

ESTIMATING PEERAGE EFFECTS:
ARISTOCRATIC CONNECTIONS AND POLITICAL CAREERS

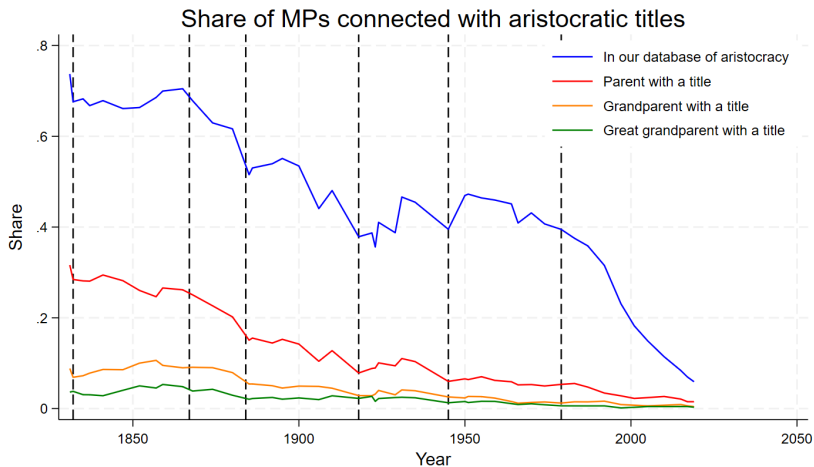
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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Even when formal rules (institutions) change, informal power structures remain and can affect who wields political power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962) (Acemoglu and Robinson 2008)
- ▶ Existing elites often manage to adapt to, or capture, new democratic rules to retain de facto power
- ▶ When competition for power becomes formally open existing elites might still be able to present themselves as more attractive (competent, reliable etc...).
- ▶ The UK is an interesting case study because it is considered one of the oldest and most stable democracies and its democratic transition was gradual
- ▶ But power structures remained in place: an hereditary aristocracy in the House of Lords but also dominating the House of Commons until recent times

SHARE OF ARISTOCRATIC MPs



THIS PAPER

- ▶ We aim to contribute to our understanding of democratization through the lens of political selection
- ▶ Build a new dataset combining MPs biographical information with information on aristocratic family trees and connections
- ▶ Study political careers
 - ▶ Age of entry into the House of Commons
 - ▶ Probability of becoming a (junior) minister (in progress, not today)
 - ▶ Probability of entering the cabinet
- ▶ Use dynastic connections (only family tree) or centrality in the aristocratic network Literature

DATA: BIOGRAPHIES OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Sources of data on members of parliament (MPs):

- ▶ Wikidata
- ▶ Database built by Michael Rush containing information on British MPs (house of commons) since the 1832 Reform Act

We mostly use the Wikidata (other than for school and party data) as it is more complete. In parts, however, it has been assembled using also the Rush database

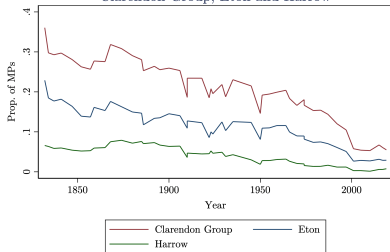
- ▶ Around 10,500 elected MPs born between 1751 and 1996, parliaments since 1831
- ▶ A wide range of further information such as their party affiliations, cabinet positions, school and university education, or occupations

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OVER TIME

- ▶ Our main focus will be on how the aristocratic networks of MPs have changed over time and how this affects
 - ▶ selection
 - ▶ career progression
- ▶ Examined by constructing measures of their network at birth using their family history from records of families related to the British aristocracy
- ▶ However, links to the aristocracy are not the only visible change in the composition of MPs
 - ▶ Less representation of those educated in elite private schools
 - ▶ although the share of those educated in Oxford and Cambridge has not changed very much
- ▶ We will therefore control for education in our core specifications below

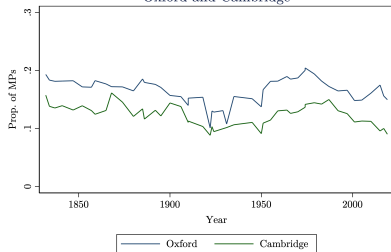
ATTENDANCE OF ELITE SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Clarendon Group, Eton and Harrow

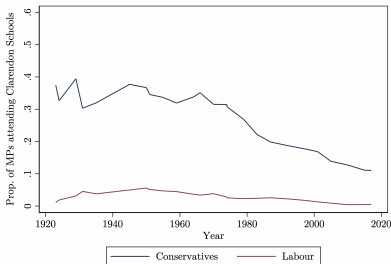


Note: year refers to the end year of a given parliament.

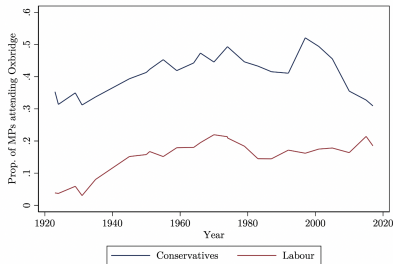
Oxford and Cambridge



Note: year refers to the end year of a given parliament.



