

Better the devil you know: Municipal Political Dynasties in Mexico

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Motivation

This projects aims to take advantage of the fact that individuals not only inherit a name from their relatives, but a set of unobservable characteristics that may be consequential when running for political office.

Political dynasties are present in a large sample of democracies (Smith 2018). However, evidence of the mechanisms behind the formation of family ties in politics is relatively scarce (i.e. machine politics, unobserved ability, voters’ demand for legacy politicians).

This work investigates the extent to which informational mechanisms explain the emergence and persistence of political dynasties. In that respect, the main contribution of this exploration is to give evidence on the “demand explanation” of the phenomena, which is intrinsically aligned with name recognition and personal vote theories (Carey y Shugart 1995; Carson et al. 2007; Downs 1957).

It’s all about last names

I relied on a matching-on-names proxy to account for the presence of political dynasties. In particular, I matched the last names of elected candidates in time t with the family names of all posterior mayors in the same municipality within a 15-year window after the election (robustness checks were performed for 10 and 25-year periods) and expressed the outcome as a proportion.

Subsequently, I performed an RDD for close elections (1990-2014) based on the following specification:

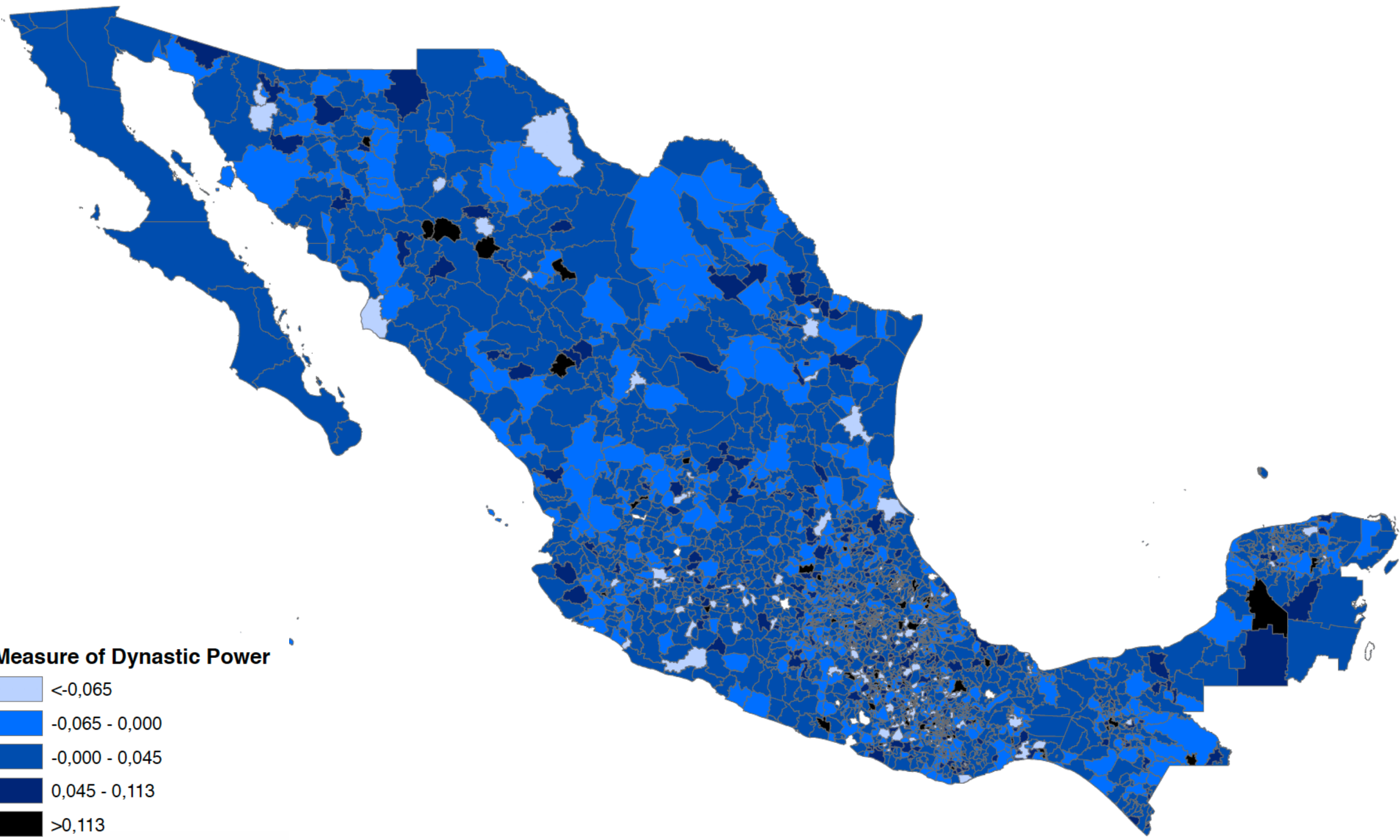
$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_1 \times \text{Win}_i + \beta_1 \times \text{Margin}_i + \beta_1 \times \text{Win}_i \times \text{Margin}_i + X_i' \beta + \epsilon_i$$

