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POLITICAL DYNASTIES, TERM LIMITS AND FEMALE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:
EVIDENCE FROM THE PHILIPPINES

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Political Dynasties, Term Limits and Female Political Empowerment: Evidence from the Philippines
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ABSTRACT

We investigate the effect of term limits on female political representation. Using data from Philippine municipalities where strict term limits have been in place since 1987, we show that term limits led to a large increase in the number of women running and winning in mayoral elections. However, we show that this increase is entirely driven by female relatives of the term-limited incumbents. We further show that the differential gender impact of this policy is driven by political dynasties' adaptive strategies to stay in power.

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1 Introduction

The second half of the 20th century has seen women break gender roles and stereotypes in all spheres of life. Despite such dramatic shifts, they still lag in leadership positions, particularly in politics, in both developed and developing countries. In 2019, only 24.3 percent of national legislators around the world are women, and such low representation is even more severe for elected executive positions, with only 11 female Heads of State.¹

Scholars and policy-makers are interested in understanding women's pathways to elected offices. Recent studies have brought attention to structural characteristics of the political environment such as electoral systems (Rosen, 2013), political competition (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Lawless and Pearson, 2008; Folke and Rickne, 2016) and the politicization of ethnicity (Arriola and Johnson, 2014) as well as cultural norms such as matrilineality (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2019). In parallel, a growing body of research has focused on how policies such as gender quotas (Krook, 2009; Pande and Ford, 2012; O'Brien and Rickne, 2016) or political reservations (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Bhavnani, 2009; Cassan and Vandewalle, 2017) shape female political representation both substantively and descriptively.

We investigate the effect of a widely used policy on female political representation: term limits. Although the intended goal of term limits is not explicitly to improve women's representation, a plausible side effect could be a rise in female elected officials. After all, open-seat races – races where the incumbent is not running – are known to attract outsiders and lesser-known candidates to the political scene (Cain, Hanley and Kousser, 2006). The search for a context to elucidate these issues takes us to the rise of female politicians in mayoral positions in the Philippines.

The Philippines ranks among the top countries in the world in terms of female political representation. Women currently hold 29 percent of the seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. However, the Philippines didn't always have such high share of female politicians. In the aftermath of the fall of Ferdinand Marcos' autocratic regime in the mid 1980s, only 9 percent of women were elected to the Senate and the House of Representatives. Other elected offices followed similar trends. Of relevance to the present study, in 1988 only 9 percent of the municipalities had a female

¹<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures> accessed on September 5, 2019.

mayor, climbing to 21 percent in 2010.

We provide evidence that this increase in female political representation is linked to the term limits introduced in the 1987 constitution. Our analysis relies on a difference-in-differences empirical strategy where we compare forced open-seat races to other races, before and after term limits bind. Hereafter, we use the term forced open-seat races to refer to open-seat races following binding term limits, to differentiate from open-seat races in which the incumbent was eligible to run but decided not to.

First, we show that forced open-seat races are significantly more likely to have (i) a woman running for office, and (ii) a woman being elected to the mayoral office. Our estimates suggest that term limits can account for about two thirds of the increase in the share of female mayors in the Philippines. We next show that dynastic candidates are more likely to run in forced open-seat races and that the increase in female representation following binding term limits is entirely driven by dynastic women. While non-dynastic women are slightly more likely to run in forced open-seat races, they are not more likely to win. Thus, in our context, term limits increase the share of a very specific group of women in power: *dynastic women*. This is a striking and unexpected result given the low share of municipalities that had a female representative to start with.

What explains this dramatic increase in the number of female dynastic politicians? Recent studies have shown that family ties are an important vehicle for women's access to politics, in both developed and developing countries (Dal Bo, Dal Bo and Snyder, 2009; Jalalzai, 2013; Chandra, 2016; Folke, Rickne and Smith, 2016; Smith and Martin, 2017; van Coppenolle, 2017; Jalalzai and Rincker, 2018). If political dynasties are more likely to field female candidates, then the increase in the share of dynastic candidates in forced open-seat races may explain the rise of female politicians. However, we show that term limits also affect the gender composition of these dynastic successions. We find that the share of dynastic candidates that are female increases from 15% prior to binding term limits to 45% in forced open-seat races. A simple simulation exercise suggests that these two effects can help account for the rise of female politicians, though neither by itself can fully explain the observed change.

We provide evidence of two mechanisms that help explain why term-limited incumbents are more likely to nominate female relatives. First, term-limited incumbents who wish to return to office after waiting out one term, may be more likely to select female relatives who, given existing social

norms, might be more willing to step aside after one term to restore their male relative's political career. Our data shows that female relatives are three times more likely than male relatives to hold office for one term and then retire to allow the termed-out incumbent to run again. Following Coronel et al. (2004), we refer to these politicians as "benchwarmers". Second, we show that given their age, term-limited incumbents may be constrained in the number of eligible male relatives. In particular, if term-limited incumbents are, on average, younger than those who retire voluntarily, they may not have any sons of eligible age when the term-limit binds and may thus have to rely on their wives to keep the mayoral position in the family.