Note: each series plots the prop. of MPs by party educated at Clarendon schools. Averages are taken by parliament. Year refers to the start year of each parliament.



Note: each series plots the prop. of MPs by party educated at Oxbridge. Averages are taken by parliament. Year refers to the start year of each parliament.

DATA: ARISTOCRATIC FAMILY TREES

- ▶ Database on the peerage of Britain as well as the royal families of Europe collected by Darryl Lundy
- ▶ The core of the database is a digitised version of the *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* books 1999 and 2003, but subsets of other books and further information have been added to database
- ▶ Currently contains around 740,000 individuals and their family relations, birth years ranging from 350 to 2022
- ▶ Around 370,000 individuals remaining if only Burke's 1999 and 2003 books are considered as sources
- ▶ Match MPs to entries in the Lundy database. Links can be found in Wikidata for some MPs, further links can be found with fuzzy matching of names etc.

FAMILY TREE OF WINSTON CHURCHILL

Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill¹

M, #106196, b. 30 November 1874, d. 24 January 1965



Siblings

 Spencer-Churchill, John S.

 **Spencer-Churchill, Winston L.**
1874 - 1965

Partners & Children

 Hozier, Clementine O., Baroness Spencer-Churchill
 Spencer-Churchill, Diana
 Spencer-Churchill, Randolph F. E.
 Spencer-

 Spencer-Churchill, John W., 7th Duke of Marlborough

 Spencer-Churchill, Randolph H.
1840 - 1895

 Vane, Frances A. E.
1822 - 1899

 Jerome, Leonard
1817 - 1891

 Jerome, Jennie
1854 - 1921

 Hall, Clarissa
1825 - 1895

 Spencer-Churchill, George, 6th Duke of Marlborough
1703 - 1857

 Stewart, Jane
1798 - 1844

 Vane, Charles W., 3rd Marquess of Londonderry
1778 - 1854

 Vane-Tempest, Frances A. E.
1800 - 1865

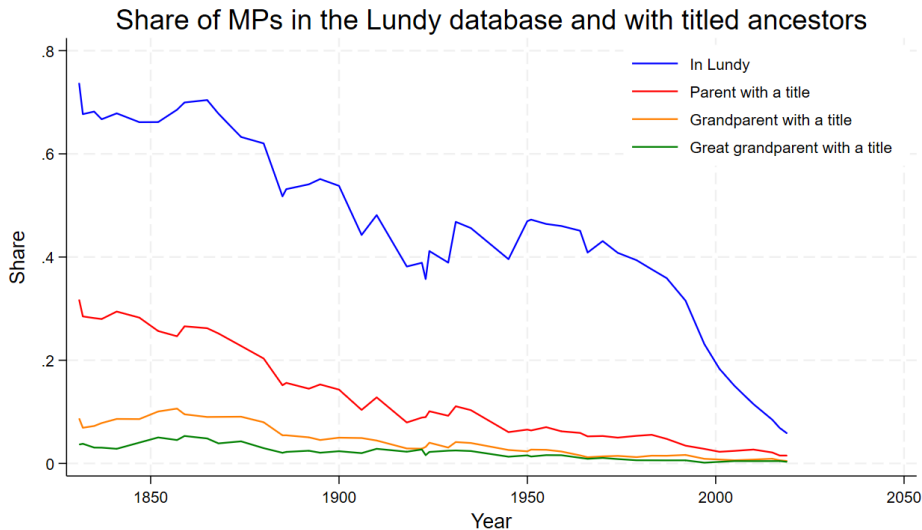
 Jerome, Isaac
1786 -

 Murray, Aurora

 Hall, Ambrose
1783 - 1861

 Wilcox, Clarissa
1796 - 1827

SHARE OF ARISTOCRATIC MPs



THE ARISTOCRATIC NETWORK

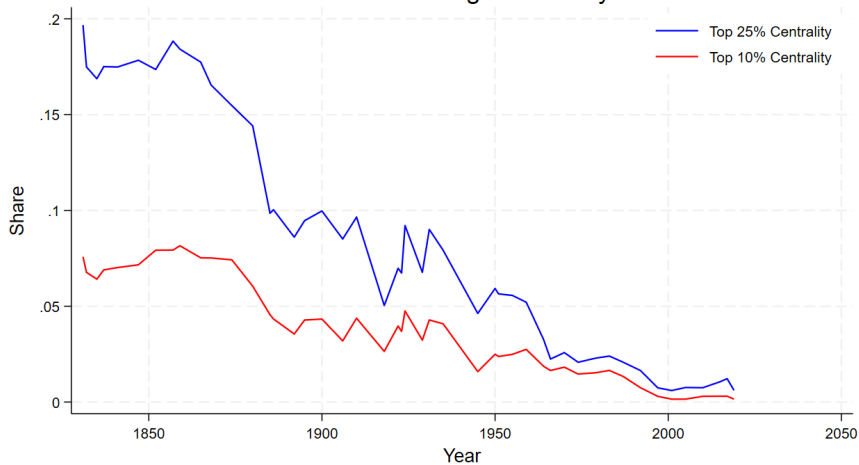
- ▶ Unweighted and undirected graph. We add connections between:
 - ▶ Parents
 - ▶ Spouses
 - ▶ Parents and children
- ▶ Idea: Compute (Eigenvector) centrality for individuals in peerage network and match to MPs
- ▶ We want network centrality at birth