Dependent variable: Proportion of last name matches (in the next 15 years)				
Frequency of paternal last name	≥ Median last name		< Median last name	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Win	0.0166 (0.0308)	0.0562 (0.0531)	0.0204** (0.0093)	0.0257** (0.0121)
N	4,646	3,223	1,086	221
R ²	0.3585	0.9923	0.5816	0.4271
Bandwidth: 0.050				

Standard errors are in parenthesis. Columns 2 and 4 include fixed effects by state, municipality, year, party, as well as relative frequency of paternal and maternal last names, candidate’s previous time in office, candidate’s gender, municipal government revenue, and municipal population.

The Mexican case

In 1932, a constitutional reform restricted subnational politicians and legislators from being reelected in Mexico (Weldon 2004). The new rules allowed municipal presidents and members of the Congress to rerun for office only after one three-year term. This change in the law may have facilitated the inheritance of political power between relatives as the once powerful local strongmen had to share their office.

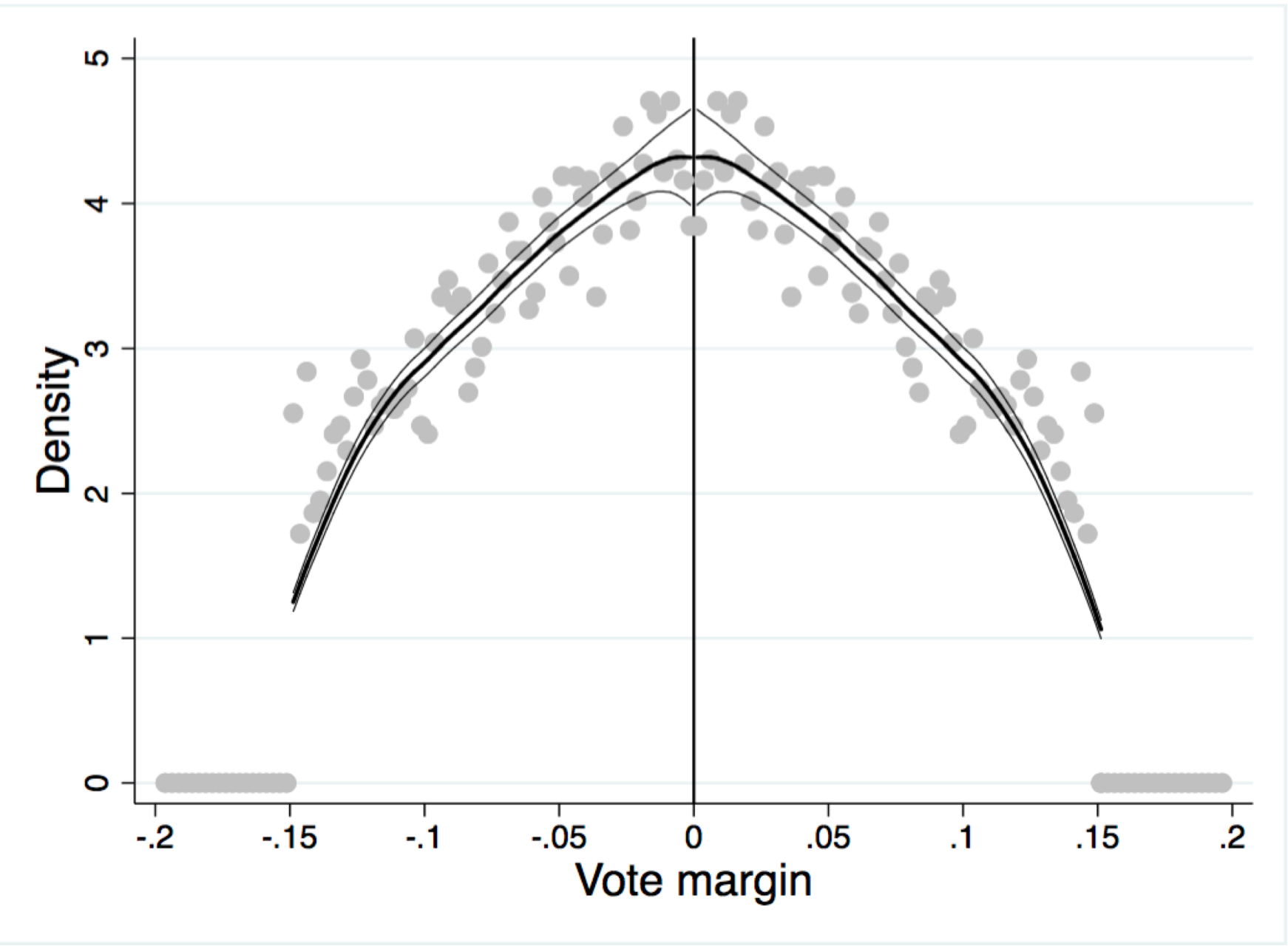
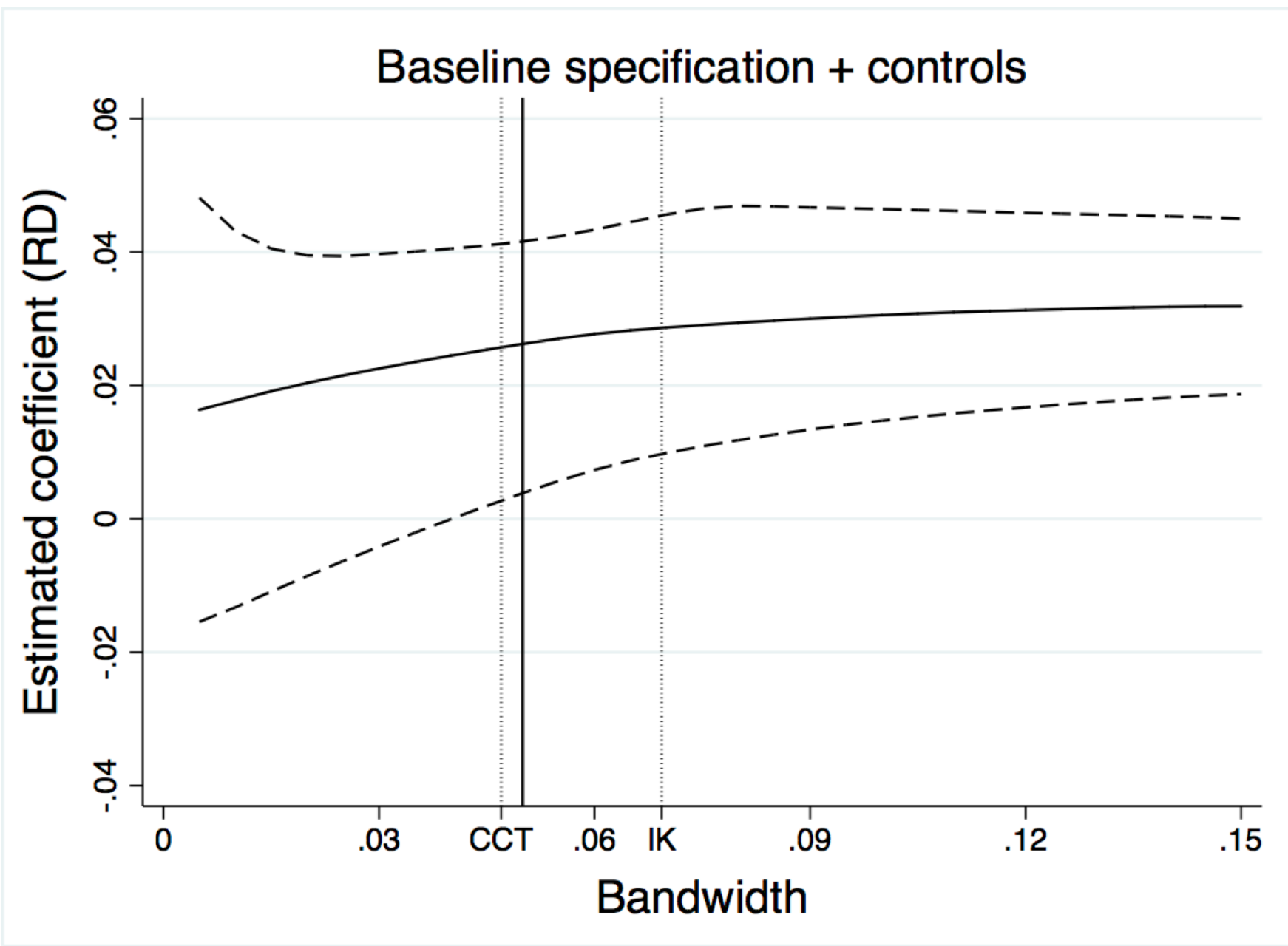
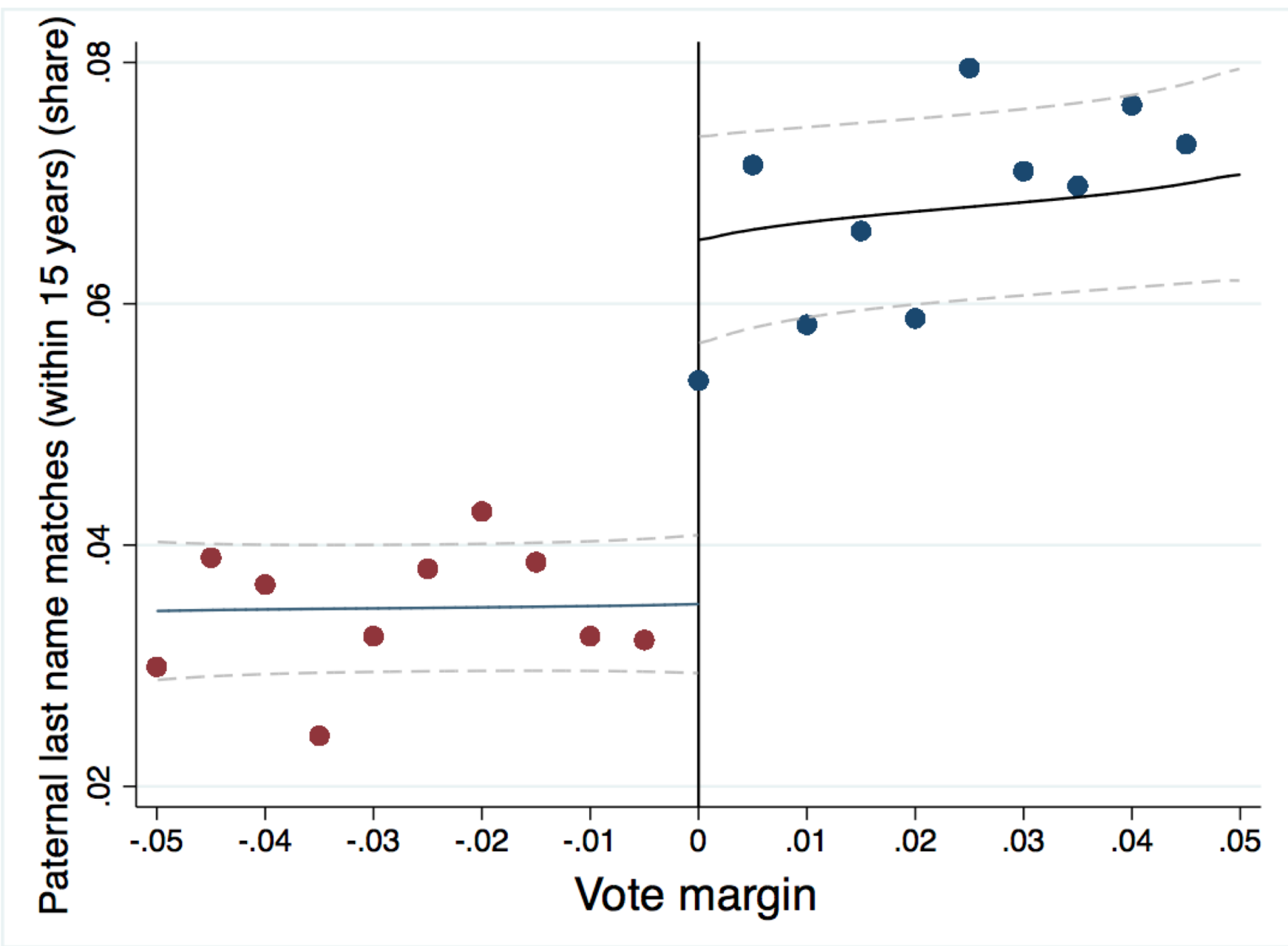