Our results are relevant for multiple reasons. Most recent research on female descriptive representation focuses on institutions such as quotas that mandate candidacy or incumbency and are often relevant for legislative bodies. Here, we bring attention to term limits, an electoral institution widespread across the world, and most common for executive offices, for which women are particularly underrepresented. Unlike quotas, term limits are not introduced with the deliberate goal of increasing female representation. We find that in our context forced open-seat races increase the probability of women accessing elected offices, but mainly for a small group of women: dynastic women.² This unintended consequence of term limits is related to a recent study by Cassan and Vandewalle (2017), where female reservations in India increased the representation of low-caste groups. In their case, the increase in low-caste representation is related to traditional gender norms prevalent among high caste people in Indian villages. Thus, while our empirical analysis is limited to local elections in the Philippines, the patterns we document are likely relevant for other democracies.

Our findings are also broadly related to the nascent literature emphasizing the importance of culture when exploring the effects of policies, see Ashraf et al. (2016) and Corno, Hildebrandt and Voena (2017). Ashraf et al. (2016) show that female education is more responsive to school construction programs for ethnic groups practicing bride price. Our paper highlights a similar point within a political context. Although we do not exploit cultural variation within the Philippines, our results provide strong evidence that the impact of term limits on political outcomes is tied to the dynastic nature of the Philippine political institutions and the high share of male term-limited

²We thus contribute to existing work that explores the characteristics of women who run for public office. See for example, Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2009) and Schwindt-Bayer (2011)

incumbents. Absent a strong dynastic environment, the impact of term limits will most likely manifest itself through other channels such as increased competition.

2 Term limits and the Rise of Female Politicians

The Philippines saw a dramatic increase in the share of female mayors in the last 30 years. Using official candidate-level results of all mayoral elections between 1988 and 2010, provided by the Commission of Elections (COMELEC), Figure 1 reports the share of municipalities with an elected female mayor in each of the eight elections between 1988-2010.³ Starting at nine percent in 1988, the share of municipalities with a female mayor jumped to 16% in 1998 and kept on increasing to 21% by 2010. The discontinuous jump in 1998 is key. It hints at the importance of term limits in the rise of female politicians as this is the first election year with forced open-seat races following binding term-limits.

Term limits for all elected offices were introduced in the 1987 constitution. At the municipal level, a politician can only be elected to the same office three times consecutively (not counting elections before 1987). The first municipal elections following the fall of Ferdinand Marcos were organized in 1988. In accordance with provisions of the 1987 constitution, the next municipal elections were organized in 1992. Thereafter, all municipal officials – the mayor, vice-mayor and eight municipal councilors, were elected in first-past-the-post elections organized every three years. Upon reaching a binding term limit, a politician can run immediately for a different office or run again for the same office after waiting out an election cycle. Thus, the 1998 election was the first election with potentially term-limited incumbents. In what follows, we formally test the hypothesis that term limits led to an increase in the number of women elected as mayors.

³The dataset includes the full names and votes received for all candidates. The only exception is 1988; we only have data on winning candidates for that election. We used the first name of the candidates in our sample to code their gender.

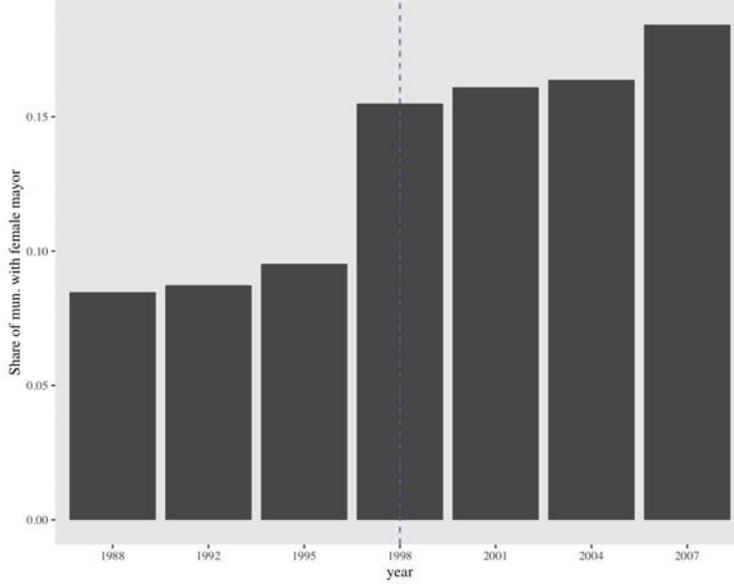


Figure 1: Share of municipalities with a female mayor

2.1 Empirical Strategy and Main Results

To test the impact of term limits on the rise of female politicians, we use a difference-in-differences estimation strategy. We compare municipalities with a term-limited incumbent to municipalities without term-limited incumbents, before and after the forced open-seat race. Our basic estimating equation is:

$$y_{mt} = \alpha + \beta Term_Limit_{mt} + \mu_m + \rho_t + \epsilon_{mt} \quad (1)$$

where y_{mt} is one of two indicators: a dummy for whether a woman ran in a mayoral election in municipality m and election year t and a dummy for whether a woman won a mayoral election in municipality m and election year t . $Term_Limit_{mt}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if at time t municipality m had a forced open-seat race and zero otherwise. Our main coefficient of interest is β . We cluster standard errors at the province level. We include election-year dummies to account flexibly for common shocks or trends at the national level and a full set of municipality fixed effects to account for all time-invariant municipal characteristics. We also estimate a more demanding specification by including interactions between election-year dummies and province fixed effects.