CALCULATING NETWORK CENTRALITY AT BIRTH

- ▶ For each individual in Lundy compute their centrality based on the network ending at their birth decade
- ▶ Problem: now centralities come from different networks
 - ▶ Individuals of earlier birth years would mechanically be more central.
 - ▶ Centrality relative to everyone in a network ranging all the way back to 350 does not appear to be a natural determinant of career progression
- ▶ We compare each individual centrality only to those born in their birth decade: create dummy variables equal to 1 if individuals are e.g. in the top 10% or top 25% in their decade network
- ▶ This seems to also naturally capture the zero-sum nature of struggle for power within a cohort.

Share of MPs with High Centrality Scores



THE POLITICAL CAREERS OF ARISTOCRATS: AGE OF FIRST ELECTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

- ▶ We test whether an MP has a political advantage in being socially connected by looking at the age at which they are first elected

Duration model

- ▶ Specifically, a_{jp} be the age of MP j elected for the first time in Parliament p

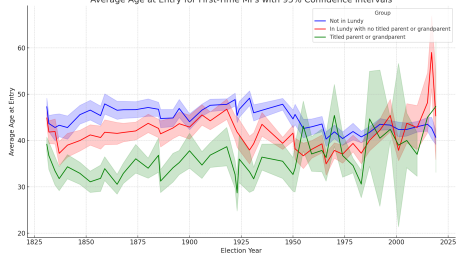
$$a_{jp} = \alpha_p + \beta\delta_j + \gamma\mathbf{X}_j + \varepsilon_{jp}$$

where $\delta_j = 1$ if an MP has aristocratic connections and α_p is a fixed effect for each Parliament.

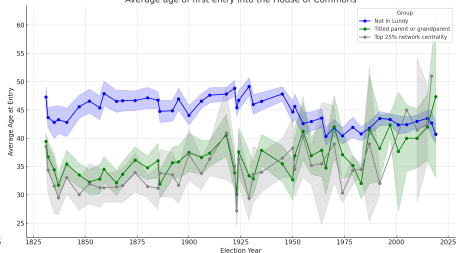
- ▶ Use two main variables for δ_j
 - ▶ having a titled parent or grandparent
 - ▶ being in the top 25% centrality score
- ▶ Interpret $\beta < 0$ as having a political advantage through connections
 - ▶ can allow this to be time varying
- ▶ We can also include “controls” $\mathbf{X}_i$ such as:
 - ▶ educated in elite (private) school
 - ▶ has a university degree including whether from Oxford or Cambridge
 - ▶ occupation (as listed in Wikidata)

AGE OF FIRST ELECTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Average Age at Entry for First-Time MPs with 95% Confidence Intervals



Average age of first entry into the House of Commons



AGE OF ENTRY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

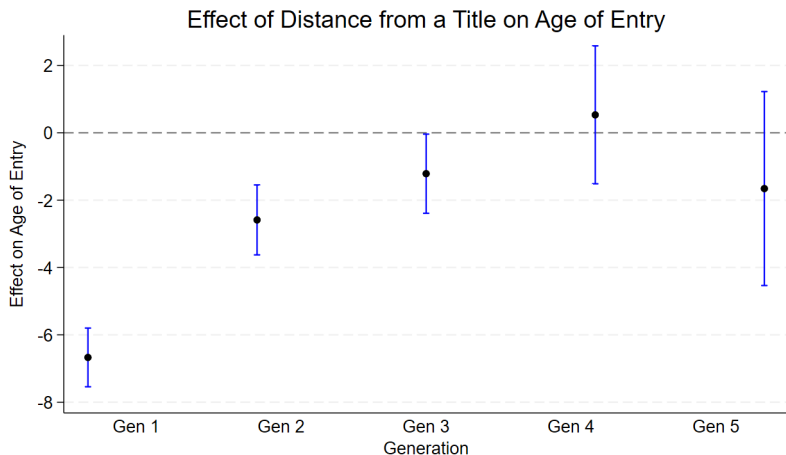
TABLE 1: Age of First Election in the House of Commons: Regressions Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Titled parent or gradparent	-8.950*** (0.466)		-7.037*** (0.416)	-6.632*** (0.427)		-5.015*** (0.418)	-4.073*** (0.581)
top25 in centrality network		-9.674*** (0.628)	-4.582*** (0.475)		-7.297*** (0.469)	-4.088*** (0.435)	-4.535*** (0.568)
Higher Education Degree				-2.813*** (0.307)	-2.770*** (0.309)	-2.799*** (0.300)	-1.952*** (0.408)
Oxford				-1.384* (0.548)	-1.777** (0.584)	-1.455* (0.554)	-1.188 (0.707)
Cambridge				-0.590 (0.399)	-0.819* (0.398)	-0.611 (0.388)	-1.213 (0.637)
Eton				-2.857*** (0.394)	-3.528*** (0.418)	-2.498*** (0.380)	-2.149** (0.670)
Harrow				-1.669* (0.719)	-2.123** (0.701)	-1.465* (0.684)	-1.051 (1.249)
Elite School				-2.151*** (0.358)	-2.351*** (0.361)	-2.205*** (0.359)	-1.769** (0.508)
Parliament fixed effects always included							
Occupation dummies	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	10331	10331	10331	10331	10331	10331	3258

