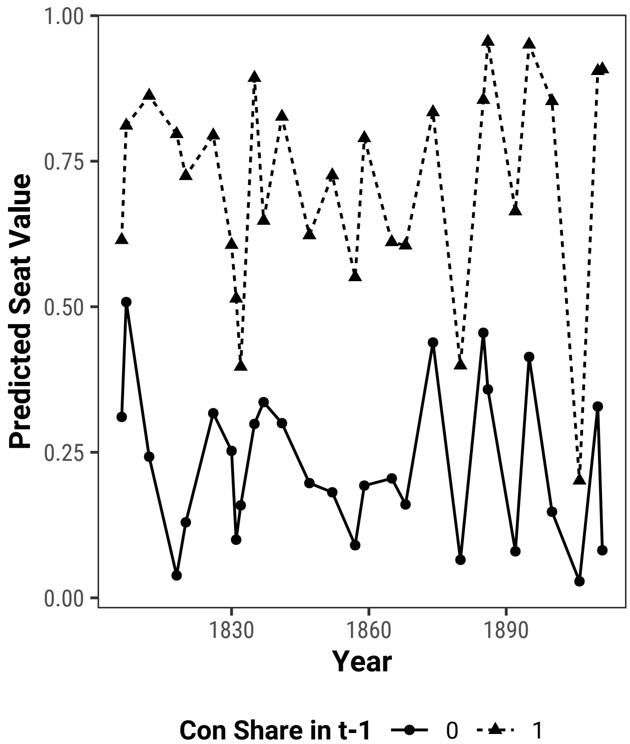

Figure 10: Predicted Conservative Seat Share for Constituencies With Conservative Seat Share 0 or 1 in Previous Election

C Patronal constituencies

In this appendix, we briefly show that the patronal constituencies behaved differently than the partisan constituencies in several ways. First, the patronal constituencies do not separate into safe Liberal and safe Conservative categories as quickly or as clearly as the partisan constituencies. This can be seen in Figures 11 and 12. Second, MPs beginning in patronal constituencies, especially Conservatives, did not show as large a decline in their chance of winning as their colleagues starting in partisan constituencies (see Figure 13). This suggests that Conservative peers were allowing their favorites get into parliament without having first to prove their mettle by contesting unwinnable constituencies.

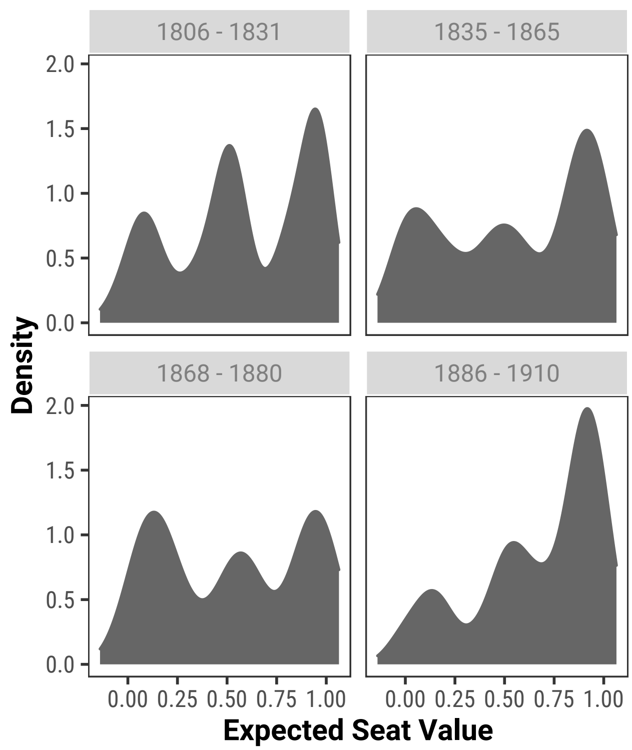

Figure 11: Patronal constituencies did not become more bimodal. This figure shows the distribution of predicted Conservative seat shares among patronal constituencies, by reform era. Unlike the non-patronal constituencies, the distribution did not become markedly more bimodal over time.

