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Dallas: Kinship, Mobility, and Inheritance in an Elite Population, 1895-1945

O'Brien, Shay

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DALLAS:
KINSHIP, MOBILITY, AND INHERITANCE IN AN ELITE POPULATION, 1895-1945

Volume I

Shannon (Shay) O'Brien

A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This three-paper dissertation argues that analytically distinct collections of elites are often connected through kin in sprawling upper-class family networks. Those connections play central roles in processes of elite change and persistence, and they are visible only with the systematic inclusion of women. Analyses are based on the first-ever full kinship network of an upper-class population in a U.S. city- Dallas, Texas from 1895-1945 (n = 12,282).

In the first paper, I demonstrate that at least seventy percent of high society was related in a single web encompassing most of the city's wealthy, powerful, and high-status people. The more deeply families connected to the web, the more likely they were to persist over time. I conclude that upper class populations are best understood not as collections of distinct dynasties that live or die with the success of sons, but as complex, durable family webs.

The second paper tackles an enduring archetype of Texas wealth: the new money oilman. Midcentury Dallas elites consistently alleged that "new money" oil families replaced "old money" cotton families during the 1930s oil boom, but the data refute their claims: most cotton families persisted, and most oil families were born rich. I argue that perceptions of elite turnover reflected a shift in prototypicality, and regime change among the 1% of the 1%, rather than broader patterns of upper-class mobility. Conceptions of elites as ultra-wealthy individuals divorced from their relational contexts may similarly overemphasize change and underemphasize persistence.

The final paper uses probate data to tackle the gender of inheritance in upper-class Dallas. Surprisingly, Dallas elites bequeathed more wealth more often to female relatives. Less surprisingly, men tended to inherit forms of wealth that gave them control over family finances, and women tended to inherit forms that gave them status and security. Together, family wealth

strategies aimed to ensure a continued upper-class lifestyle for all close kin, rather than simply preserving a patrilineal dynasty. And because the elite was so densely interrelated, most Dallas inherited wealth simply circulated within the large, white, extended upper-class family.

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Introduction

The Second-Oldest Mansion in Dallas

In the middle of Dallas, encircled by highways and subdivisions, is a small parking lot. In a corner of the lot is a narrow lane, and at the end of the lane is a gate. Behind the gate is a long, quiet, tree-lined drive, and at the end of the drive is a huge green lawn, and at the center of the lawn is a white-columned mansion, surrounded by gardens. This is the Caruth family "homeplace:" one of the oldest surviving structures in Dallas[1], and an enduring symbol of one of its largest fortunes. Few living Dallasites know it exists, and fewer have seen it. At one point, the family living there owned more than thirty thousand acres of Dallas land. They called it their "country home" because it was an hour by buggy from their mansion in town, through six miles of grazing cows, tenant shacks, and cotton fields. As the city grew larger and closer, they sold, developed, and rented their acreage, converting it into a tax-optimized collection of trusts and properties likely worth billions (Byrd v. Caruth 1974; Atkinson 1975b; Sanders 1988). The mansion and its 5.6-acre lawn remain, preserved indefinitely by the family's favorite nonprofit foundation. Third-generation heir W. W. Caruth Jr. (1912-1990) explained, "Grandfather acquired the land, father held it, and I harvested. It's as simple as that" (Atkinson 1975b). A fortune passing, like a billion-dollar baton, from father to son to grandson.

Of course, it isn't as simple as that. For one thing, the father-to-son narrative completely ignores almost everyone in the family, including all the women, whose wealth, business dealings, kin ties, and social status were essential parts of the story. It ignores the lawyers,

[1] The Caruth "homeplace" is the second-oldest mansion in Dallas. The oldest is Millermore, which has a broadly similar history – it was built in 1855 by enslaved people for William Brown Miller, whose descendants were entrenched in the Dallas elite for more than a century. Once surrounded by a cotton plantation, it is now the site of haunted house tours.

bankers, and accountants who devised the Caruths' labyrinthine estate plans, and who were typically part of the local upper class, too. It also sidesteps the genocide and land theft that made the thirty thousand acres available for pennies on the dollar, and the many enslaved and free Black people who built the Caruth mansion, farmed the Caruth cotton, raised the Caruth children, and generally did all the work the Caruths did not want to do themselves (Keaton and Segura 2023). In truth, the father-to-son story does very little to explain how the Caruths got and stayed so rich. It does very little to explain how *any* family gets and stays rich.

This dissertation is about the Caruths, and about the thousands of other white Dallas elites tied to them to through sprawling chains of blood, marriage, and money. It is also about the way we understand elites, and how we might see them more fully. For a very long time, studies and theories of elites have focused mostly on individual men. In this vision, elites are people with powerful jobs and ultra-high incomes. Elite families share a surname and a singular male founder. Elite networks are composed of shared institutional memberships, like interlocking corporate boards. There are good reasons for these simplifications, many of them practical. Collections of individual economic and positional elites tell us much about the shifting compositions and characteristics of rich and powerful people, and indeed, until recently, they have been the only kind of approach truly feasible at the population level for most contexts. But it has now become increasingly possible to expand our view, and so we should. Many researchers are already examining broader family ties for larger populations than this, typically using kinship-rich sources like the Scandinavian registry data. Many others have been doing so for decades on smaller scales, through genealogically informed ethnographies and histories (in particular, see Farrell 1993). In general, research on families and fortunes has resurged, bringing

the kinship back in to the center of the study of the economy and society (Beckert 2022). I join their efforts here.

Using a wide array of archival sources, I have built a large, multidimensional dataset that traces the contours of the Dallas white upper class for its first century, and particularly its second fifty years – 1895-1945. It is the first-ever full kinship network of an upper class in a U.S. city. Methodologically, this is a prosopography, which means I take a bounded historical population and examine their intertwining life courses, mostly through a combination of descriptive quantitative analysis and case studies (Stone 1971; Rossier 2019). In a series of three papers, I use these data to tackle classic topics in the study of elites and stratification, tracing broad patterns of interconnection, mobility, and inheritance for the upper-class population. I also draw heavily on qualitative data to inform and enrich the larger-scale findings. An appendix describes the dataset in detail, and each paper describes its relevant aspects more succinctly.

Overall, I find that through moderate levels of intermarriage and reproduction, and over the course of just fifty years, the white upper class of Dallas went from a collection of largely unrelated newcomers to a massive, interconnected family web. Analytically distinct groups of white elites became increasingly connected through kin. “New money” was connected to “old money;” political elites to economic elites; debutantes to mayors to gold-diggers to oilmen to judges. These connections are only visible because I systematically include women and kin ties beyond the patrilineage. Otherwise, the elite appears to be a collection of fathers and sons, much as W. W. Caruth Jr. described his own family. But as I will demonstrate, women and kin ties beyond the patrilineage are essential to the story of upper-class persistence. To fully understand the multigenerational durability of wealth, status, and power, you really do need to include women.

Why study Dallas elites?

There are many arguments to be made for comprehensively studying the elite of practically any city or region. There is no best choice, but there are many good ones, and Dallas is one of them. Perhaps most importantly, Dallas is a good choice because the information available about historical white elites is comprehensive, accessible, and manageable in size. For the first century of Dallas history, elites left enormous quantities of information about themselves that translate nicely into quantitative data. Starting in 1895, they listed themselves almost yearly in the social registers – like a *Who's Who* of elite families – that form the basis of the dataset. Most lived in uniformly wealthy incorporated enclaves in the middle of the city, providing excellent population-level Census data as statistical background. Prominent clubs, churches, and synagogues published membership lists yearly in the newspaper and in their own materials. After 1937, there was even a "membership list" for the most politically powerful men in the city. The *Dallas Morning News,* elite-owned and fully digitized and searchable, obsessively chronicled the minutiae of elite lives well into the 1970s, often down to the seating chart of a Friday night dinner party. Further enriching these data, many elites wrote memoirs, gave long interviews to journalists and historians, and donated their family papers to archives. At the same time, the elite population was much smaller and had been in the area for a much shorter time than elites of New York, Philadelphia, or Boston- the traditional focus of work on U.S. elites- such that creating a multiyear dataset this complex is much more feasible. A similarly constructed dataset for a single year in upper-class New York would be larger than the dataset for this entire study.

Dallas is also an interesting choice. Because the city was so new as a white settlement when the first social register was published, the data allow us to trace the emergence of an upper

class over time. In this way, it is a particularly rigorous case for understanding family entanglement, one of the most central motifs in this dissertation. And that emerging upper class has had national impacts. Today, Dallas is arguably the capital of the right-wing South. It is the largest metropolitan area in the former Confederacy, it is the birthplace of the alliance between the white Christian right and the Republican party, and it has been a hotbed for right-wing extremism since at least the 1920s. All of these factors have been driven largely by the Dallas elite, and lend themselves to research questions using these data that are well beyond the scope of this dissertation. At the same time, the city population is as diverse and progressive as many other major cities throughout the country. It is an economic powerhouse presiding over the intersection of multiple distinct regions: the South, the Southwest, the Midwest, and the Mexican border (Phillips 2006; Minutaglio and Davis 2013; Miller 2015). The extreme, contradictory city, topped by an entrenched elite, can be read as an embodiment of many of the tensions and triumphs at the heart of the country itself. As Graff (2008: xxii) observed, "what is most striking about Dallas is not its difference from other U.S. megalopolises, but rather its exaggeration of features that many contemporary cities share," including an obsession with geographic and economic growth, race and class-based segregation, and consistent, overwhelming elite control. Throughout the dissertation, I will use the Dallas white upper class as a window into the U.S. upper class overall, and to elite populations the world over, but I will also pay close attention to Dallas in and of itself.