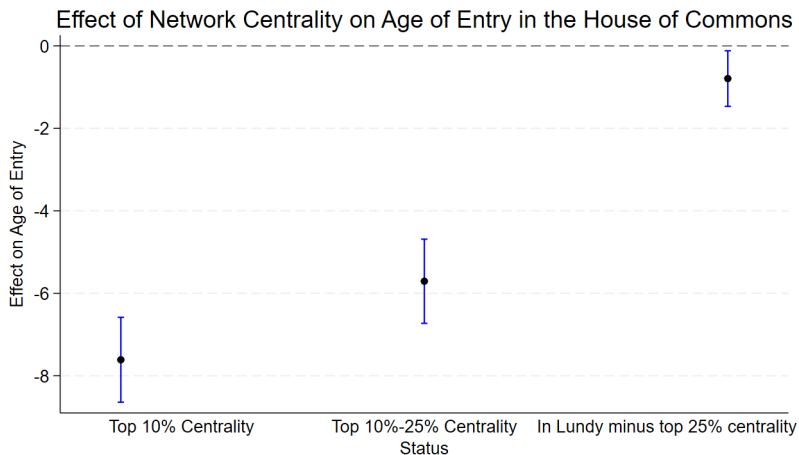
Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

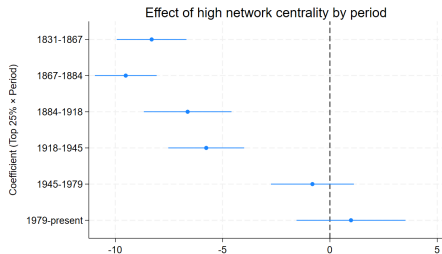
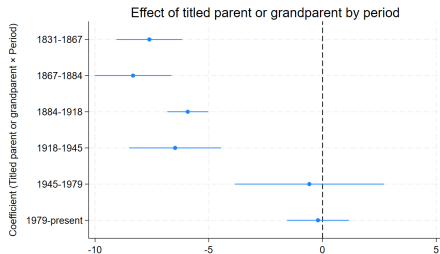
AGE OF ENTRY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY CLOSEST PEER (OLS COEFFICIENTS)



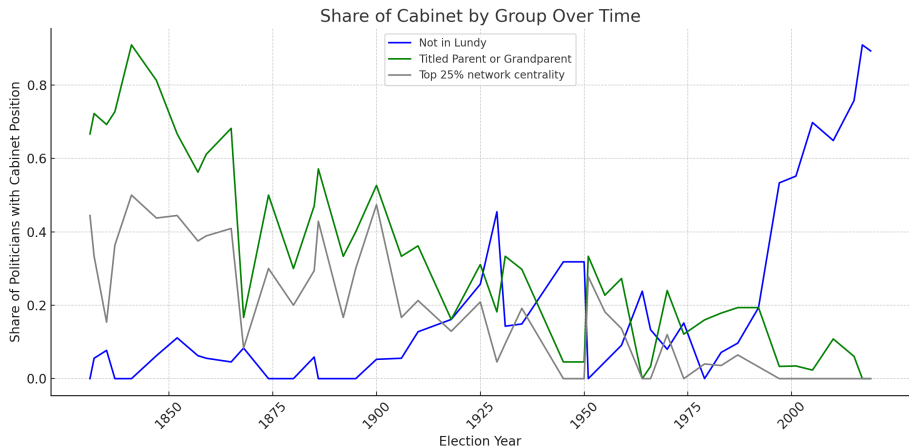
AGE OF ENTRY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY NETWORK CENTRALITY (OLS COEFFICIENTS)



ARISTOCRATIC CONNECTIONS AND ENTRY AGE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OVER TIME



SHARE OF CABINET MEMBERS BY ARISTOCRATIC STATUS



PROBABILITY OF ENTERING INTO CABINET

- ▶ We test whether an MP has a political advantage in being promoted to the cabinet
- ▶ Specifically, θ_{jp} be the probability that MP j elected becomes cabinet minister in Parliament p :

$$\theta_{jp} = \kappa_p + \lambda\delta_j + \pi\mathbf{X}_j + \zeta s_j + \eta_{jp}$$

where $\delta_j = 1$ if an MP has aristocratic connections and κ_p is a fixed effect for each Parliament.