Table 1 presents our main results. The dependent variable is a dummy for whether a woman ran (Columns 1-2) or won the race (Columns 3-4). Municipalities are 17 percentage points more likely to have a woman running for the mayoral office in a forced open-seat race (Column 1). Women are not only more likely to run, they are also 10.5 percentage points more likely to *win* in forced open-seat races (Column 3). These results are robust to using the interactions between election-year dummies and province fixed effects instead of country-wide year fixed-effects (Columns 2 and 4).⁴ Contrasting our point estimates to the jump in the share of female politicians in 1998 (the first year with forced open-seat races), binding term limits could account for more than two thirds of the 6.09 percentage points increase in the share of female mayors between 1995 (9.91%) and 1998 (16.0%). Given that 41% of the municipalities had a forced open-seat in that year, our estimates would imply a 4.3 percentage points increase in the share of municipalities with female mayors.

Table 1: Term Limits and the Rise of Female Politicians

	Female Candidate		Female Mayor	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limit	0.170 (0.014)	0.165 (0.014)	0.105 (0.011)	0.104 (0.012)
Municipal FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election FE	Yes	No	Yes	No
Province \times Election FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	11,892	11,892	11,835	11,835
R ²	0.309	0.354	0.317	0.353
Mean Dep. Var.	0.299	0.299	0.146	0.146

Notes: Results from municipality*elections regressions and include municipal and time fixed effects. The dependent variable is a dummy for whether a woman ran for mayor (Columns 1-2), or a dummy for whether a woman was elected mayor (Columns 3-4). The standard errors (in parentheses) account for potential correlation within provinces.

To sum up, the estimates in Table 1 show that women are more likely to *run* and *win* in forced open-seat races. This results from (both) an increase in the likelihood of women running, and to a minor extent in the likelihood of women winning conditional on running. Prior to 1998 (before term limits bind), conditional on at least one woman running, the likelihood that a woman was

⁴Sample sizes are a bit smaller in Columns 3 and 4 since, for a few cases, we don't have information on who won the election.

elected mayor was 0.45. In forced open-seat races, that likelihood increases slightly to 0.5.

2.2 Testing for the Parallel-Trends Assumption

We now provide evidence of the key identifying assumption in difference-in-differences designs: namely, that municipalities with and without forced open-seat races were on similar trends before binding term limits. To do so, we estimate an extended version of equation (1) where we include leads and lags of the term limit variable. More concretely, we estimate the following equation:

$$y_{mt} = \alpha + \sum_{s=-3}^{+2} \beta^s \text{Term_Limit}_{mt}^s + \mu_m + \rho_t + \epsilon_{mt}, \quad (2)$$

where β^s are the estimates on the full set of leads and lags (up to three years). For example, Term_Limit_{mt}^1 is the first lead of the term-limit dummy. It is equal to one for all term-limited municipalities one election before they became term-limited and zero otherwise.

Figure 2 provides strong evidence in support of the parallel trends assumption. The coefficients on the one and two period leads are small and statistically insignificant, which suggests that treated and control groups follow a common trend prior to term limits. This reinforces our confidence that the results discussed above capture the causal effect of binding term limits on female political participation.

In addition to documenting parallel trends, Figure 2 highlights an interesting feature. The effect of term limits becomes much weaker one and two periods *after* the forced open-seat race. The coefficients on the one and two-period lags, while positive, are substantially muted compared to the contemporary term-limit dummy. We return to this finding below in Section 4.

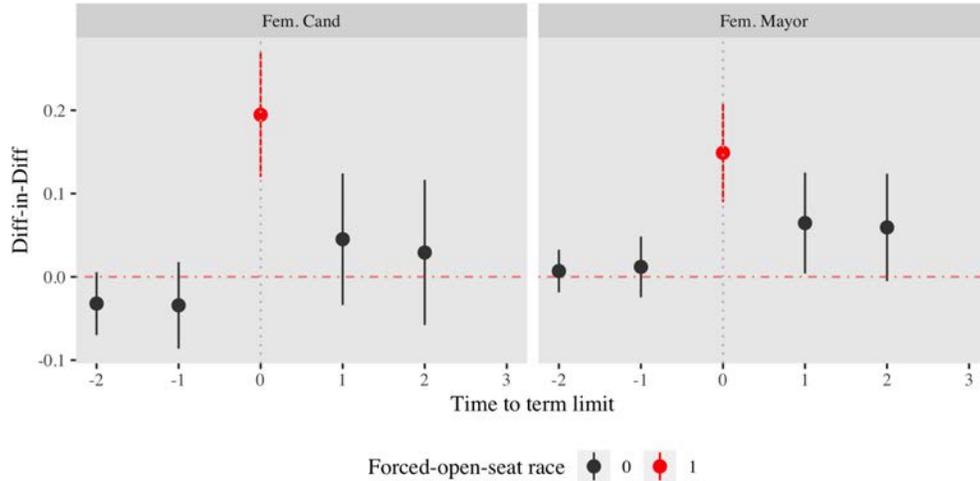


Figure 2: Estimates and 95% Confidence Intervals for Leads and Lags of Term Limit Variable

3 The Dynastic Nature of the Rise of Female Mayors

What drives the increase in female politicians during forced open-seat races? Are the patterns consistent with the original goal of the policy which was to promote alternation in office and curb the power of incumbent political elites, namely political dynasties? Political dynasties play an important role in politics at both the national and local levels (McCoy, 2009) and have persisted across many decades. It is common for relatives to take turns holding the same office, and for the same family to control multiple elected offices at the same time (Querubin, 2012). To understand how term-limits interact with this prevalent role of political dynasties, we next explore the composition of candidates across different races between dynastic and non-dynastic. Contrary to the original intent of the policy, we provide evidence that forced open-seat races lead to an increase in the number and share of dynastic politicians, particularly of incumbent relatives and show that the increase in female representation following binding term limits is driven by the entry of female relatives of the incumbent into the mayoral races.