Prologue: An early history of the Dallas upper class

The first white settler of Dallas, John Neely Bryan, arrived in 1841, planning to start a trading post catering to local indigenous nations. The land Bryan squatted on had long served as

a crossroads and trading hub for the Cherokee, Wichita, Comanche, and Caddo peoples- one so frequently visited that the riverbanks were worn down on both sides by buffalo hooves and human feet (Phillips 2006). It was strategically located at the intersection of multiple environmental regions, including some of the richest farmland in the country, and the fledgling Republic of Texas wanted it badly for white settlement. Just before Bryan's arrival, the President of Texas, Mirabeau Lamar[2], had ordered the Texas Rangers to genocidally force all indigenous people west of the area. Finding the land deserted, Bryan shrugged his shoulders and decided to make money starting a white town instead (Leslie 1964). This was the way settler colonial towns often started on the frontier – as a kind of pyramid scheme. The earliest colonial settlers gobbled up recently-stolen land, which increased in value with each new settler, and each new settler had more limited opportunities to get rich in the same way.

Bryan didn't need to do much recruiting himself. President Lamar soon gave an empresario grant to an English-American investment group, creating the Peters Colony. Agents began aggressively selling in England and the Ohio River Valley, promising each married white man 640 free acres of fertile land, and each unmarried white man 320 acres – a policy in keeping with the long U.S. settler colonial tradition of linking private property to heterosexual white monogamous marriage and reproduction (Hill 1996; TallBear 2018). As one English settler remembered it, recruiters said that if they arrived in Dallas quickly enough, they "could secure for themselves an estate equal to the estates of the lords and noblemen of England" (Jackson

[2] Several of his brother's descendants were in Dallas high society, a relation those descendants frequently took care to mention.

1908:2). Wealthier Peters Colony arrivals often started businesses, and then plowed their revenues into further land acquisition[3] (Kimball 1927).

Even after the Peters Colony stopped giving out free land, wealthy whites continued to migrate to the area, mostly from nearby slave states, accompanied by people they enslaved. The 1857 *Texas Almanac* reported, "the mass of immigration has been composed of heavy slave owners, seeking more and better land than they possessed in the old states" – the old land having been depleted by their own rapacious greed (quoted in Smith 1995:123; Baptist 2014). Between 1850 and 1860, the population of enslaved people in Dallas County ballooned from 207 to 1,074, or from three percent of the population to twelve, with many more trapped on plantations in the surrounding countryside. White residents deemed it illegal for freed Black people to enter Dallas.

Another surge of wealthy white enslavers brought their families and the people they enslaved to Dallas during the Civil War, trying to delay Emancipation as long as possible. Still more came directly after Emancipation in the Confederate Diaspora, in which former enslavers migrated to frontier communities, disproportionately becoming judges, lawyers, and other high-powered officials, and violently enforcing white supremacy at every turn (Bazzi et al. 2023). As each stream of wealthy white migrants flowed into Dallas, they intermarried with the embryonic local upper class, and the earliest version of the upper-class family network began to grow. In 1895, the first social register – like a *Who's Who* for the upper class – was published, and the stage was set for the three papers in this dissertation.

That is the foundation of white wealth in Dallas, as in the United States as a whole: land theft, genocide, and enslavement. Stolen wealth flowed through white, state-sanctioned family

[3] That general strategy- using business revenues to buy large tracts of land that become increasingly valuable with the growth of a city- is the same one that built the Astor, Beekman, Schermerhorn, and Rhinelander fortunes of nineteenth century New York, among many others (Beckert 1993: 28).

ties, fueling the formation of the family web. Families of all three biggest enslavers in 1850 Dallas, Obadiah Knight, William Brown Miller, and James A. Smith, were entrenched in the Dallas elite for well over a century (Smith 1995). One of those descendants, right-wing billionaire Harlan Crow, has recently entered the national spotlight, because he has apparently spent decades giving lavish gifts to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Harlan is the great-great-great grandson of James A. Smith, on his mother's side.

Chapter One: The Family Web

The first paper, "The Family Web," traces the kin ties between Dallas elites from 1895-1945. It is the first full upper-class kinship network of a U.S. city. I show that at least seventy percent of the elite was connected through blood and marriage. The more deeply families connected to this vast kinship web, the more likely they were to persist over a half century, through multiple financial panics and a major oil boom. Patrilineal measures of family, including father-son chains and surname groupings, are unable to capture this vast web of interconnection, and many of the kin ties that matter most for elite persistence. I argue that wealthy families are not really isolated patrilineal dynasties that live or die with the success of sons. They are, rather, massive, resource-dense extended family webs, where kin ties between and including women frequently drive elite family entrenchment.

Here is how this population-level finding looked for the Caruths. For its first decade or so in Dallas, the Caruth family was an isolated patrilineage, consisting of a pair of wealthy enslaver brothers, Walter Anderson and William Barr Caruth, and later their father John. William arrived just in time to claim his Peters Colony acres, and his brother and father soon followed him[4].

[4] Though family legend has it that William grew his fortune from scratch- sometimes "nothing but a gold watch," and other times "a horse, $5 and a pistol" - he and his brother Walter, who soon followed William, received not only

Their first kin ties to other Dallas elites came during the Civil War enslaver migration, when a pair of sisters from the Mississippi Delta arrived - Annie and Mattie Worthington. Most early Dallas settlers arrived on covered wagons, horses, or their own feet, but Annie and Mattie were so rich that they came to Dallas in a carriage (Sanders 1988). Within two years, Annie and Mattie married Walter and William, respectively. These twice-connected branches of the Caruth family socialized and made business deals with various Worthington cousins for decades. In this way, the Caruths, who could be read just as a patrilineal dynasty, were increasingly connected to other families through women.

Kin connections with and between women were important, because they frequently helped drive elite family persistence, and also because elites did not always have sons. Non-patrilineal kin ties were essential even for the Caruths, who consistently produced patrilineal heirs. W. W. Caruth Jr. told a reporter, "The women, my mother and grandmother, were always the socialites. My father and I couldn't have cared less… Even today," he continues with a chuckle, "when my wife and I travel, she flies first class and I fly coach[5]" (Atkinson 1975b). It is true that the Caruth women did most of the relational labor that connected the family to the local upper class. It is also true that they used those connections to play key roles in the acquisition and maintenance of the Caruth family fortune. Will Jr. said that his grandfather acquired the land that made them rich, but it was equally the triumph of grandmother Mattie, who was widowed when their only child, Will Sr., was nine. Mattie took over the family business and carefully ran it for decades, using management techniques she learned growing up on her family's brutal network of Mississippi plantations. She is the one who acquired much of their most valuable

the free land, but also thousands of dollars in gold from their wealthy enslaver father (Dunlap 1976; Sanders 1988). They set up a general store, and when local settlers could not pay their bills in cash, they accepted land instead.

[5] Actually, they usually flew in their private plane (Moritsugu 1990).

cotton-growing land, buying it from her sister Annie and brother-in-law Walter[6]. She managed the education and elite socialization of her son Will Sr., sending him to the exclusive Bingham Military School in North Carolina. Mattie even designed the famed Caruth country mansion, ordering Abe Bush and several other recently freed Black men to model it after her favorite childhood plantation (Dunlap 1975; Sanders 1988). Mattie was a socialite, and she was also a shrewd businesswoman who did as much as her husband to acquire the vast Caruth acreage.

Mattie's son and only child, William Walter Caruth Sr. (1876-1949), who was born in their country mansion, inherited all the land she and her husband acquired. Obsessed with cotton and cattle, he largely refused to sell any of it. But he married the Dallas debutante Earle Rauch Clark, who had grown up in a family of powerful, well-connected bankers. Earle realized that as the city rapidly encroached on their interconnected plantations, and as land taxes creeped up, the family business needed to adapt. She decided that their son, W. W. Caruth, Jr., should go to Harvard Business School. Will Jr. was reluctant, and Will Sr. agnostic, but Earle used her own wealth to pay his tuition and her local influence to force him to attend. She enlisted two ambitious Dallas Harvard students to ensure that the Will Jr. arrived on campus– "orders" neither much wanted, but could not disobey, particularly since one of those ambitious men aspired to marry Will's reluctant second cousin Hazael (Beckett 1985; Sanders 1988). At Harvard, Will Jr. met and married Mabel Peters, a Boston debutante descended from a Harvard founder. He and Mabel came back to Dallas, and Will Jr. steadily converted the network of family plantations

[6] According to Mattie and Will's branch of the family, Annie and Walter's branch were spendthrifts who wasted their fortune and regularly went into debt. They said Walter was an alcoholic who neglected his plantations and drank himself to death. Annie allegedly told her sister that she wasn't raising her children to be "workmen" (Sanders 1988). Regardless of the truth of these allegations, it is clear that Annie and Walter's branch of the family, while durably wealthy and high-status, did not reach the economic heights of Mattie and Will's branch. In the 1920s, Annie and Walter's branch of the family sued Mattie and William's, trying to recover the valuable acreage they had sold to Mattie. According to William's branch, they bribed many of the Worthington cousins to testify on their behalf. They lost the case and changed the spelling of their surname to Carruth in protest.

into a tax-optimized collection of real estate developments and trusts. All in all, then, Will Jr. may have taken the billion-dollar baton from his father, but his grandmother helped build the baton, and his mother ensured he knew how to carry it. Non-patrilineal kin ties helped knit the elite together, and they also frequently drove processes of elite family persistence.

Chapter Two: The New Money Myth

The second paper in this dissertation tackles an enduring archetype of Texas wealth: the new money oilman. Every major account of Dallas high society in the 1930s tells the same story. Supposedly, in the aftermath of the 1930 East Texas Oil Boom and during the Great Depression, the old money cotton families fell out of the upper class, and new money oil families took their place. It is true that during the 1930s, oil supplanted cotton as the dominant regionally-specific industry. But as the paper will demonstrate, this supposed turnover from new to old money among elite families is largely a myth. Most cotton families persisted through the Great Depression, and most oilmen were born upper-class. Moreover, oil and cotton men often combined in the same families; most Dallas elites were closely related to both. I posit that the new versus old money narrative, which echoes similar narratives across the U.S. and Europe, corresponded to a turnover among tycoons, and a shift in the prototypical Texan elite from an enslaver aristocrat to a newly rich oilman, rather than to actual turnover among the one percent as a whole.

This, too, is something the Caruth family dealt with, because they were old money "cotton people," and in 1935, they got a supposedly new money oilman of their own. The connection formed when the third[7] Mattie Caruth (1908-1972), daughter of Earle and W. W.