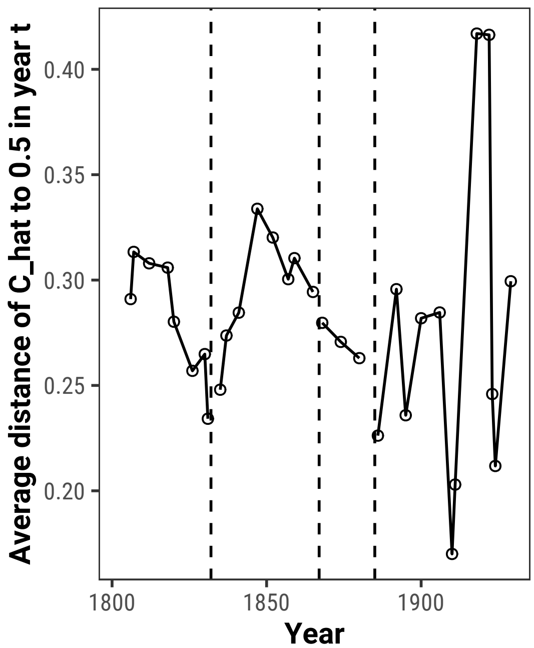

Figure 12: Patronal constituencies did not become more safe. This figure shows the average distance between constituencies' predicted Conservative seat share and an equal split (0.5). Unlike the non-patronal constituencies, seats did not become safer on average.

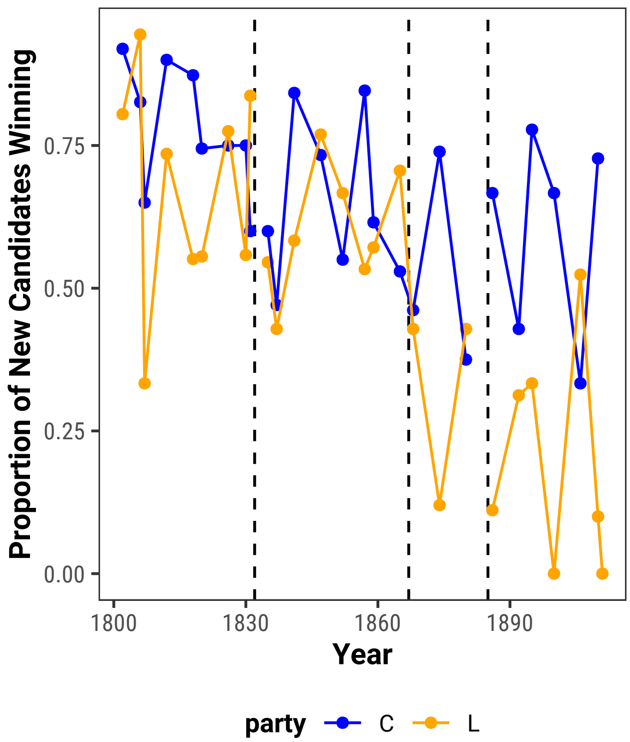

Figure 13: New candidates (especially Conservative ones) running in patronal seats keep winning more often. This figure shows the share of first-time candidates running in patronal seats who won, by party and election year. While Liberal first-time candidates in patronal constituencies still became less likely to win outright over time, the trend is attenuated for Conservative first-time candidates in patronal constituencies.

D Double Candidacies

In this section, we report the share candidates (identified by name) that ran in more than one constituency in any given election. Figure 14 plots the share by election year. There is a marked and continued decrease in the share of candidates with multiple nominations throughout most of the 19th century.

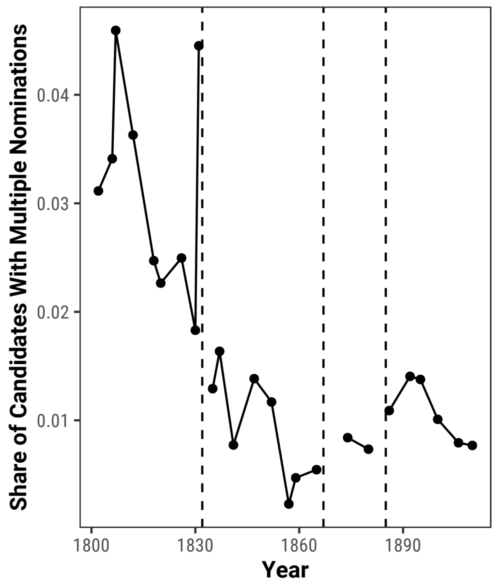

Figure 14: Very few candidates ran in with multiple nominations in the same election.

E Regression Discontinuity: Year-by-year Regressions

Below, we show the results for Equation X estimated on data from separate years, rather than moving windows spanning multiple elections. The results are much noisier, but show an upward trend over time, in line with our 'moving window' estimates. We omit very early years where, due to the low number of competitive elections, no reasonable estimate of the effect at the threshold can be made.