A key step to analyzing changes in the composition of mayoral races is to identify dynastic candidates and the relatives of the incumbents in our sample. Individuals in the Philippines carry two family names: the mother’s maiden name and father’s family name (men and single women) or the father’s family name and husband’s family name (married women). We follow Querubin (2016) and Fafchamps and Labonne (2017) and classify a candidate as *dynastic* if it shares at least

one family name with any current or previous mayor and as an *incumbent relative* if it shares at least one family name with the current mayor.

This approach assumes that a shared family name indicates an actual family tie, which is valid given the historical way in which family names were allocated in the Philippines. In 1849, Governor Narciso Claveria y Zaldua assigned a different family name to every household in each municipality. As a consequence very common family names are not as prevalent in the Philippines as in other countries and thus, sharing a family name is very strongly correlated with an actual family tie. For example, using biographical data, Querubin (2016) documents that the rate of false positives (i.e. candidates who share a family name but are not related to each other) amongst candidates for provincial offices (a larger sub-national level) is around 5%. This rate is likely lower at the municipal level since unique family names were originally allocated at this administrative level.⁵ Fafchamps and Labonne (2017) and Cruz, Labonne and Querubin (2017) validate and discuss this method for tracing relatives in more detail.

Our empirical strategy is identical to regression (1), but we use a different set of outcome variables related to whether candidates or elected mayors are dynastic.⁶ In Panel A of Table 2 we focus on the composition of candidates and mayors, between dynastic and non-dynastic, independently of their gender. In Column 1, we use as dependent variable the number of candidates in the mayoral race and find, as expected, that forced open-seat races attract a larger number of candidates. However, once we turn to the composition of the pool of candidates between dynastic and non-dynastic candidates in Column 2, we find that the share of candidates that are dynastic (relative to all candidates) increases by 6 percentage points in forced open-seat races. This is driven by the higher likelihood of dynastic candidates (Column 3) and in particular incumbent relatives (Column 4), running in forced open-seat races. The point estimates show that incumbent relatives are almost 50 percentage points more likely to run in forced open-seat races relative to other

⁵For example, in principle there should be one Aquino family per municipality, even if the Aquino family name may exist in several municipalities. Two individuals with the Aquino family name living in the same municipality are thus much more likely to share an actual family tie than two individuals with the Aquino family name from different municipalities in the same province.

⁶We show the results for our preferred specification with municipality and year fixed effects. The point estimates are very similar when we include province-specific election-year fixed effects.

races. Finally, the dependent variables in Columns 5 and 6 are dummies for whether dynastic candidates or incumbent relatives *win the election*, respectively. The point estimate in Column 6 shows that incumbent relatives are 33 percentage points more likely to get elected following binding term limits. Contrasting the estimated coefficient to the share of mayors that are relatives of the incumbent in non-open seat races (4.7%), incumbent relatives are 7 times (33/4.7) more likely to become mayors in forced open-seat races. In sum, our findings show that while forced open-seat races attract more candidates, they do not necessarily lead to an increase of “new blood” in the system.

Table 2: Term Limits and the Rise of Female *Dynastic* Politicians

Panel A	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	No. Cand.	Share Dyn.	Dyn. Ran	Inc. Rel. Ran	Dyn. Won	Inc. Rel. Won
	All Candidates:					
termlim	0.595 (0.031)	0.060 (0.006)	0.197 (0.011)	0.464 (0.013)	0.139 (0.011)	0.334 (0.012)
Observations	11,928	11,928	11,928	11,928	11,928	11,928
R-squared	0.547	0.491	0.495	0.372	0.462	0.327
Mean Dep. Var.	2.654	0.176	0.366	0.188	0.234	0.101
Panel B	Female Candidates:					
	Dyn. Ran	Inc. Rel. Ran	Non-Dyn Ran	Dyn. Won	Inc. Rel. Won	Non-Dyn Won
Term Limit	0.171 (0.011)	0.243 (0.011)	0.043 (0.012)	0.105 (0.009)	0.161 (0.009)	-0.000 (0.007)
Observations	11,927	11,927	11,928	11,892	11,892	11,835
R-squared	0.305	0.251	0.295	0.307	0.217	0.336
Mean Dep. Var.	0.111	0.0617	0.209	0.0691	0.0368	0.0764

Notes: Results from municipality*elections regressions and include municipality and election-year fixed effects. In Panel A, the dependent variable is the number of candidates (Column 1), the share of candidates who are dynastic relative to the pool of candidates (Column 2), a dummy equal to one if a dynastic candidate ran (Column 3), a dummy equal to one if an incumbent relative ran (Column 4), a dummy for whether the elected mayor is dynastic (Column 5) and a dummy for whether the elected mayor is related to the previous incumbent (Column 6). In Panel B, the dependent variable is a dummy for whether a dynastic woman ran (Column 1), a dummy for whether a woman related to the incumbent ran (Column 2), a dummy for whether a non-dynastic woman ran (Column 3), a dummy for whether a dynastic woman won (Column 4), a dummy for whether a woman related to the incumbent won (Column 5), and a dummy for whether a non-dynastic woman won (Column 6). The standard errors (in parentheses) account for potential correlation within provinces.