[7] The second Mattie Caruth (1868-1956) was the daughter of Walter and Annie Worthington Caruth, and the only woman born in the second generation of Dallas Caruths. She married wealthy banker Neill McMillan and moved

Caruth Sr., and older sister of W. W. Caruth, Jr., married the oilman D. Harold Byrd (1900-1986). The Caruths disliked Byrd, whom they saw as vulgar and greedy. He did look and behave like the classic Texas new money "oillionaire." After making millions of dollars practically overnight in the East Texas Oil Boom, he had decided to move to Dallas, "become a welcome member of Dallas high society,…and eventually get married" (Byrd 1978: 38). The following year he became the very first "Byrd" listed in the Dallas social registers, and three years after that, he married Mattie. He bragged constantly about his fortune, threw extravagant parties, and landed in embarrassing national news stories on spendthrift Texas millionaires. At the same time, the Caruths were supposedly feeling the pinch of the Depression: some people said that Will Sr. was starving his cows. Even Mattie disliked her husband, especially in her later years. When she died, she was buried in all her best jewelry, in a casket sealed with concrete and steel, because she didn't want Harold to give her jewels to his girlfriends (Sanders 1988:177-8). The Caruths, a quintessential old money cotton family of Dallas, emphatically resented the intrusion of their "new money" oilman.

But as Byrd himself explained in his memoir, *I'm an Endangered Species: Autobiography of a Free Enterpriser,* he was not by any means "crashing" his way into Dallas high society by marrying or amassing money: he was welcomed immediately because of his matrilineal cousins. His mother's sister's children Elizabeth, Joel, and Easley Waggoner had grown up in the Dallas elite and were members of the most exclusive white social clubs in the city. They introduced Harold to Mattie Caruth, who was friends with Joel (Byrd 1978:49; Galloway 1996). On his father's side, he was publicly acknowledged as the cousin of two

with him to St. Louis in 1895. The first and second Matties were known to be very close until the first Mattie died in 1907 (Sanders 1988), but in the 1920s, Mattie Caruth McMillan joined her mother and brothers in the lawsuit against her aunt's son and grandchildren, eventually changing her name to Mattie Carruth McMillan (see Footnote 6).

"nationally prominent figures," U.S. Senator and Virginia Governor Harry Flood Byrd and Arctic explorer Richard Evelyn Byrd[8]. Even his mother-in-law Earle Caruth, who "was not the list bit charmed by him," admitted that "there was nothing really wrong with Byrd's family" (Sanders 1988:159). Indeed, drilling oil wells was hugely expensive, requiring access to massive loans that were available almost exclusively to well-connected white men like Byrd. In multiple senses, then, Byrd was not really "new" to money or to the upper class. And though Will Caruth Sr. may have starved his cows, the Caruth fortune is even today uncountably large. This is the truth of Dallas's new money myth: "new money" was rarely new, "old money" rarely fell, and everyone married each other anyway. A general pattern that, again, would be difficult to spot without information on women or kin ties beyond fathers and sons.

Chapter Three: The Gender of Inheritance

The third, final dissertation paper tackles the gender of inheritance in upper-class Dallas. It begins with a puzzling finding. In the written wills of early twentieth century white upper-class Dallas, a thoroughly patriarchal context, women inherited more wealth more often than men. Most of the time, wealthy testators in Dallas tended to nominally split their fortunes equally between their heirs. But many of them left extra bequests to sisters, daughters, and nieces, especially when their female relatives were unmarried, to ensure that they could independently maintain their upper-class lifestyle without having to work for pay. These extra bequests

[8] The Byrds were one of the most powerful families in Virginia. D. Harold Byrd consistently referred to the Virginia Byrds as his cousins, and vice versa. The Arctic explorer Richard Evelyn Byrd Jr. even named a mountain range in Antarctica after "his cousin"- the Harold Byrd Mountains. This acknowledged connection likely has more to do with the fact that they shared a surname and were all rich and white than with actual family history. I have not been able to verify their cousinhood genealogically, because Harold's patrilineal ancestry becomes difficult to trace beyond his great-great-great grandfather Amos Byrd (b. 1737), who lived in Missouri, not Virginia. An anonymous genealogist on *Find-A-Grave* speculates that Amos was born to an unwed Virginia Byrd woman named Maria. If this is true, the closest genealogical relationship Harold could have had to the famous Virginia Byrds was fifth cousins.

aggregated into more money going to women overall. Less surprising, and much more typical, is the fact that the *types* of wealth elites left their kin also varied by gender. Men inherited more of the kinds of wealth that gave them control and the possibility of further wealth accumulation: family businesses, stocks, and trusteeship. Many of these kinds of income-generating bequests were concentrated over the life course, obscuring them from the bequests described in wills. Women tended to inherit more of the kinds of wealth that gave them status and security without much control, and that were concentrated at death rather than over the life course: trusts, family homes, antiques, and jewelry. These gendered bequests formed a family system, in which men controlled and accumulated the family fortunes, and women maintained the family class status, using their private reserves to help kin when needed. Women may have inherited more than men when their relatives died, but they did not necessarily inherit more throughout their lives. Men's management of family trusts and businesses symbolically converted their inheritances into "earned" wealth. And overall, because the upper class held most of the city's wealth, and because it was so interrelated, most of the bequests in the city simply circulated within the large, white, upper-class family web.

These general patterns held in the Caruth family. Will Caruth Jr. often said, "All I inherited from my mother and father was a grand piano" (Atkinson 1975b; Fitzgibbons 1982). This was patently untrue: court cases, newspaper articles, and the family hagiography mention multiple large gifts of land and money gifted directly to Will Jr. from his parents over the course of his life (e. g., Byrd v. Caruth 1974; Atkinson 1975b; Sanders 1988). He also bought considerable tracts of land from his parents – on his terms, with no competition from other buyers – which he then developed with loans from a bank run largely by his mother's side of the

family[9], accumulating a fortune that belonged solely to himself and his wife. Most importantly, he inherited total control over the family empire at a young age – very soon after he returned from Harvard Business School. He is the one who made his parents' estate plan. With the help of multiple professionals and employees, including legendary tax attorney and local elite Vester Hughes, Will Jr. placed already high-value stocks and bonds in a trust for his mother. He split undeveloped land, which would later be much more valuable, in trusts for himself, his sister, his four sons, and his sister's two sons. He gave himself trusteeship over everything. When his sister and brother-in-law complained, especially at the fact that their two sons each got the same as his four (they said he "forgot how to divide by two"), Will Jr. claimed that he had been more than generous. He did all the hard work of managing the fortune, and moreover, he said he actually gave his sister much more than himself on multiple occasions. "He must have felt as if he was their slave," observed his chosen biographer, with apparently zero irony (Sanders 1988: 171). In Will Jr.'s view, management of the family fortune converted his inheritance into his "earned" wealth, and the only thing he really inherited was that grand piano. Many people bought this story, including one journalist who described him, likely to Will's delight, as a "self-made heir" (Atkinson 1975b). In contrast, his grandmother's successful management of the family fortune remained largely invisible.

This is likely the truth behind elite Dallas women inheriting more than their brothers at relatives' deaths. On paper, it may have seemed as if Will Jr.'s sister Mattie Caruth Byrd inherited as much or even more than him. He certainly wanted it to look that way. She also

[9] Most of Will Jr.'s loans came from the First National Bank, the "largest and most established bank in Dallas," which his mother's side of the family had run for decades (Broyles and Sheshunoff 1974). Robert Henry Stewart I (1854-1936), stepfather of Will Jr.'s mother Earle and father of his three maternal uncles, ran the bank until Will's early twenties. Will's first cousin Robert Henry Stewart III (1925-2002), the son of Earle's half-brother R. H. Stewart II, took over First National when Will Jr. was in his forties.

undoubtedly inherited more than she would have in a more strictly patrilineal systems of inheritance, which has important implications for the flow of resources across the family web. But ultimately, Will Jr. held the billion-dollar baton. "After all," the reporter observed, "if a man has *control* of a billion dollars worth of land, he doesn't really need to own all of it" (Atkinson 1975b).

When Mattie Worthington Caruth modeled the Caruth country mansion after her favorite family plantation in Mississippi, she imagined Caruths living there far into the future, her great-great grandchildren proudly ensconced in the material and symbolic trappings of economic, social, and racial domination. In her will, she wrote that if there ever came a time when no Caruth wanted to live in the country mansion, it should be burnt to the ground. "We don't want any strangers wandering around in there," explained her grandson Will Jr. "There's been too damn many Caruths living there" (Dunlap 1976). And indeed, Caruths lived in the house continuously for 149 years, right until Mattie's great-great grandchildren reached adulthood. At that point, her descendants strategically adapted to the changing economic landscape, as Mattie herself had done by moving to Dallas. When Mabel Peters Caruth died, she left the nonprofit Communities Foundation of Texas a pile of money to purchase the house – from her son George, for an undisclosed sum. The Caruth mansion still sits in the center of Dallas, now lovingly restored and preserved with her tax-deductible donation. It is not open to the public.

Chapter 1

The Family Web: Multigenerational Class Persistence in Elite Populations

INTRODUCTION

Dallas cattle baron J. B. Wilson died in 1920 with millions of dollars and zero sons. In patrilineal terms, his dynasty died with him. No one took over his business empire, and the only heir to bear his name was the eight-story Wilson Building he constructed downtown. The reality was more complicated. Wilson split his millions between his wife and five daughters, three of whom were married into well-known Dallas dynasties. Wilson himself had married his business partner's niece, and he frequently worked with his brother Frederick, who had married into a tightly interwoven community of wealthy Swiss immigrants living on Swiss Avenue. One of the children of those Swiss immigrants married Wilson's daughter Bess, becoming Wilson's son-in-law in addition to his sister-in-law's first cousin once removed. Wilson's daughter Fay married LeRoy Munger, heir to a cotton gin empire. Her sister-in-law Rena Munger married prominent banker George Nathan Aldredge, whose brother Sawnie was elected mayor a year after Wilson's death. Geraldine Wilson married Robert E. Lee Knight Jr., the grandson of multiple wealthy early settlers, including the biggest enslaver in antebellum Dallas. When he died several years later, she inherited his wealth in addition to her father's and promptly married another local heir, Horatio Ben Smith. The dizzying density of elite kin ties extended well beyond J. B. Wilson and his daughters to encompass over half of local high society by 1945, and most of its most prominent members. None of J. B. Wilson's grandchildren carried his last name, but they eventually inherited some of his fortune, as well as the fortunes of their other grandparents and

great-grandparents, and the collective connections to the dense web of kin ties that facilitated their own advantageous marriages, friendships, and business partnerships. Even if J. B. Wilson's dynasty ended with him, his fortune and family did not.