- ▶ Interpret $\lambda > 0$ as having a political advantage through connections
 - ▶ can allow this to be time varying
- ▶ Along with other controls include s_j seniority of an MP in Parliament p
 - ▶ measured by years of service
 - ▶ also include the square of this.

PROBABILITY OF ENTERING INTO CABINET

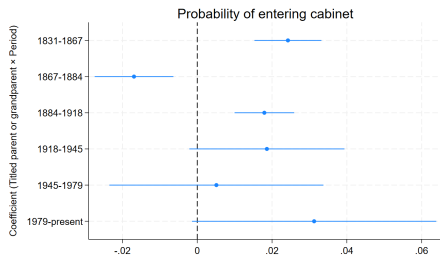
TABLE 2: Probability to enter Cabinet

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Titled parent or grandparent	0.0309*** (0.00381)		0.0256*** (0.00362)	0.0167*** (0.00375)		0.0124** (0.00384)	0.0180* (0.00859)
top 25 network centrality		0.0312*** (0.00480)	0.0129** (0.00442)		0.0189*** (0.00429)	0.0117** (0.00433)	0.0240 (0.0131)
seniority in parliament				0.00534*** (0.000549)	0.00539*** (0.000558)	0.00531*** (0.000556)	0.00939*** (0.00104)
seniority squared				-0.0000346 (0.0000223)	-0.0000350 (0.0000224)	-0.0000344 (0.0000223)	-0.0000955* (0.0000372)
Parliament fixed effects always included							
Age, age squared, school and higher education controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation dummies	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	34764	34764	34764	34050	34050	34050	11148

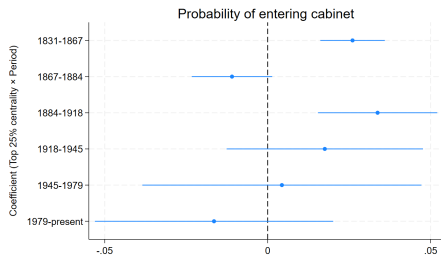
Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

THE EFFECT OF ARISTOCRATIC CONNECTIONS ON THE PROBABILITY OF ENTERING CABINET OVER TIME



Titled parent or grandparent



Top quartile centrality in aristocratic network

SENIORITY (YEARS SPENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS) AT FIRST ENTRY IN CABINET

- ▶ We test whether a connected waits less (or longer) to become a cabinet minister
- ▶ Specifically, let s_{jp} be the seniority of MP j who joins the cabinet in Parliament p :

$$s_{jp} = \mu_p + \phi\delta_j + \rho\mathbf{X}_j + \psi a_j + \omega_{jp}$$

where $\delta_j = 1$ if an MP has aristocratic connections and κ_p is a fixed effect for each Parliament.

- ▶ Interpret $\phi < 0$ as having a political advantage through connections
 - ▶ can allow this to be time varying
- ▶ Controls now include age and age²

TABLE 3: Seniority (years spent in the House of Commons) at first entry in Cabinet

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Titled parent or grandparent	2.507** (0.766)		2.755** (0.808)	2.969*** (0.825)		3.121** (0.960)	3.631* (1.653)
top 25 centrality		0.858 (1.356)	-0.661 (1.411)		0.463 (1.172)	-0.591 (1.308)	0.698 (1.686)
HE Degree				0.760 (0.645)	0.831 (0.677)	0.760 (0.646)	-0.218 (1.436)
Oxford				0.491 (0.639)	0.549 (0.611)	0.484 (0.642)	0.00706 (1.056)
Cambridge				0.494 (0.520)	0.632 (0.567)	0.473 (0.519)	0.539 (0.849)
Eton				1.530 (0.913)	2.810** (0.948)	1.691 (0.917)	0.324 (1.602)
Harrow				0.779 (1.652)	1.754 (1.722)	0.833 (1.592)	-1.685 (2.458)
Elite School				-0.0648 (0.949)	0.113 (0.994)	-0.0796 (0.951)	-0.103 (1.339)
age				0.0970 (0.394)	0.0848 (0.389)	0.0832 (0.389)	0.494 (0.536)
age squared				0.00403 (0.00421)	0.00401 (0.00420)	0.00416 (0.00417)	-0.000801 (0.00570)
Parliament fixed effects are always included							
Occupation dummies	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	565	565	565	565	565	565	312

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

PARTY HETEROGENEITY

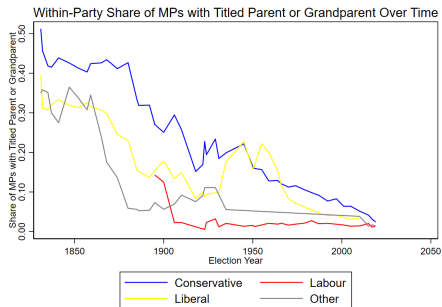
- ▶ We would expect differences across parties
- ▶ The Conservative party has been the main ruling party over the period
 - ▶ With close connections to the aristocracy
- ▶ Labour party emerged as the party of the working class
 - ▶ much weaker connections to the aristocracy
 - ▶ close alliance with the trade unions
- ▶ So decline in the importance of aristocratic connections is likely due to:
 - ▶ changes *within* the Conservative party
 - ▶ an increase in the fraction of Labour MPs