Turning to the sample of female candidates in Panel B, in Columns 1-3 we use as dependent variables dummies for whether a dynastic, incumbent relative or non-dynastic woman ran in the race, respectively. The estimates show that the increased probability of women running for office

documented in Table 1 is mostly driven by dynastic candidates. Dynastic women are 17 percentage points more likely to run in forced open-seat races (Column 1). The effect is even larger for female relatives of the incumbent who are 24 percentage points more likely to run following binding term limits (Column 2). The effect for non-dynastic women (Column 3), while positive and statistically significant, is substantially smaller than that for women related to previous or current incumbents.

Investigating the composition of winning candidates (female mayors), in Columns 4-6 we use dummies for whether dynastic, incumbent relatives or non-dynastic women won the election, respectively. The estimates show that the increase in the number of female politicians following binding term limits is driven entirely by the entry of dynastic female politicians, in particular, by women related to the term-limited incumbents (Column 5) who are 16 percentage points more likely to win in forced open-seat races. In fact, close to 75 percent of the women elected in the first wave of forced open-seat races in 1998 were related to the term-limited incumbent and out of the 342 dynastic women winning an election in open-seat races, only 15 are dynastic but unrelated to the term-limited incumbent. On the other hand, the coefficient in Column 6 shows that non-dynastic women are not more likely to win forced open-seat races.

In sum, the descriptive patterns and regressions presented in Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2 provide strong evidence that forced open-seat races constitute critical junctures in which women are disproportionately more likely to access political office. However, not all women benefit from term-limits: relatives of the term-limited incumbent are substantially more likely to win in forced open-seat races.⁷

4 The Gender Nature of Dynastic Politics and Term Limits

So far we've shown that term limits led to an increase in female political representation in mayoral positions and that most of these women "succeeded" their term-limited relatives in office. This suggests that a key factor behind the rise of female mayors in the Philippines is related to political successions and the response of term-limited incumbents when faced with the constraint imposed

⁷The fact that voters often vote for and elect female relatives of term-limited incumbents is consistent with the argument of Dolan (2014) that traditional political forces (such as membership in the incumbent dynasty) are often a more important determinant of voter behavior than a candidate's gender.

by term limits on their political careers. In this section, we explore two plausible explanations for the role of term limits in the increase in the probability of female relatives of the incumbent running for office. We focus on the likelihood of running for office, rather than on the likelihood of winning, since incumbents only have full control on whether a relative runs for office (not on whether they actually win). Moreover, recall from Section 2.1 that the increase in female representation in forced open-seat races is mostly driven by the higher likelihood of women running for office, rather than of women winning conditional on running.

Specifically, the share of female relatives running for office is the product of i) the likelihood of incumbent relatives running for office and ii) the gender composition of these incumbent relatives. Let $Prob(FemRel)$ be the probability that a female relative of the incumbent runs for mayor. We can use the following identity to illustrate the point:

$$Prob(FemRel) = Prob(Rel) \times Prob(Fem|Rel)$$

where $Prob(Rel)$ is the probability that a relative of the incumbent runs for mayor and $Prob(Fem|Rel)$ is the probability that, conditional on a relative of the incumbent running, the relative is female. In what follows, we will explore quantitatively the significance of each of these components in explaining the change in the share of female relatives running in forced open-seat races.

4.1 Term Limits and the Likelihood of Dynastic Successions

Based on the above expression, a first explanation behind the rise of female relatives running for office is that, as shown in Panel A of Table 2, term limits are associated with an increase in the likelihood of incumbent relatives running for office (an increase in the likelihood of dynastic successions). As documented by Querubin (2012), this reflects the adaptive strategies of term-limited incumbents who want to continue their political careers and preserve their political power. In a context like the Philippines, where incumbents enjoy a very large electoral advantage (Querubin, 2016), it is essential to prevent opponents from gaining access to office in forced open-seat races. Given the weakness of political parties in the Philippines (Montinola, 1999) and the importance of families in politics, term-limited incumbents often attempt to maintain political control by having a relative run to replace them. Moreover, as mentioned above, previous studies have documented

the importance of political dynasties as a vehicle for women's access to office both for executive positions and for legislatures in other developed and developing countries (Dal Bo, Dal Bo and Snyder, 2009; Jalalzai, 2013; Chandra, 2016; Folke, Rickne and Smith, 2016; Smith and Martin, 2017; van Coppenolle, 2017; Jalalzai and Rincker, 2018). In our setting, during 1988-1995, prior to any binding term-limits, the female share amongst candidates related to the incumbent ($Prob(Fem|Rel)$) was 0.15. Can the increase in the likelihood of dynastic candidates running for office (documented in Panel A of Table 2) explain the increased probability of female relatives running and the ensuing rise in female political representation? Specifically, what would be the predicted change in the likelihood of female relatives running for mayor ($Prob(FemRel)$) if we held the female share of dynastic successions constant at 0.15, but account for the increased likelihood of incumbent relatives running for office?

Recall from Table 2, Panel A, Column 4, that forced open-seat races are associated with an increase of 46 percentage points (0.46) in the probability of an incumbent relative running for office. Thus, $\Delta Prob(FemRel) = 0.46 \times 0.15 = 0.069$. Contrasting this number with the estimated difference-in-difference coefficient in Column 2 of Table 2 Panel B, we can see that the change in the likelihood of dynastic successions can account for 29% of the 24 percentage increase in the probability of female relatives of the incumbent running for office ($0.069/0.24=0.29$). This suggests that the increase in the number of "dynastic successions" following term-limits, holding everything else constant, plays an important role, but leaves 71% of the estimated change in the likelihood of female relatives running for office unexplained.