J. B. Wilson's story is consequential for our understanding of elite persistence and for the multigenerational transmission of socioeconomic class more generally. Research on the family-based transmission of class is wide and deep, and it is traditionally based on fathers and sons. That focus makes sense given a historical context where women, particularly upper-class white women, have been less likely than their husbands to be formally employed, and where the structure of most longitudinal data makes it easier to link sons and fathers than mothers, daughters, or other kin. Similarly, work on the persistence of elites has tended to measure families through a unidirectional male line when families are measured at all.

Patrilineal, dyadic measures of family are simpler and more scalable than full family networks. It is much easier to determine that there was no J. B. Wilson Jr. than to discover that his son-in-law was also his sister-in-law's first cousin once removed. But as social scientists have expanded beyond father-son class transmission models to include mothers, daughters, grandparents, cousins, and siblings, they have typically found that those ties, too, are significantly associated with adult outcomes (Mare 2011; Torche 2015; Lundberg 2020). At the same time, technological advances are making it increasingly feasible to trace historical persons with a breadth and depth that have only recently become practically possible "within the lifetime of a single scholar" (Bearman 2015: 4; Cousin, Khan, and Mears 2018). Moreover, inheritance is once again a driving factor in the global wealth gap, and wealth regularly flows beyond the father-son tie (Beckert 2022; Bessière and Gollac 2023). Together, these trends point to the possibility and utility of richer data on elite family networks.

Children are not born simply to fathers – they are born to complex, varying kinship networks. Mapping these fuller family networks is a complex, time-consuming task, and it is helpful only to the extent that non-patrilineal kin ties play a significant role in the processes we want to understand. If we are interested in the inheritance of landed estates in aristocratic England, for example, it makes sense to group families patrilineally, as did Stone and Stone (1984), because for one thousand years estates and titles passed mostly through the male line (Starr 2019). But if we are interested in processes that regularly involve kin ties beyond the patrilineage, such as inheritance in the white upper class of the U.S. since at least the Revolutionary War (Jones-Rogers 2019), the multigenerational durability of wealth (Beckert 2022), or wealth inequality and its relationship to familial transactions (Zelizer 2005; Bessière and Gollac 2023), more expansive measures of family are needed.

This chapter will proceed as follows. I begin with a literature review and a description of this case study. I then introduce the first-ever full kinship network of an elite population in an U.S. city. I show that most (at least 69.6%) Dallas elites were ultimately related through close family ties in a single web, and that the web encompassed most of the very wealthy and powerful people in the city. The web cohered rapidly as elites intermarried, making the full kinship graph increasingly distinct from a patrilineal graph. I then demonstrate that patrilineal measures of family significantly underestimate the depth and breadth of elite family persistence in Dallas high society over fifty years, because not all elites had sons. Elites whose families persisted over nearly half a century almost always (96%) connected to the family web, and they connected more deeply than elites whose families dropped out. Three case studies demonstrate that kin ties with and between elite women fundamentally structured the economic lives of the upper class, and that rather than flowing primarily from fathers to sons, elite resources flowed in multiple

directions through multiple types of kin ties, providing status and security to elites in the family web. I conclude that due to the particularly entangled nature of the upper class, the family web is a promising, flexible analytic approach to the study of multigenerational class persistence at the top of the class distribution.

BACKGROUND

Family-based transmission of upper-class status

In large part due to data limitations, the voluminous mobility literature in sociology and economics has paradigmatically measured class persistence as the degree of socioeconomic association between fathers and their adult sons (e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967). Innovations in data collection and analysis are now making it feasible for researchers to move beyond the father-son tie. Scandinavian registry data links children to both mothers and fathers, allowing scholars to systematically include mothers, maternal grandparents, and daughters (e. g., Hällsten and Pfeffer 2017; Toft and Friedman 2021). Across the globe, genealogical microdata linking individuals over three or more generations are increasingly available, generating new theoretical and empirical insights about complex family-based stratification processes (Song and Campbell 2017). In the U.S., moving beyond the patrilineage has been challenging because women have traditionally changed their surnames after marriage[10], and because the U.S. Census has never recorded married women's natal surnames. Accordingly, large-scale contemporary U.S. Census matching algorithms have remained patrilineal (Abramitzky et al. 2021). Theoretical and empirical innovation in stratification research usually springs from new data (Ganzeboom,

[10] Although there has never been a U.S. law specifically stating that women must change their surnames after marriage, the custom has been so baked in to bureaucratic and ideological assumptions that married women in the U.S. encountered significant legal problems when trying to use their premarital surnames well into the 1970s (Gorence, 1976).

Treiman, and Ultee 1991), and the stratification literature continues to be enriched by a data landscape that includes women, multiple kin tie types, and multiple generations, as well as variations across population, time, and place.

I introduce a new dataset capable of bringing the multigenerational perspective on class transmission to the study of elite populations in the U.S. As Mare (2011) observed, the expansion beyond the two-generation transmission model may be particularly important for the upper class, because elite institutions like generation-skipping trusts and Ivy League legacy admissions persist over and above the parent-child tie. Quantitative estimates of upper-class familial persistence have tended to follow the paradigmatic father-son class transmission model, taking a group of upper-class men and estimating how many of them were represented by elite male descendants at a later time. Families are measured patrilineally, by surname (Baltzell 1958; Padgett and Ansell 1993; Clark 2014[11]; Padgett and McLean 2006; Barone and Mocetti 2021; Cummins 2022; Dupraz and Simson 2023), father-son ties and chains (Pessen 1973; Wiener 1978; Campbell 1982; Stone and Stone 1984; Song, Campbell, and Lee 2015, Dupont and Rosebloom 2018), or some combination of the two (Jaher 1984; Rishel 1990; Padgett 2010; Ager, Boustan, and Eriksson 2021). But elites do not always have sons, and in most settings, they do not pass their wealth, status, and power exclusively to sons. Further, upper-class families tend to intermarry, compounding advantages in their mutual descendants, meaning that it is not only more urgent but also more feasible to compile information on elite kin beyond the patrilineage: in an endogamous upper-class world, the grandparents of one elite are likely to be the siblings, great-aunts, and second cousins of many others.

[11] See Torche and Corvalon (2018) for a comprehensive critique of his methodology and argument.

At birth, children inherit an initial position in a broader kinship network. Upper-class children often inherit positions that are dense with connections to highly resourced, similarly well-positioned kin. Lineal models of family-based inequality elide the possibility of influence from lateral or co-lineal ties, including siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles, as well as the possibility of compound influence from multiple elite kin. Notably, childless elders are entirely excluded from any active role in family class transmission. But adults without children can and do play an active role in the intergenerational transmission of family class status, most obviously as aunts and uncles. And extended elite kin, in general, can and do provide their relatives with connections, jobs, bequeathments, loans, gifts, housing, status, and other resources throughout the life course. It is reasonable to hypothesize that a child embedded in a web of upper-class extended kin may be more durably upper class than a child born to newly wealthy parents. Without broader information on family ties, we cannot tell the difference.

Relational economies in upper class worlds

Even now, upper class worlds often adhere to a gendered division of labor, in which husbands work high-income jobs and wives focus on socializing, volunteering, and childrearing (Kendall 2002; Sherman 2017; Ginalski 2020; Keister, Thébaud, and Yavorsky 2022; Yavorsky et al. 2023). It makes some sense, then, to exclude women from income- or occupation-based models of upper-class transmission: women in elite families have rarely been breadwinners. Indeed, patrilineages may be the best structural base for a study of family-based class transmission in populations where status and property flow primarily from fathers to sons, such as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century China (Song, Campbell, and Lee 2015) and the English aristocracy before the first World War (Starr 2019). But in many settings, the kinds of resources

most likely to drive upper-class family longevity, like trust funds, club memberships, land, family businesses, elite school legacies, and sheer wealth (Harrington 2017; Beckert 2022), regularly flow to and from women, even though women often receive less than their male kin (Bessière 2022; Bessière and Gollac 2023). Kin ties themselves have traditionally been maintained in many societies through women's social and emotional labor as kin-keepers (Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur 1987; Farrell 1993). Viviana Zelizer's (1997, 2005, 2012) work offers a way to think beyond the gendered economic-domestic dichotomy and see relationships and social processes as not separate from or reducible to economic activity, but as fundamentally constituting economic activity. Elite "relational work" is the starting point for an understanding of elite economic worlds – worlds that are only visible with the systematic inclusion of women.

Although all people tend to share their advantages with family members, elites have more of those advantages to share in the first place. In the contemporary U.S., wealthier families are more likely to receive financial assistance from family members, and when they do receive financial assistance, they tend to receive larger amounts (Schoeni and Ross 2005; Western et al. 2012). Kin support has different effects for different classes; whereas care work, loans, and gifts are often a matter of survival in under-resourced family networks (Reese, Cottom, and Laymon 2021), for highly resourced families, such support helps relatives build wealth, access elite jobs, and generally maintain upper-class status. Gifts, favors, and bequeathments on the intimate scale aggregate on the population level, widening the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. As Zelizer (2005:27) observed, the "intergenerational transmission of wealth illustrates…[that] intimate transactions [can] create or sustain large-scale inequalities by class, race, ethnicity, and even gender." In a Zelizerian sense, the elite family web can be read as a vast architecture of resource hoarding and exchange: in other words, an upper class.