TABLE 4: Party Affiliation by titled ancestry and high centrality

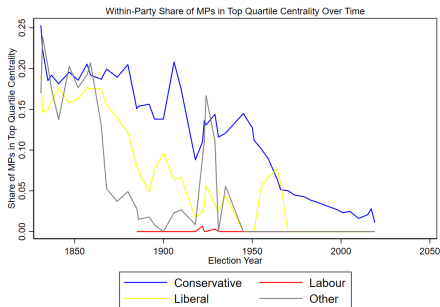
Panel A: Titled parent or grandparent			Panel B: Top quartile network centrality		
Party	No	Yes	Party	No	Yes
Conservative	12035	3539	Conservative	13754	1820
Labour	7822	142	Labour	7962	2
Liberal	6681	1995	Liberal	7689	987
Other	2279	407	Other	2483	192

Party regressions

WITHIN-PARTY SHARES OF CONNECTED MPs

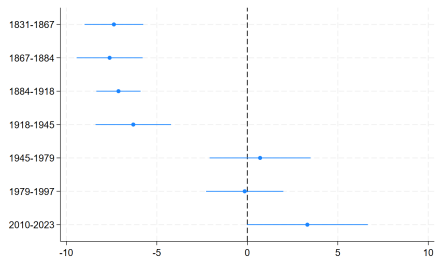


Titled parent or grandparent

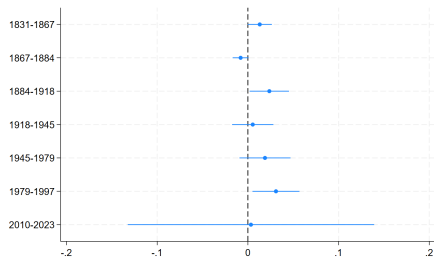


Top quartile centrality in aristocratic network

CONNECTED MPs IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (OLS COEFFICIENTS OF INTERACTION TERMS)



Age of first election in HoC



Probability of entering the cabinet

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ Network centrality in the aristocracy can be well approximated by just looking at titled ancestry
- ▶ An aristocratic birth meant an early career start with an age of entry in the House of Commons reduced by 7-12 years
- ▶ Aristocratic advantage in Cabinet entry less pronounced and mostly indirect (via seniority acquired with the early start). A meritocracy within peers?
- ▶ Is this mostly a story of the transformation of the party of the landed elites, the Conservative party?
- ▶ Further results: intensive margin Weighted Aristocratic Embeddedness

CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ We build a novel dataset combining data on the careers of British MPs with family trees of the British aristocracy.
- ▶ We document the advantages of aristocratic birth and centrality in aristocratic networks: 1) early entry into parliament; 2) higher likelihood to enter cabinet
- ▶ We also document the political decline of the British aristocracy, the diminished role of elite schools, the persistent role of elite universities.
- ▶ But the importance of the aristocracy in British politics persists well into the democratic period.

TABLE 5: Age of Entry into the House of Commons: Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition

	titled parent or grandparent	high network centrality
	b/se	b/se
group 1 (not privileged)	44.27 (0.11)	43.63 (0.11)
group 2 (privileged)	35.73 (0.25)	34.00 (0.34)
difference	8.55 (0.27)	9.64 (0.36)
endowments	1.83 (0.23)	1.37 (0.32)
coefficients	6.51 (0.30)	7.24 (0.38)
interaction	0.21 (0.27)	1.03 (0.34)

Endowments include Higher Education Degree, Oxford, Cambridge, Elite School, Eton, Harrow