4.2 Term Limits and the Gender Composition of Dynastic Successions

This brings us to our second explanation: the change in the gender composition of dynastic successions. Remember that the share of female relatives running for office (conditional on a relative running for office) is 0.15 during the baseline period (1988-1995), prior to any binding term limits. This share increases to 0.45 in forced open-seat races. This observed difference roughly coincides with the difference-in-difference estimate reported in Column 2, Panel B of Table 2. In other words, the share of female relatives differs substantially in dynastic successions following binding term limits compared to other dynastic successions (that occur due to different causes such as death or retirement, for example). Why do term limits change the gender composition of

dynastic successions? We investigate two plausible explanations rooted in the design of the term limits policy in the Philippines.

4.2.1 Age Profile of Term-Limited Incumbents and Availability of Eligible Male Relatives

A first explanation is related to the fact that term-limits force incumbents out of office after three terms. As a consequence, strong incumbents are forced to exit their positions at a younger age, on average, compared to strong incumbents in standard (non-forced) succession decisions that do not follow binding term-limits. We argue that the younger age of the exiting incumbent can generate large differences in the gender composition of political successions in line with what we observe in our setting. This is because the term-limited incumbent is less likely to have children (in particular sons) of eligible age (which in the Philippines is 21) compared to other successions, and hence he may resort to his wife to succeed him in office. This argument is better exemplified by the story of one prominent political family in the Philippines. Jejomar Binay was elected mayor of Makati in 1988. He was re-elected in both 1992 and 1995 and thus was term-limited in 1998 at age 55. At that time, Jejomar did not have any sons of eligible age. His kids were Nancy (25, female), Abby (23, female), Jun (20, male), Marita (19, female) and Joanna (10, female). Elenita, his wife, ran and was elected for the position but did not run in 2001. She was replaced by her husband who was again re-elected in 2004 and 2007. In 2010, when he became term-limited again, his son Jun (now of eligible age) ran and was elected.

Next, we use a simple quantitative simulation to show that, even in a world with a strong male preference in dynastic succession decisions, this channel can generate changes in the share of female candidates similar in magnitude to the ones observed in the data, under plausible assumptions. To that end, suppose that incumbents prefer a male succession: the exiting incumbent chooses an eligible male successor as long as there is one available, otherwise he chooses amongst the potential set of eligible female successors (consisting of the wife and daughters). Consider first a standard succession in which a male politician voluntarily retires or dies. In this case, such politician is likely to be of older age and succeeded by one of his children. Fertility data for wealthy Filipino couples in the 70s suggests an average of 3 children per family, which given a gender ratio of 50%, would imply a share of male relatives in this succession of around 87.5%.⁸ Interestingly, this

⁸The estimates for the number of children per family comes from Table 5 in Hirschman and Guest (1990). In 1975-79,

unconstrained male biased scenario is close to what we observe in non-term-limited successions where the share of women related to the incumbent is around 15%.

As mentioned above, dynastic successions following term limits differ from standard successions as they likely affect politicians at a younger age. As a consequence, their children might not be old enough to run for office and thus, their wives may become important (or the only) contenders in the succession. As politicians get older, they become more likely to have older children who can run to replace them. To illustrate this point, assume the same male-bias applies to dynastic successions following binding term limits. In other words, term-limited incumbents select an eligible male relative when available, otherwise they select their wives or eligible daughters. In order to account for the fact that sons may not yet be of eligible age, we introduce parameters p_1 , p_2 and p_3 , as the probability that, respectively, the first, second and third child is eligible to run. Thus, the share of potential male successors becomes: $p_1 * 1/2 + p_2 * 1/4 + p_3 * 1/8$.⁹ Using statistics on the age distribution of fathers from Official Vital Statistics of the Philippines at the end of the 70s, we can estimate p_1 , p_2 and p_3 for different age values of the term-limited politician, given a representative politician with three kids and an age difference of two years between the kids.¹⁰ We can then simulate the probability of having a male relative of eligible age for incumbents aged 45 to 64 years old. Figure 3 shows the simulated (predicted) share of male relatives running in our sample. As the age of the term-limited incumbent increases, the share of male relatives running converges towards the share in other non-term-limited successions. Unfortunately, we do not have data on the age of incumbents in our sample. However, assuming that politicians are uniformly distributed between 45 - 64 years old at the moment of first becoming term-limited, the probability of having an eligible male relative would be, on average, 54% which coincides with the actual (observed) fraction of male relatives running for office in term-limited successions.¹¹

the Total Fertility Rate of women with at least some College education (as a proxy for wealth) was 3.08. 87.5% comes from the probability of having at least one son, conditional on having three children: i.e., $1 - (1/2)^3$.

⁹The formula comes from the probability of having a first son weighted by the probability of the first son being of eligible age ($p_1 * 1/2$), the probability of having a middle son weighted by the probability that the middle son is of eligible age ($p_2 * 1/4$), and the probability of having a third son weighted by the probability that the third son is of age ($p_3 * 1/8$).

¹⁰See <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/1978%20Vital%20Statistics%20Report.pdf> accessed on September 5, 2019.