Table 3: RD Estimates Fitted On Each Election Year Separately. With Robust Standard Errors.

	Running Again		Winning	
Year	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
1818	0.06	0.46	-0.20	0.60
1820	0.08	0.33	0.08	0.33
1826	0.22	0.28	0.09	0.32
1830	-0.08	0.69	0.00	0.71
1832	0.01	0.14	-0.12	0.14
1835	0.07	0.13	0.25	0.11
1837	0.01	0.12	0.10	0.11
1841	-0.10	0.12	-0.09	0.11
1847	-0.01	0.16	-0.04	0.13
1852	0.38	0.14	0.37	0.15
1857	0.22	0.14	0.18	0.15
1859	0.00	0.16	-0.04	0.15
1868	-0.03	0.12	-0.18	0.12
1874	-0.04	0.12	-0.01	0.10
1885	0.39	0.11	0.35	0.10
1886	0.23	0.14	0.12	0.15
1892	0.15	0.12	-0.06	0.13
1895	0.18	0.12	0.25	0.12
1900	0.03	0.16	0.03	0.15
1906	0.06	0.15	-0.01	0.13
1910	0.35	0.10	0.29	0.13
1911	0.24	0.11	0.23	0.09
1922	0.13	0.15	-0.01	0.16
1923	0.42	0.12	0.55	0.14

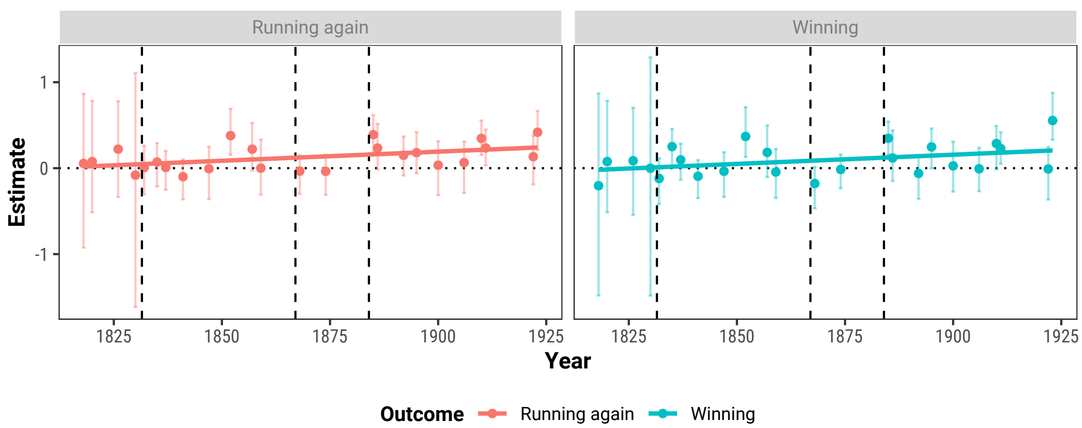

Figure 15: Regression Discontinuity Estimates Fitted On Each Election Separately. The points indicate the coefficient estimate for the regression discontinuity fitted to each election separately, along with 95% robust confidence intervals. Slope indicates line of best fit over time.