Average seniority in HoC of Cabinet members

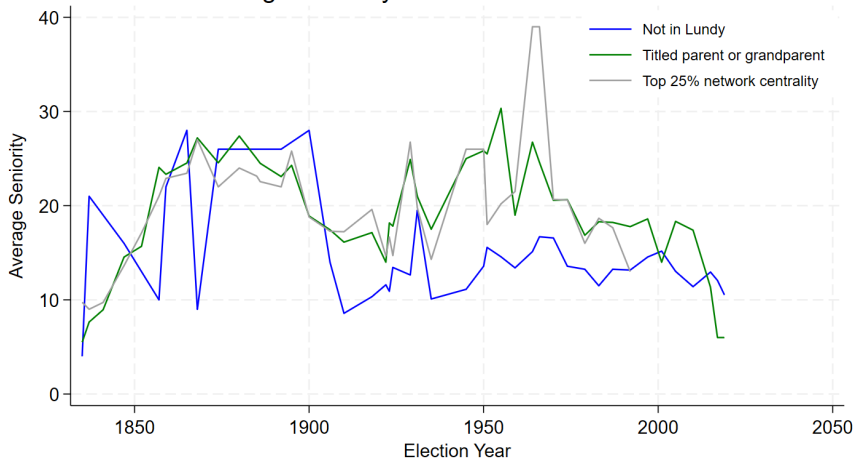


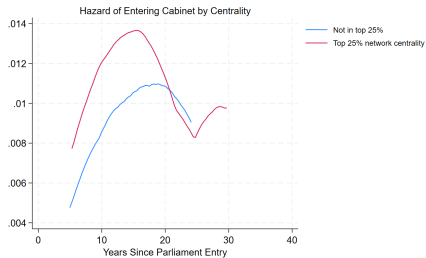
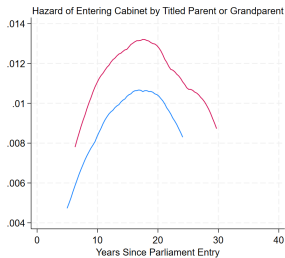
TABLE 6: Age of first entry into Cabinet

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
DV: age at entry	HoC	HoC	HoC	HoC	Cabinet	Cabinet	Cabinet	Cabinet
Titled parent or grandparent	-5.501*** (0.944)		-5.236*** (1.112)	-4.311*** (1.214)	-2.995** (0.914)		-2.481* (0.994)	-2.339* (0.990)
Top quartile centrality		-1.882 (1.553)	-0.707 (1.520)	-0.387 (1.653)		-2.736* (1.358)	-1.368 (1.449)	-1.717 (1.517)
Parliament fixed effects are always included								
Control variables	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	565	565	565	565	565	565	565	565

Control variables include higher education degree, Oxford, Cambridge, Elite school, Eton, Harrow. Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Hazard rates of entering the Cabinet



[Back](#)

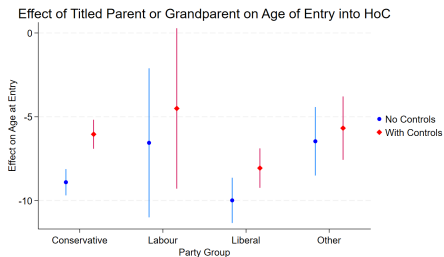
TABLE 7: The determinants of cabinet entry: Cox proportional hazard ratios

	(1)	(2)
Titled parent or grandparent	0.825 (0.116)	
top25 centrality		0.876 (0.142)
HE Degree	2.286*** (0.366)	2.293*** (0.369)
Oxford	1.383* (0.186)	1.370* (0.185)
Cambridge	1.223 (0.212)	1.210 (0.209)
Eton	0.667** (0.0865)	0.644*** (0.0840)
Harrow	0.772 (0.153)	0.753 (0.151)
age	1.340*** (0.110)	1.345*** (0.109)
age2	0.995*** (0.000833)	0.995*** (0.000829)
Elite School	1.127 (0.142)	1.117 (0.140)
Parliament dummies included		
Observations	7509	7509

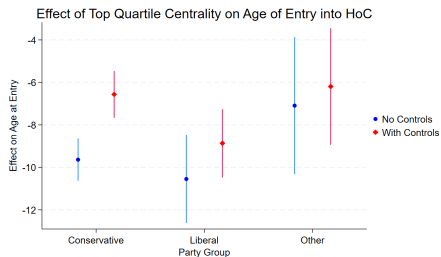
Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

ARISTOCRATIC CONNECTIONS AND AGE OF ENTRY IN HoC BY PARTY



Titled parent or grandparent



Top quartile centrality in aristocratic network

WEIGHTED ARISTOCRATIC EMBEDDEDNESS (5 GENERATIONS)

Let T_g denote the number of titled ancestors (in direct lineage) in generation g , where $g = 1$ corresponds to the parental generation, $g = 2$ to the grandparental generation, and so forth, up to generation 5. We define the *Weighted Aristocratic Embeddedness* (WAE) as follows:

$$\text{WAE} = \sum_{g=1}^5 \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{g-1} T_g$$

TABLE 8: Intensive margin: weighted aristocratic embeddedness

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dependent variable: see footnote								
WAE	-4.041*** (0.232)	-3.140*** (0.184)	0.0117*** (0.00168)	0.00638*** (0.00153)	0.944* (0.417)	1.327*** (0.310)	-1.643** (0.469)	-1.628** (0.482)
Observations	10331	10331	34764	34689	565	565	565	565
Parliament fixed effects always included								
Control variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Dependent Variable: entry age in HoC (1-2), prob(cabinet) (3-4), seniority at first cabinet entry (5-6), age at first cabinet entry (7-8)

Control variables include Higher education degree, Oxford, Cambridge, Elite school, Eton, Harrow.

Column (4) includes as controls also age and age squared and seniority (years spent) in the House of Commons and its square.

In column (6) age and age squared are included.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A DURATION MODEL (1)

- ▶ Consider a cohort of individuals who are eligible to stand for public office. Then let $p(a : \alpha)$ be the probability that someone of age a becomes an MP and assume that this is an increasing function of attractiveness.

- ▶ Let attractiveness be

$$\alpha = f(c, a)$$

which is decreasing in a and increasing c where c is their network connectedness.

- ▶ Let

$$\hat{p}(a : c) = p(a : f(c, a))$$

which is increasing in c .