¹¹These numbers would be in line with mayors being first elected when they are 35 – 45 years old, which is consistent

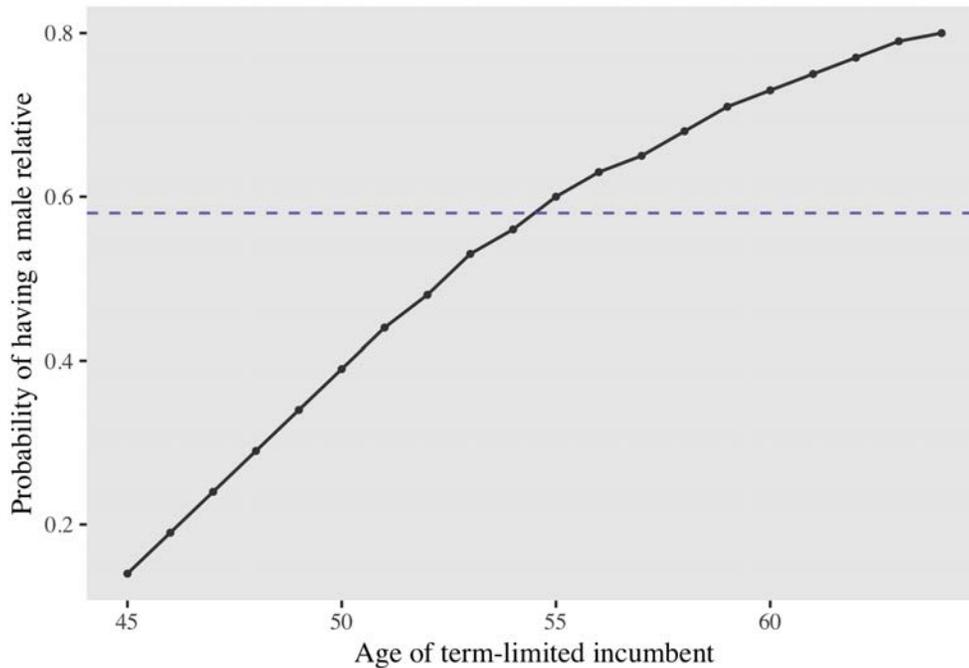


Figure 3: Simulation probability of having a male relative running

It is worth emphasizing the importance of wives for this channel, which is a by-product of the high share of male incumbents in the Philippines. For example, close to 92% of term-limited incumbents in 1998 were men. This high share of male politicians elected in unconstrained races is necessary for term-limits to generate a discrete jump in the gender composition of dynastic successions. Had the majority of term-limited incumbents in 1998 been female, then term-limits would have increased the likelihood of having *male* mayors, since term-limited female incumbents would have had eligible male relatives (their husbands) available for the succession.

4.2.2 Women as Benchwarmers

For our second explanation behind the change in the gender composition of dynastic successions, recall from Section 2 that term limits in the Philippines impose a short-term constraint on the incumbent, forcing the politician out of office for only one term. This contrasts with other standard dynastic successions (following retirement or death) where the incumbent’s exit is more permanent. Thus, since term limits generate only a short-run (i.e. one term) constraint on the incumbent, those interested in running again after one term may be more likely to appoint a female relative in office

with statistics for other countries.

to serve as *benchwarmers*. This is a Filipino expression for incumbent relatives who serve for only one term after the forced open-seat race, and retire immediately after to allow their relative to run again (Coronel et al., 2004). Elenita, the wife of Jejomar Binay, is an example of a benchwarmer. We argue that female relatives might be more attractive than male relatives as benchwarmers due a number of reasons. First, consider a term-limited incumbent who wants to remain influential during his term out of office and to run again immediately after. Given gender norms in the Philippines, women may be more willing to comply with the relatives' directives while in office and to retire immediately after to allow his return. Similarly, in a context where the careers of men are perceived as more important than those of women, short-term distortions on the life (and career) of the female relatives might be perceived as less costly. For example, according to the 2009 Labor Force Survey, female labor force participation is 19 percentage points lower for women than for men (gap amongst those with college education is similar). Moreover, 60% of Filipino respondents in the 6th wave of the World Values Survey (2010-2014) agree that whenever jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. Finally, 56.4% of respondents agree with the statement that "men make better political leaders than women do" (fraction who agree amongst male respondents is 63.7%). This is also consistent with findings by Fox and Lawless (2014) and Lawless and Fox (2005) that women are significantly less likely than men to demonstrate ambition to run for elective office. If incumbents are interested in returning to office after one term, they may prefer to select female relatives who will be less inclined to remain in office and continue a political career of their own.

In line with this explanation, we find that female mayors who replaced their term-limited relative are more likely to be one-termers – that is, to exit after serving only one term – than other mayors. In particular 57.7% of women who replaced their term-limited relative serve for only one term. This is higher than the share of one-termers amongst non-dynastic women (44.5%) or men (38%) elected in forced open-seat races. It is also higher than the share of one-termers amongst women elected in non-forced open-seat races (37%).¹² Female mayors who replaced their term-limited relative are also three times more likely to be *benchwarmers* than their male counterparts (that is, to retire after one term in order to allow the previously term-limited incumbent to return

¹²These differences in the share of one-termers between female relatives of the incumbent elected in forced open-seat races and other mayors are statistically significant at the 1% level

to office). While only 10% of male relatives are benchwarmers, the corresponding figure for female relatives is 31%. As a consequence, male relatives of the incumbent serve on average a larger number of terms (2.23) than female relatives (1.81). This may also explain the small coefficient on the one and two period lags of the term-limit dummy reported in Figure 2. The high prevalence of benchwarmers amongst dynastic women is in line with the effect of term-limits on female representation being short-lived.