Elite endogamy and family networks

Endogamy is ubiquitous in elite populations, showing up in settings as various as Florence during the Renaissance (Padgett and Ansell 1993; Padgett 2010), elite business families in contemporary Taiwan (Chung, Lee, and Zhu 2021), the U.S. Black elite since the nineteenth century (Gatewood 1990; Bodenhorn 2015), the business elites of early twentieth century Mexico City (Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur 1987), the twelfth-century French aristocracy (Ermakoff 1997), centuries of the Central American ruling class (Stone 1990), the contemporary Norwegian upper class (Toft and Jarness 2021), and the white elite of New York (Beckert 2001), Boston (Farrell 1993), Philadelphia (Baltzell 1958), Pittsburgh (Rishel 1990), and Virginia (Gordon-Reed 2008) throughout their histories. The phenomenon is consistent with the general principle of class-based homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

Elite endogamy helps upper-class families preserve and augment their wealth, status, and power (Padgett and Ansell 1993; Chung, Lee, and Zhu 2021; Goñi 2022). Over time, endogamy tangles lineages. Studies mapping kinship ties between political and corporate elites have found that they were highly interrelated. Bro (2022) mapped both matrilineal and patrilineal kin connections between political elites in nineteenth-century Chile, finding that at least 69% were related in a single cluster. Stone (1990) found that 69.2% of the Costa Rican Presidents from 1784-1986 were descended from the same conquistador. In a broader sense of kinship, Henrikson *et al.* (2018) found that Danish corporate chairman-executive patrimonial relations exhibit a center-periphery structure, in which one-fifth of the relations are connected through a central core; the authors suggest that this structure may be common to most genealogical networks. Phenomenologically, elites themselves have noted how interrelated their families tend

to be. “The best way to describe Old Money families,” observed one scion of New England wealth (Aldrich [1988] 1995:55), “is to call them families of cousins.”

Why Dallas?: Dallas elites in historical and national context

There are arguments to be made for mapping the kin networks of practically any population. The Dallas elite population from 1895-1945 is a good choice for this study because it is (a) practical, in the sense that data is accessible, comprehensive, and manageable in size, and (b) rigorous, in the sense that the city’s sheer newness makes the case a particularly demanding test, across a landscape of potential elite populations, of the idea that endogamy might weave massive upper-class family webs.

In a practical sense, hand-constructing an elite kinship network in the U.S. is most feasible for the first half of the twentieth century. Socially prominent white people living between 1900-1950 are especially searchable across the life course through the publicly available written record. In about twenty cities, white social elites listed themselves yearly in social registers. Social registers are directories of prominent families that were popular from about the Gilded Age to the mid-twentieth century, and are a standard measure of social elite status in historical studies of U.S. elites (Mills [1956] 2000; Accominotti, Khan, and Storer 2018). They were one of many strategies deployed by white, predominantly Protestant U.S. elites to increasingly distance themselves from lower-class whites and people of color in the context of rapid population growth, rising immigration, and the recent emancipation of formerly enslaved Black Americans (Beckert 2001). Whereas other elite directories like the *Who’s Who* list individuals in positions of power, making them well-suited to studies examining composition and recruitment in the positional elite (Ellersgaard, Larsen, and Munk 2012; Reeves et al. 2017;

Denord, Lagneau-Ymonet, and Thine 2018; Friedman and Reeves 2020; Worth, Reeves, and Friedman 2022; Matsumoto and Okazaki 2023), the social registers list upper class *families*, making them well-suited to multigenerational studies of family-based inequality and stratification[12]. Among cities with social registers, Dallas is one of only a handful with a population small enough to code by hand.[13]

Dallas's newness makes it a particularly rigorous case for examining the scope and density of elite kin entanglement. A kinship map of nineteenth century European royals, for example, would likely be completely connected, because upward mobility was rare, and royal families intermarried for centuries. But Dallas was a settler colonial city, following a typically murderous development pattern: in the 1840s, the colonial Texan government "claimed" a patch of land already much-used for seasonal trading and migration by Caddoan, Wichita, Comanche, and Cherokee peoples; the government enforced that claim with genocidal military action and promises of free or cheap acreage to white settlers; the settlers arrived in droves, amassed wealth to varying degrees, and rapidly reproduced (Phillips 2006; Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). As it grew, Dallas increasingly became a local magnet for white elites – what Savage (2021) calls a "center for accumulation." By 1890, Dallas was the biggest city in Texas, and in 1895, white elites compiled their first social register.

Dallas white elites in 1895 were not necessarily (or even usually) new to the upper class, but they were new to living together in Dallas. The first social register overwhelmingly (96.4%) listed adults born elsewhere. Each register that followed typically featured hundreds of

[12] Although the Dallas social registers had the same contents, functions, and selection processes as the New York social registers, they were never published by the central New York Social Register Association because their various compilers included paid advertisements, and they did not want to stop doing so (Baird 1932).
[13] Cities with social registers and similarly small population sizes include Portland, OR, Providence, RI, and Seattle, WA. While larger cities like New York would be fascinating to study in this way, they are too big: a single edition of the New York Social Register from 1899 contains more than four times the number of elites in this entire study (Accominotti, Khan, and Storer 2018).

newcomers. Much as contemporary Norway is an interesting case for investigating upper-class homogamy and persistence "because of the purported invisibility of concentrated privilege at the top of the class structure" (Toft and Jarness 2021:73), and as Switzerland is an interesting case for understanding elite cohesiveness because it is particularly decentralized and internationalized (Rossier et al. 2022), the white upper class of Dallas from 1895-1945 is an interesting case for studying kinship networks because it was principally composed of new arrivals. Indeed, in the contemporary context, where researchers have simultaneously noted elites' increased geographic mobility (Bühlmann, David, and Mach 2013; Cousin and Chauvin 2021; Chiang 2022; Hoang 2022) and gravitation toward cities and other elite enclaves (Bruno and Salle 2018; Farrell 2020; Mears 2020; Savage 2021), early twentieth-century Dallas may tell us more about present-day elite demographic processes than its older contemporaries. The Dallas case demonstrates that "families of cousins" are not exclusive to aristocracies. Even with a constant stream of newcomers, moderate levels of elite endogamy and reproduction can produce massive, entangled family webs in a matter of decades.

THE FAMILY WEB

Mapping the web

Overall, my approach is best characterized as a prosopography: a historical method in which a researcher picks a collection of people, asks a set of uniform questions about them, and examines their intertwining life courses, often including a set of detailed case studies (Stone 1971; Rossier 2019). This population consists of everyone listed in the Dallas social registers from 1895 to 1945 (n = 12,282). All of them, with the exception of one half-Choctaw Christian

evangelist named Frank Hall Wright[14], were socially categorized as white. When I added each family, I looked them up on *Ancestry.com* and in the *Dallas Morning News* archives, using these records to include, at minimum, their natal surnames, birth and death dates and locations, occupations, Christian or Jewish affiliation, and kin ties to other elites in the dataset. I have also collected and coded multiple measures of elite status external to the registers: estate notices from the *Dallas Morning News*, wealth and home value records from the U.S. Census, and lists of debutantes, Dallas mayors, members of the politically powerful Dallas Citizens Council, and members of the most exclusive white men's social club in the city, the Idlewild Club[15] (Kendall 2008). I drew on newspaper and magazine articles, memoirs, family papers, and other archival sources to inform the case studies and my broader understanding of elites' lives. For more details on the data compilation process, sources used, variables, analysis, and limitations, please see the Appendix.

I included the Dallas social registers published in 1895-6, 1900-1910, 1912-14, and 1925-45, treating the 12,282 people listed as the full population of Dallas high society from 1895-1945[16]. They are the denominator for all the empirical claims I make about elite kinship, wealth, status, and power during this time period. This decision involves two overarching assumptions: first, that the social registers are a reasonable measure of high society, despite their gaps and

[14] Frank Hall Wright (1860-1922) was the son of a Choctaw Principal Chief, Allen Wright, and a white missionary from Ohio named Harriet. He lived in Dallas with his white wife Addie and three children for about fifteen years while he traveled around Texas and Oklahoma proselytizing to various Native communities. He and his family never intermarried with the Dallas white elite, and they were not included in any of the exclusive social clubs, but they were listed in the registers and regularly mentioned in the elite gossip magazine, *Beau Monde*, which was published by their neighbors across the street.

[15] The Idlewild Club, founded in 1884, is "one of the oldest and most prestigious wall-less clubs in the southwestern United States, and "has been referred to as 'THE symbol of high society'" (Kendall 2008: 9). Members are exclusively men, and at least until 1987, they have been exclusively white. The only two Jewish members have been Philip and Alex Sanger, ultra-wealthy owners of the Sanger Brothers Department Store in the early 1900s (Idlewild Centennial Committee 1987). The Idlewild Club selects the debutantes each year and organizes a debutante ball, "the most prestigious ball" in Dallas high society (Kendall 2008:82).

[16] There were smatterings of registers after 1945, but I have not yet coded their contents comprehensively enough to include them in this population examined in this paper.

opacities, and second, that high society is a suitable population of interest for an examination of elite kinship- rather than all very wealthy families, or all very politically powerful ones. Both assumptions come with their own limitations; I address the first in the Limitations section and the second in the section on social, economic, and political elites.

The full kin network of Dallas high society consisted of a tangled web of densely interconnected kin relations in the center, surrounded by much smaller clusters of orbiting families and individuals. That central tangle of relations, or giant component, is what I refer to as the "family web." Cumulatively, most elites who participated in high society from 1895-45 were connected through close family ties in the single 8,545-person cluster. The web was 93 percent Christian and seven percent Jewish, roughly similar proportions to the overall dataset, though few spousal ties within the web (.6%) were interreligious. Elites outside the web were usually connected only to their own household and perhaps a few others; the mean cluster size in the periphery was four people. Only 134 people listed (1.1%) were never related to anyone in the social registers. Those isolates were disproportionately men (57.4%) and tended to be in the city for short periods of time to fill high-level positions in extra-local businesses, like the railroads. The mean distance between people in the web was 11.3 kin ties, and the diameter was 35, which means that the most distantly related elites in the web were 35 kin ties apart.