Other Mechanisms

Dependent variable: Proportion of last name matches (in the next 15 years)								
Population					Marginalization index (Poverty)			
>national median		≤ national median		Low	Middle 1/3		High	
(1)		(2)		(3)	(4)		(5)	
Win	0.0099	0.0415**		0.0079	0.0813***		0.0186	
	(0.0142)	(0.018)		(0.0155)	(0.0271)		(0.0226)	
N	1,331	2,052		1,125	705		1,553	
Dependent variable: Vote margin (concurrent elections)								
Value of being part of a political dynasty								
Governor election	No party switching		Party switching		Party switching Same party Municipal candidate		Party switching Different party Municipal Candidate	
Municipal election	Win	Lose	Win	Lose	Win	Lose	Win	Lose
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Legacy candidate	-0.0142**	0.02889***	0.0193	0.0228*	-0.0100	0.0155	0.0481**	0.0427*
	(0.0062)	(0.0056)	(0.0154)	(0.0133)	(0.0302)	(0.0256)	(0.0242)	(0.0231)
N	7,258	7,041	1,743	1,717	774	775	969	942
R ²	0.3917	0.4118	0.6527	0.7103	0.9056	0.9021	0.8105	0.8450

Standard errors are in parenthesis. All columns include fixed effects by state, municipality, year, party, as well as relative frequency of paternal and maternal last names, candidate’s previous time in office, candidate’s gender, municipal government revenue, and municipal population.

Results



References

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