F Regression Discontinuity: Sorting Around Threshold

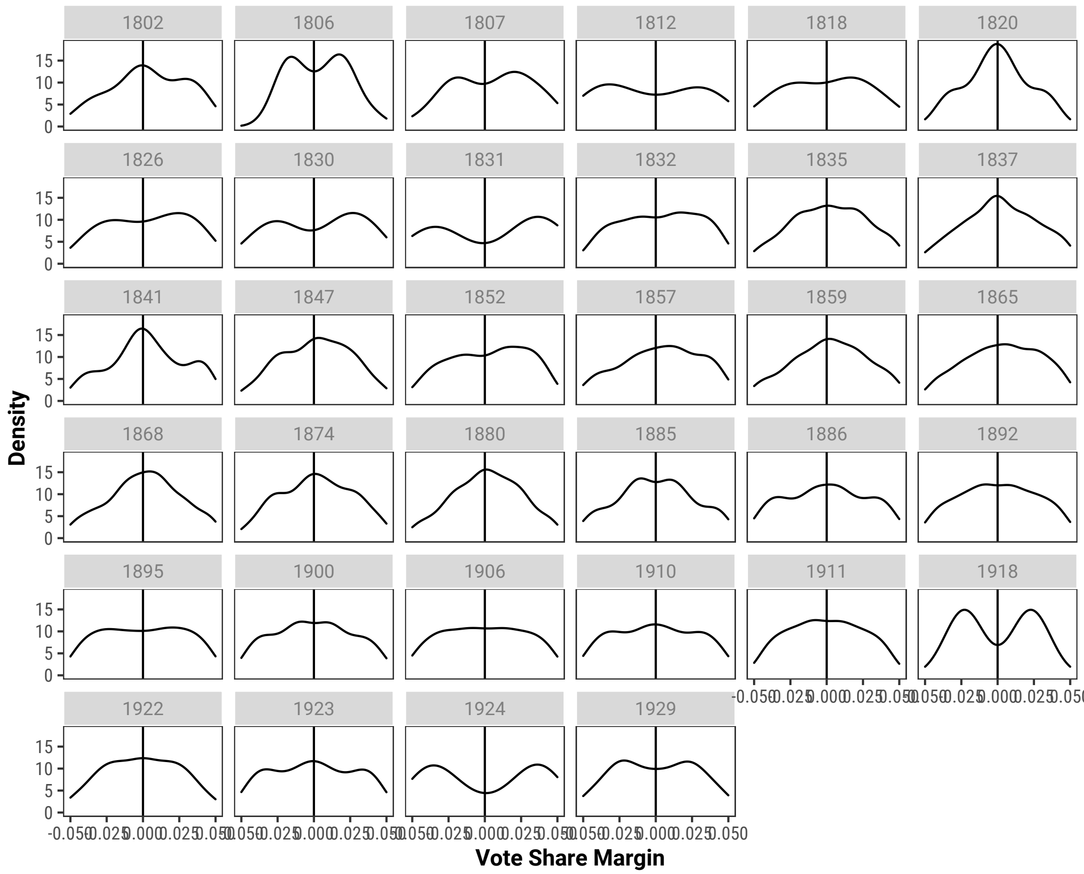

Figure 16: No Evidence Of Candidates Sorting Around Threshold. Each facet displays the density of observations for a given voteshare (relative to the winning margin).

G Regression Discontinuity: Polynomial Robustness

We replicate Figure 5 but fit second-order polynomials on either side of the winning threshold (as opposed to first-order polynomials). The results are in Figure 17. This suggests that our interpretation of the results is robust to the specification of the polynomial.

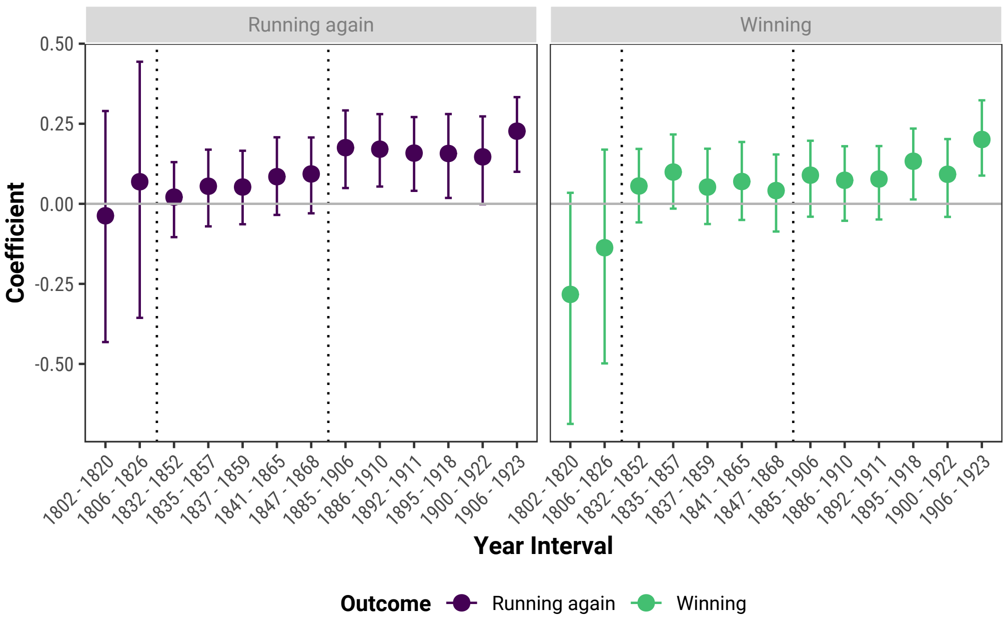

Figure 17: Regression Discontinuity Estimates with Fitted Second-Order Polynomial Terms