A DURATION MODEL (2)

- Then the expected age of someone to become an MP is

$$E(a : c) = \int_0^{\infty} H(z : c) dz \quad (1)$$

where $H(z : c) \frac{\hat{p}(z:c)}{\int_o^z \hat{p}(z:c)}$ is the hazard function.

- Consider two MPs with different social connections $c \in \{0, 1\}$
 $c = 1$ means being connected, then

$$E(a : 1) - E(a : 0) = \int_0^{\infty} H(z : 1) - H(z : 0) dz.$$

BOOKS IN PEERAGE DATABASE AS OF 16.02.2022

- ▶ Burke's Peerage 2003 - 4312/4312 pages done
- ▶ Burke's Peerage 1999 - 3120/3120
- ▶ Burke's Peerage 1970 - 711/2910
- ▶ Pines New Extinct Peerage 1970 - 288/288
- ▶ Burke's Landed Gentry 2001 - 164/1454
- ▶ Burke's Landed Gentry 1965-1972 - 81/2387
- ▶ Burke's Irish family records 1976 - 711/1237
- ▶ BLGI1958 - 148/778
- ▶ Complimentary sources to add details on people from Burke's:
- ▶ Cokaynes Complete Peerage - 1998//10539
- ▶ Cokaynes Complete Baronetage - 453/2380
- ▶ Pauls Scots peerage - 140/4999

PEERAGE FAMILY DATA IN A NUTSHELL

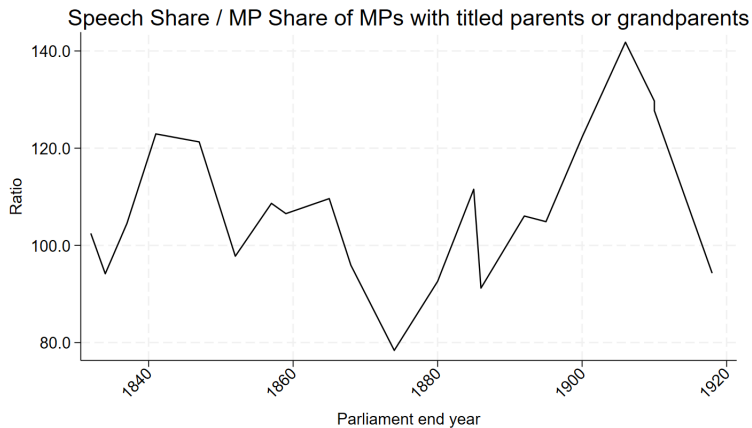
	birthyear	peerageid_father	peerageid_mother
peerageid			
1	1948	100704	100699
83	1053	102187	102188
133	<NA>	3727	3728
227	1431	101984	107406
228	1432	101984	107406
259	1414	<NA>	<NA>
260	1430	259	<NA>
261	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
299	<NA>	148025	148028
328	1637	113162	113170

	marriageyear	peerageid_spouse1	peerageid_spouse2
0	1774	102285	102286
1	1785	101727	110553
2	1777	103550	103551
3	1804	100996	100997
4	1807	100998	100999
5	1851	100994	100995
6	1853	100829	100830
7	1999	100708	104136
8	1665	102782	102783
9	1681	108791	108461

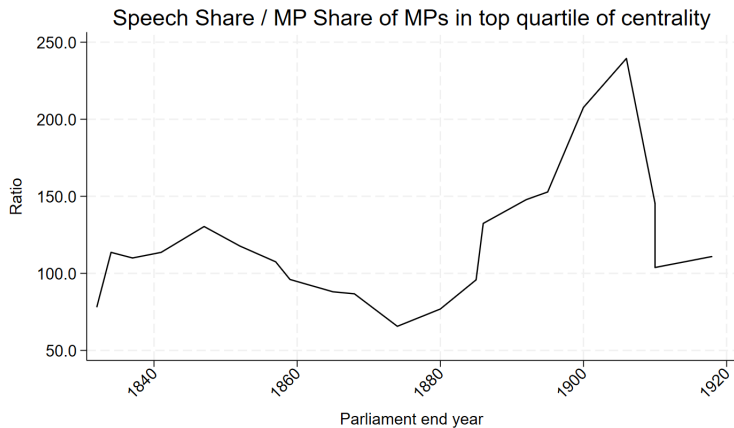
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		Top quartile centrality		Total
		0	1	
Titled parent	0	8652	97	8749
or grandparent	1	986	761	1747
Total		9636	858	10496

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Speech data from the Eggers - Spirling database



Speech data from the Eggers - Spirling database

LITERATURE (VERY INCOMPLETE!)

- ▶ Political dynasties: Dal Bó et al. (2009); Van Coppenolle (2017)
- ▶ Political connections and patronage in the British empire: Xu (2018)
- ▶ Family networks and electoral outcomes in the Philippines: Cruz et al. (2017)
- ▶ Kinship networks and war: Benzell and Cooke (2021)
- ▶ Elite networks and state building in China: Wang (2022)