Social, economic, and political elites in the family web

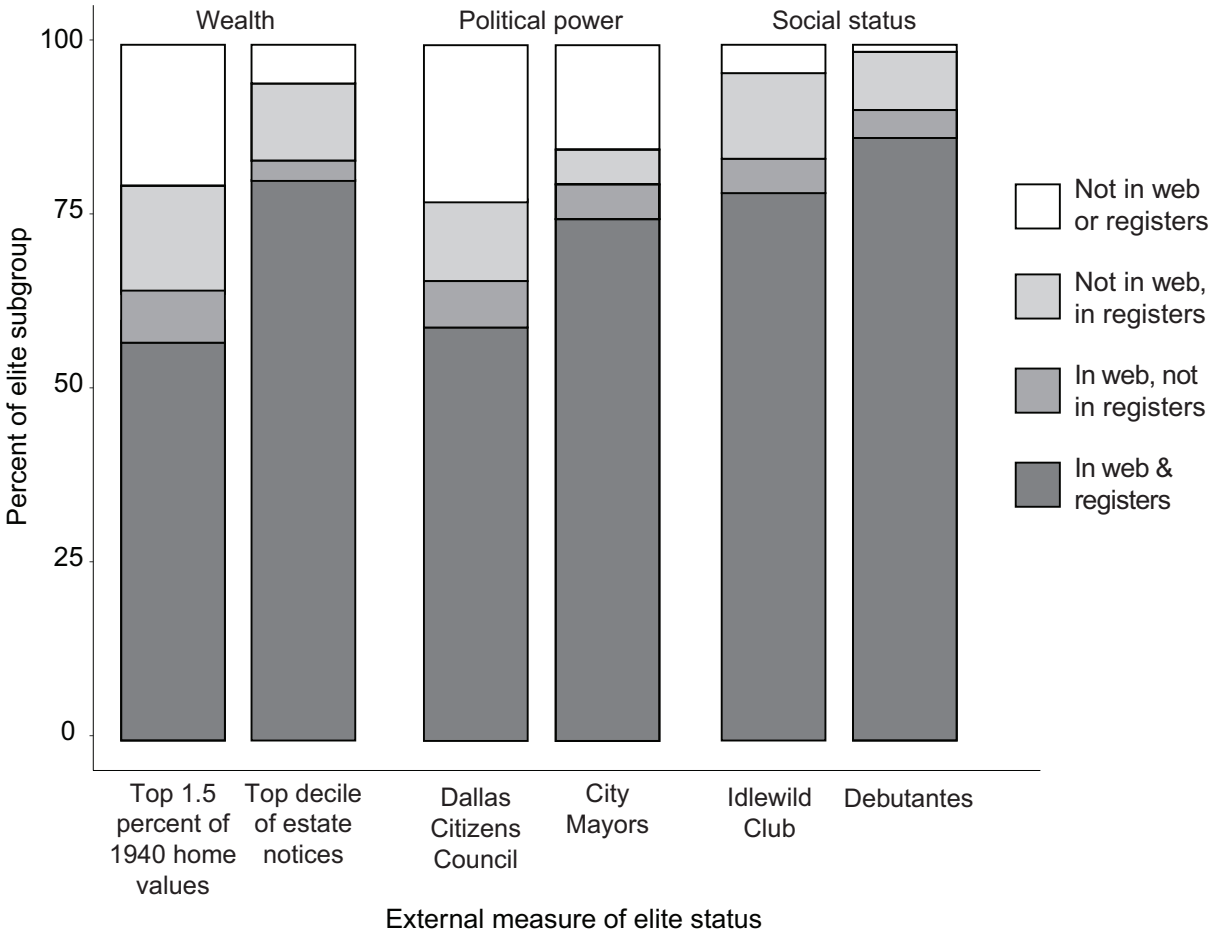
Conceptually, I follow Khan's (2012:361) flexible definition of elites as people with "vastly disproportionate access to or control over resources." I use this term interchangeably with "upper class," which emphasizes the kin, social, and cultural connections between individuals (Domhoff 1967). I prefer these flexible terms because they best approximate the population

studied here, which most comprehensively covered the population of social elites, but also included most members of other analytic elite groupings, such as economic or political elites. In defining elites and the upper class by membership in the social register, I diverge from many contemporary elite studies, in which elites and the upper class are typically defined by occupation (e. g., the Oslo Register Data Class Scheme or the *Who's Who*) or income (e. g., Yavorsky et al. 2023). Most men in the dataset did have occupations meeting these definitions of cultural, professional, and economic elites, and in the 1940 Census, most reported top-coded incomes, when they reported incomes from wages at all. But few of the women held salary-paying jobs, and indeed, for women, refraining from market-based labor *was* an upper-class status marker. Relying on the social registers, rather than strictly income- or occupation-based definitions of elite status, allows me to fully include women and children in this study.

The population does not include all people who could be considered elite by various alternate metrics. Notably, it does not include any of the city's Black or Latinx elites – people who, while actively excluded from the social registers, held disproportionate status within their own communities, and in a few cases, amassed moderate fortunes. The focus on white elites in this study of elite kinship and resource exchange reflects not only the fact that the social registers were exclusively white, but also the reality that Dallas from 1895-1945 was a segregated city in which white elites violently monopolized resources of every kind, exploiting Black people and other people of color to enrich and empower themselves while violently barring them from amassing wealth and power of their own (Phillips 2006). Accordingly, various collections of economic and political elites were also all white: mayors, the city council, the Dallas Citizens Council, the largest estates, and the most expensive houses listed in the 1940 Census.

Beyond systematically excluding all people of color, the social registers excluded wealthy and/or politically powerful white people who were not considered sufficiently socially elite. But multiple external measures indicate a high level of overlap between types of elite status. Most very wealthy and powerful people were also socially elite whites, and most white people who were measurably elite were also connected to the central family web. Moreover, many wealthy and powerful white people who were not listed in the social registers were deeply enmeshed in the family web (though, for consistency's sake, they are not included in the population analyzed in the main empirical sections).

Figure 1. Economic, social, and political elites in social registers and family web

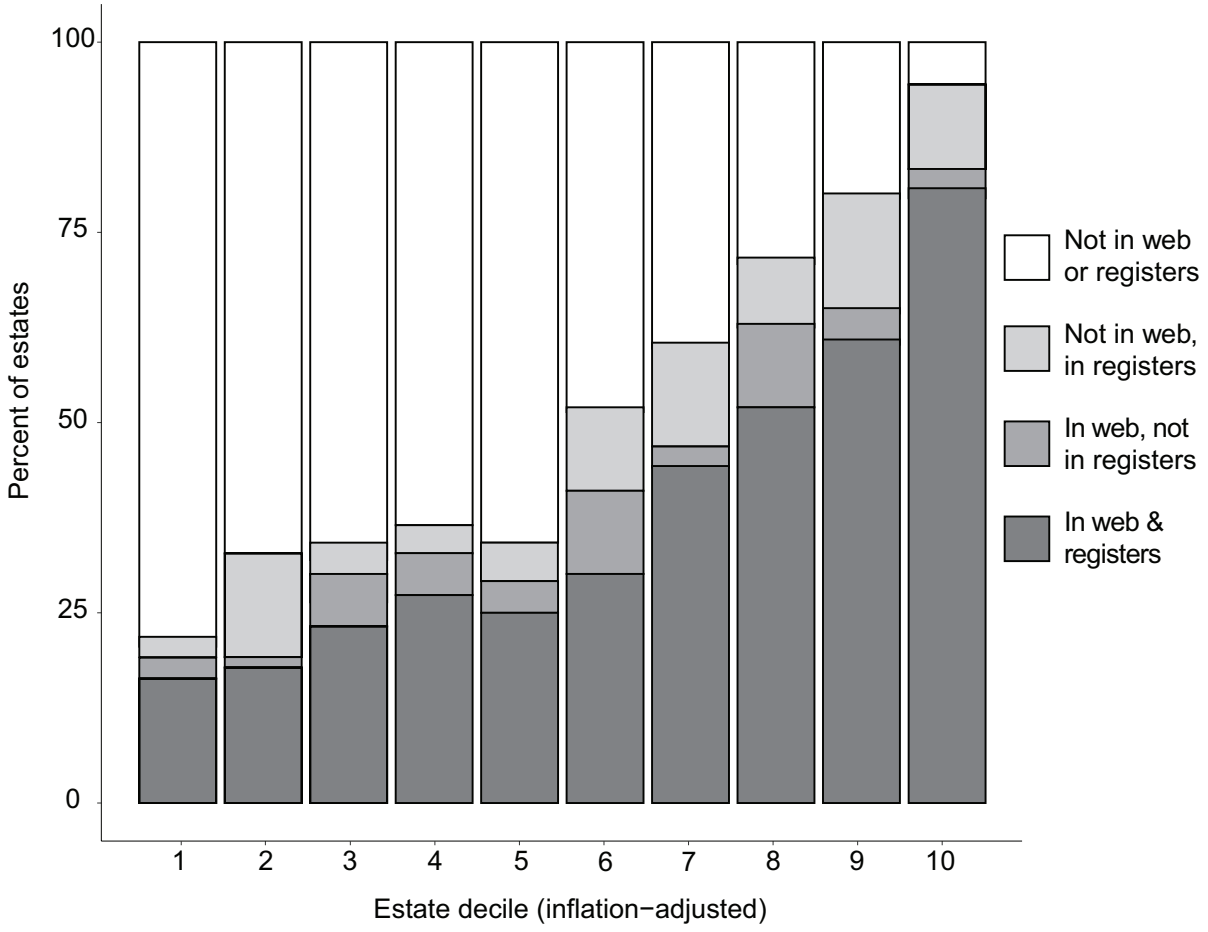


Sources: Home values from U.S. Census of Dallas County, 1940; Estate notices from *Dallas Morning News* archives, 1895-1945; original 1937 Dallas Citizens Council members from Fairbanks (1998); Idlewild Club members and debutantes 1886-1945 from Idlewild Centennial Committee (1987).