The benchwarmer effect and the lower average number of terms served by female politicians elected in forced open-seat races, point at two important forces behind the steady increase in the share of municipalities with a female mayor in the Philippines in the last 30 years. While there is an increase in the number of female mayors accessing office during forced open-seat races, there is a decrease in the average number of terms these women stay in power (as well as an increase in the number of one-termers), compared to other races. In other words, while following binding term limits a larger number of municipalities experience a female mayor, these female mayors are on average less likely to be re-elected. These two forces, the number of forced open-seat races and the share of women exiting after one term, generates a delicate balance of inflows and outflows that translate into the observed increase in the share of municipalities with a female mayor. For example, the number of female mayors in 1995 was 147 and it increased to 237 in 1998. This net increase in 90 female mayors consists of 170 new female mayors (of which 133 were elected in forced open-seat races) and 80 outgoing female mayors who either did not run or were not re-elected. A similar pattern can be observed in 2001: out of the 237 female mayors, 94 decided not to run, while 40 were term-limited (for an outflow of 134 female mayors). Importantly, 59 out of the 94 female mayors who decided to not run another term, were relatives of the term-limited incumbent in 1998 and served for only one term. Despite the higher share of female mayor outflows in 2001 (40% or 94 out of 237) than in 1998 (23% or 30/133) there was still a net increase in the total number of female mayors to 246 due to the inflow of 143 new female mayors (83 of them elected in forced open-seat races). The key observation is that absent the benchwarmer effect (or higher likelihood of one-termers amongst female relatives of term-limited incumbents), the net increase in the number of municipalities with a female mayor would have been much larger.

To sum up, in this section we provide evidence that the age-profile of term-limited incumbents and the use of benchwarmers by term-limited incumbents interested in returning to office after one

term can help us explain the change in the gender composition of dynastic successions in forced open-seat races. Returning to our original question, what fraction of the change in the fraction of women running for office can be explained by the increase in the fraction of women in dynastic successions? We conduct a similar exercise to the one reported in Section 4.1, but use the baseline (1988-1995) fraction of incumbent relatives running ($Prob(Rel) = 0.08$) and predict the change in the likelihood of women running for office, using the change in the fraction of incumbent relatives that are female: $\Delta Prob(FemRel) = 0.08 \times 0.3 = 0.024$. Thus, the change in the female ratio of dynastic successions by itself can account for about 10% ($0.024/0.24$) of the change in the likelihood of women running for office. This suggests that the interaction of both forces – an increase in the likelihood of dynastic successions and in the female share of these successions– provides a compelling account of how term limits led to increased female political representation in the Philippines, as each force by itself is not enough to explain the jump in the fraction of women running for office.

5 Conclusion

In this paper we show that term limits - a widely used institution across several democracies - can lead to an increase in female representation and explain the dramatic rise of female mayors in the Philippines. However, we show that in the Philippines this effect was mostly restricted to female relatives of the incumbent. This finding has potential implications for the extent to which an increase in female descriptive representation translates into substantive representation or the empowerment of other women in dynastic contexts. Previous research has shown that women who were elected to office via reservations or gender quotas have enacted pro-women policies and have had demonstration or role model effects on the political participation of other women (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Bhavnani, 2009). However, it is likely that the channel through which women access office mediates their impact on other policy or electoral outcomes. Women elected through the dynastic channel following binding term limits may be unwilling to steer policy away from their family's interests and closer to their own preferences (or the preferences of other women) or may be unable to do so as they are often figureheads or benchwarmers for their relatives, who constrain their decisions and retain de facto power. As argued by Jalalzai (2013), women might derive their political identities through their close male relatives and may be

expected to further the political goals of the male relatives they succeeded. Similarly, if women are elected through the dynastic channel, they may not have a mandate that enables (or encourages) them to prioritize women's needs and preferences, in contrast to contexts where women are elected via gender quotas (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008). Third, the new pool of elected dynastic women may not be representative of the broader pool of women which may also impact whether their policy choices will benefit the majority of women. For instance, Clots-Figuera (2011) find that in India, female legislators of lower castes, but not those of higher castes, are more likely to enact female-friendly policies. Finally, the fact that dynastic women elected following binding term limits often serve for only one term, may not only limit their substantive impact on economic policies but may also attenuate their "role model effect" if other women in society perceive that women, once in office, cannot pursue a political career of their own and must retire to promote the career of their male relatives.

While the evidence presented in this paper is specific to the Philippines, we believe that many of the insights are relevant for other democracies where term limits are common and where parties are weak and/or political dynasties play an important role. Moreover, some of the specific channels we have explored (such as the differential age profile induced by term limits) likely apply to many other contexts. Our findings, however, highlight the importance of understanding how the cultural and social context mediates the effect of widely used political institutions such as term limits. In dynastic contexts, term limits may, perhaps inadvertently, increase female representation but restrict this higher access to office to dynastic women. And this may have important consequences for the role that these newly elected female politicians can play. As stated by Jalalzai (2013), "in spite of the rising numbers of women executives, we should question women's ultimate progress in achieving powerful positions" (p. 114). Where women's increased access to elected office is mainly driven by family connections, the consequences for substantive representation may be very different.

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