Figure 1 depicts rates of inclusion in the social registers and the family web for several external indicators of wealth, status, and power. The social registers overlapped most completely with external measures of social status: almost all debutantes and members of the ultra-exclusive men's Idlewild club were in the social registers. But the registers also overlapped significantly with measures of political and economic status. Most mayors were listed in the social registers, and most of those were connected to the web. Most charter members of the notoriously

politically powerful group called the Dallas Citizens' Council were in the registers, and most of those were in the web. Most owners of the top 1.5 percent most expensive homes in 1940 Dallas were in the registers, and most of those were in the web. Finally, a collection of all estate notices published in the local newspaper (n = 730), depicted more in depth in Figure 2, suggests that the wealthier a person was at death, the more likely they were to have been listed in the social registers and connected to the family web.

Figure 2. Social register listing and family web connection for *Dallas Morning News* estate notices, 1895-1945

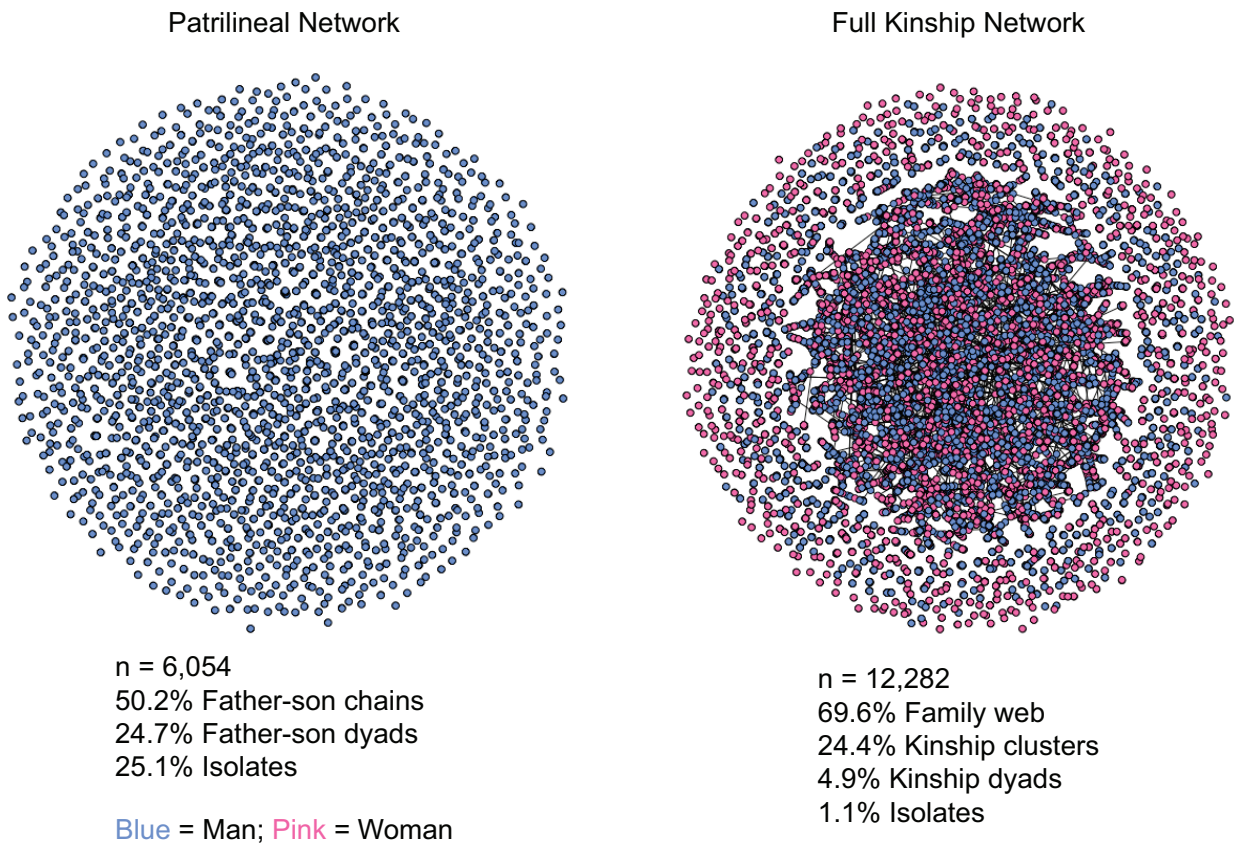


As with any social world, the edges of Dallas high society were porous, varying, and case-specific. It is perhaps best conceptualized not as a bounded group to which individuals did or did not belong, but as a density of interwoven, highly-resourced white people whose centrality varied in degree and kind. The denominator described here – 12,282 people listed in extant social registers – is less important than the family web itself. In other words, depending on the preferred criteria for elite membership, there were undoubtedly people who should have been included but weren't, and people who were included and shouldn't have been, but the 8,545 people in the family web were related in the ways described here, and their numbers did include most of the very socially, politically, and economically powerful people in Dallas. Those connections cannot be captured through patrilineal measures of family that obscure the dense ties of blood and marriage between supposedly isolated dynasties.

FROM DYNASTIES TO WEBS

The family web is only visible when we systematically include women and non-patrilineal kin ties. Otherwise, the kinship graph consists of thousands of isolated men and patrilineages. Figure 3 visually compares the traditional measurement of elite families as patrilineages to the full kinship network. When we look only at father-son ties, Dallas high society looks like a collection of isolated men, father-son pairs, and father-son chains. When women are included, Dallas high society can be read as one massive, growing, densely interconnected extended family, surrounded by a small sea of newcomers and friends who hadn't married their way into the relational center (though they might like to).

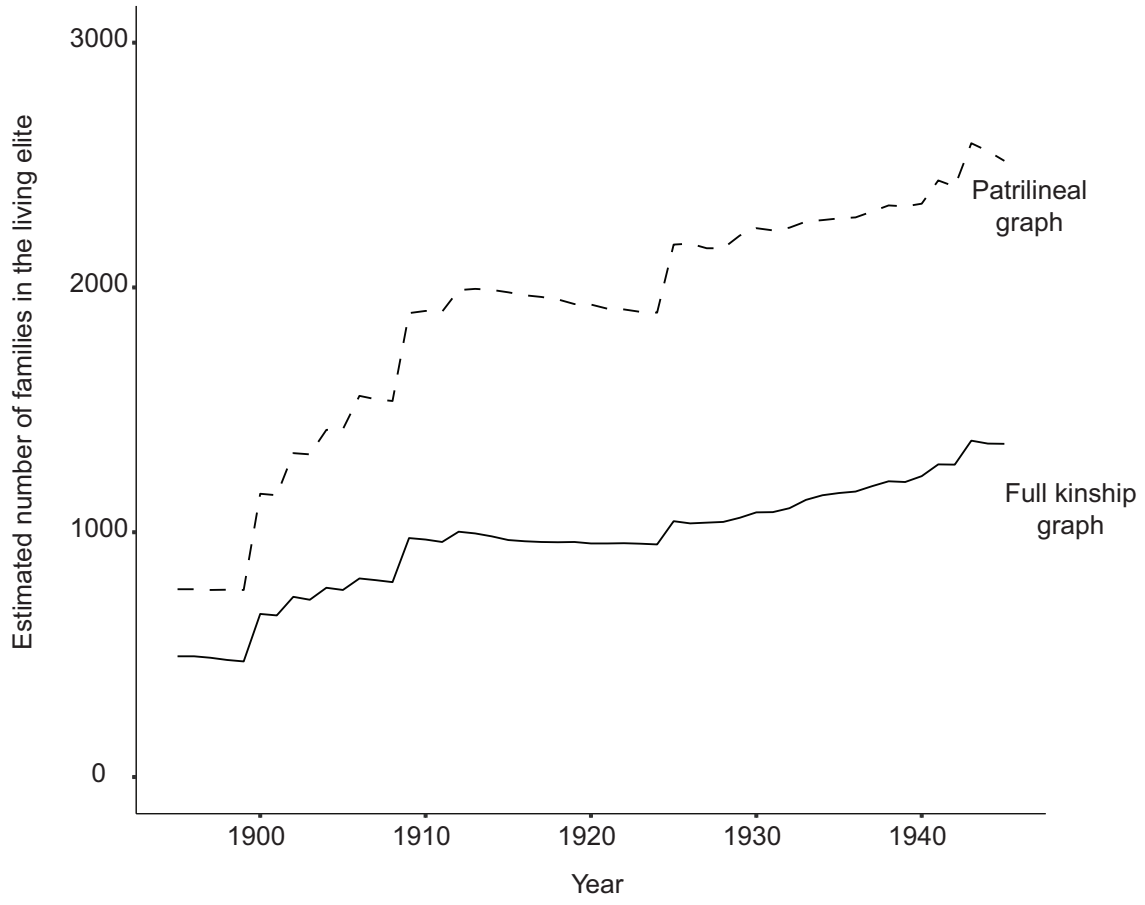
Figure 3. Comparing cumulative patrilineal and full kinship graphs for Dallas elites, 1895-1945



The patrilineal graph is so much more fragmented than the full graph largely because it is unable to capture endogamy. As families continuously intermarried between 1895-1945, the gap between the full kinship graph and the patrilineal graph widened. In 1895, the patrilineal map overestimated the number of distinct families by 278. The largest patrilineage encompassed .6% of the male population, and the largest full kin cluster encompassed 4.5% of elites. By 1945, the patrilineal map overestimated the number of distinct families by 1,174. The largest patrilineage encompassed a tiny fraction (.2%) of the living male population, compared to forty percent of living elites (41.0%) in the family web. Whereas the full kinship map quickly cohered into a giant component large enough for many typical network analysis measures, the patrilineal

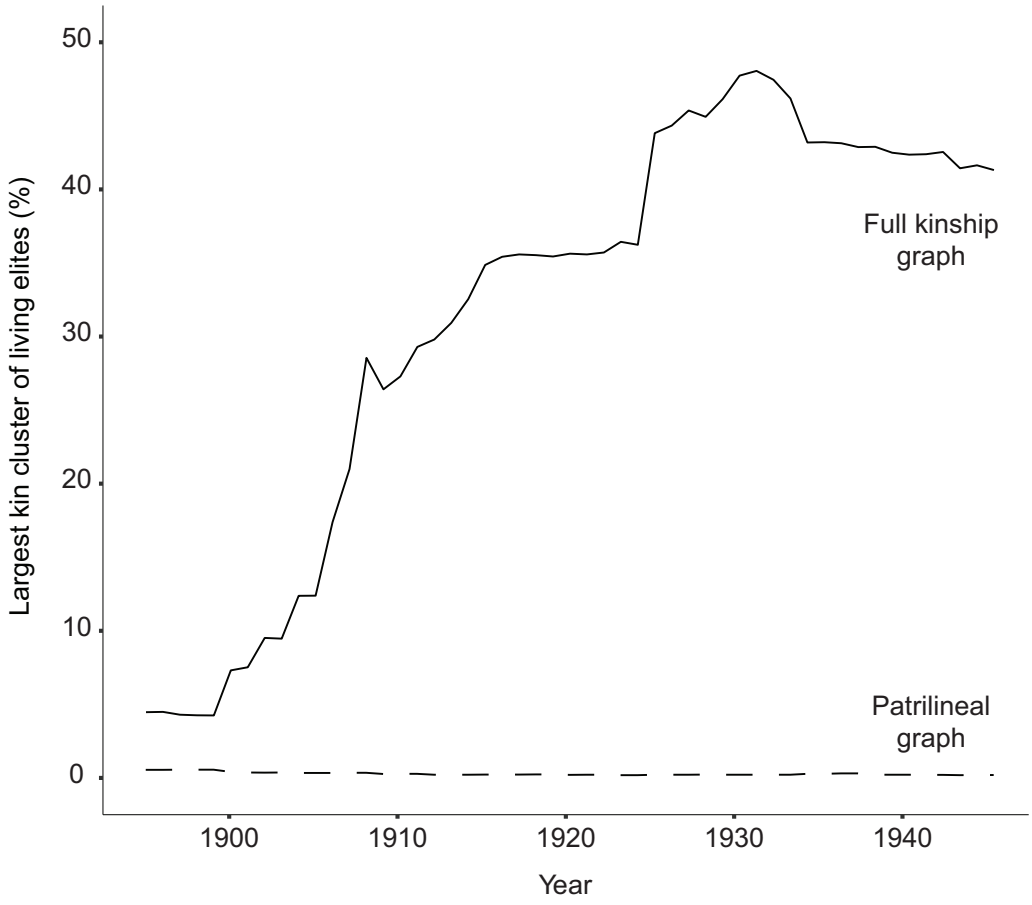
kinship map remained so thoroughly fragmented that typical descriptive network statistics - like density, transitivity, diameter, or mean distance – are practically nonsensical.

Figure 4. Patrilineal network increasingly overestimates number of distinct elite families



Note: The "living elite" includes all people who were alive and had been listed in the social registers by a given year. Families include all clusters connected through father-son ties (patrilineal case) and through natal or spousal ties (full network case). Isolates count as one cluster each. Spousal ties are included in the full graph beginning in the marriage year. In cases where marriage years are missing I assume they married when the younger spouse turned 21.

Figure 5. Proportional size of family web increasingly larger than the largest patrilineage



Note: The "living elite" includes all people who were alive and had been listed in the social registers by a given year. Clusters are connected through father-son ties (patrilineal case) and through natal or spousal ties (full network case). Spousal ties are included in the full graph beginning in the marriage year. In cases where marriage years are missing I assume they married when the younger spouse turned 21.

In sum, methodologically simpler patrilineal measurements of family cannot capture anything close to the true levels of relatedness in an endogamous population. Even kinship graphs that can capture marital ties between patrilineages may underestimate overall connectedness. When we measure and conceptualize elite families as patrilineal groupings, elite family worlds look like collections of isolated men and dynasties that live or die by the success of sons. When we expand our view to include all close family ties, including ones with and

between women, we see a more complicated family structure – one that has the potential to more accurately describe patterns of upper-class persistence and change over time.

MEASURING ELITE FAMILY PERSISTENCE

Estimating the rate and scope of persistence

Patrilineal measures of family not only fail to capture the connections between families; they also fail to capture the existence and persistence of elite descendants outside the patrilineage. In other words, patrilineages mechanically underestimate the persistence of elite families over time, because men do not always have sons. The underestimate grows larger with each generation, because sons do not always have sons, either. Patrilineal measures underestimate both the *rate* of familial persistence – meaning the percentage of elite ancestors with elite descendants – and the *scope* of familial persistence – meaning the number of elite descendants per elite ancestor. Here, I quantify the estimation gap for this population by comparing estimated rates and scopes of elite persistence from 1895-1945 using patrilineal and full measures of family. I find that patrilineal measures of family generate estimates of fifty-year elite persistence nearly three times smaller than full measures. On average, elite elders had six more locally elite descendants than patrilineal measures would indicate. Almost all (95.9%) the elite families that persisted over half a century connected to the family web at some point, and they connected more deeply than the families that dropped out.

To measure the rate and scope of elite persistence, I take the adults over the age of 34 listed in the original registers (1895-1900) and ask how many descendants they had in the latest editions of the registers (after 1940). I will refer to that collection of 1895-1900 adults as elite elders. This is a measure of persistence in the *local* elite, and not in the elite more generally,

because many elites left Dallas for other places where they remained wealthy and/or high-status. It is similar to classic measures of elite persistence, which look, for example, at the percent of wealthy enslavers in a Southern U.S. county in 1860 who were still wealthy in 1870 (Wiener 1978).

Figure 6 depicts the persistence of patrilineal descendants, and Figure 7 depicts the persistence of all known descendants: sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, and their children. In 1895, seventy percent of elite elders had at least one listed son; almost all (91.3%) had descendants more generally. Thirty years later, after a financial panic and explosion of city growth, 27.1% had a son or a son of a son in the social registers, compared to 44.7% with any lineal descendants, and 8.4% more with only co-lineal descendants (nieces, nephews, and/or their children). In 1925, then, the full kinship map generated an estimated persistence rate twice (2.0) as high as the patrilineal estimate. By 1940, after a decade of the Great Depression and a major oil boom, just 15.2% had patrilineal descendants in the social registers. But 33.7% had any lineal descendants, and 9.6 percent more had co-lineal descendants – a rate nearly three (2.8) times higher than the patrilineal estimate. Patrilineal measures mechanically underestimate rates of familial persistence, and the magnitude of that underestimate increases with time and with the scope of kin considered legitimate heirs.

Figure 6. Patrilineal family persistence for 1895 elite elders

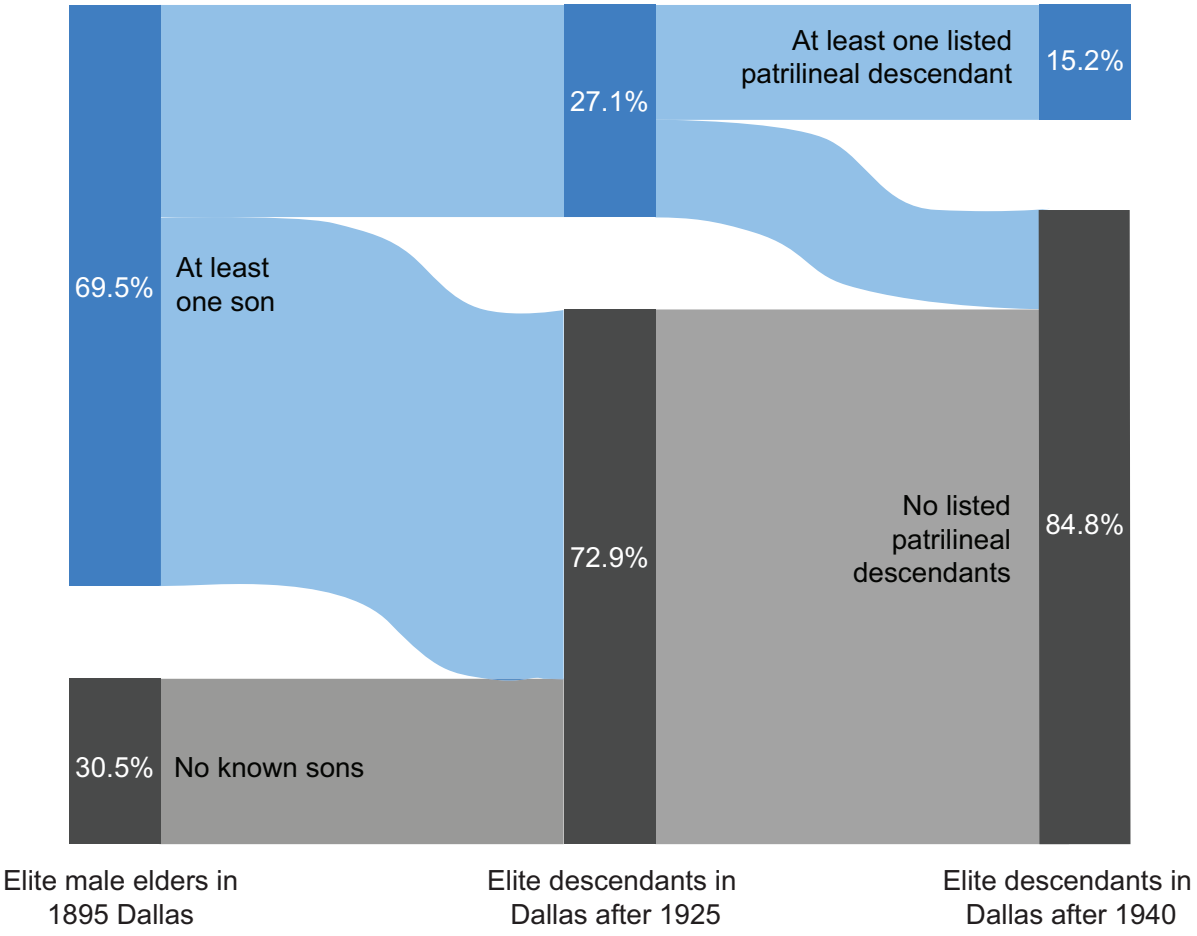
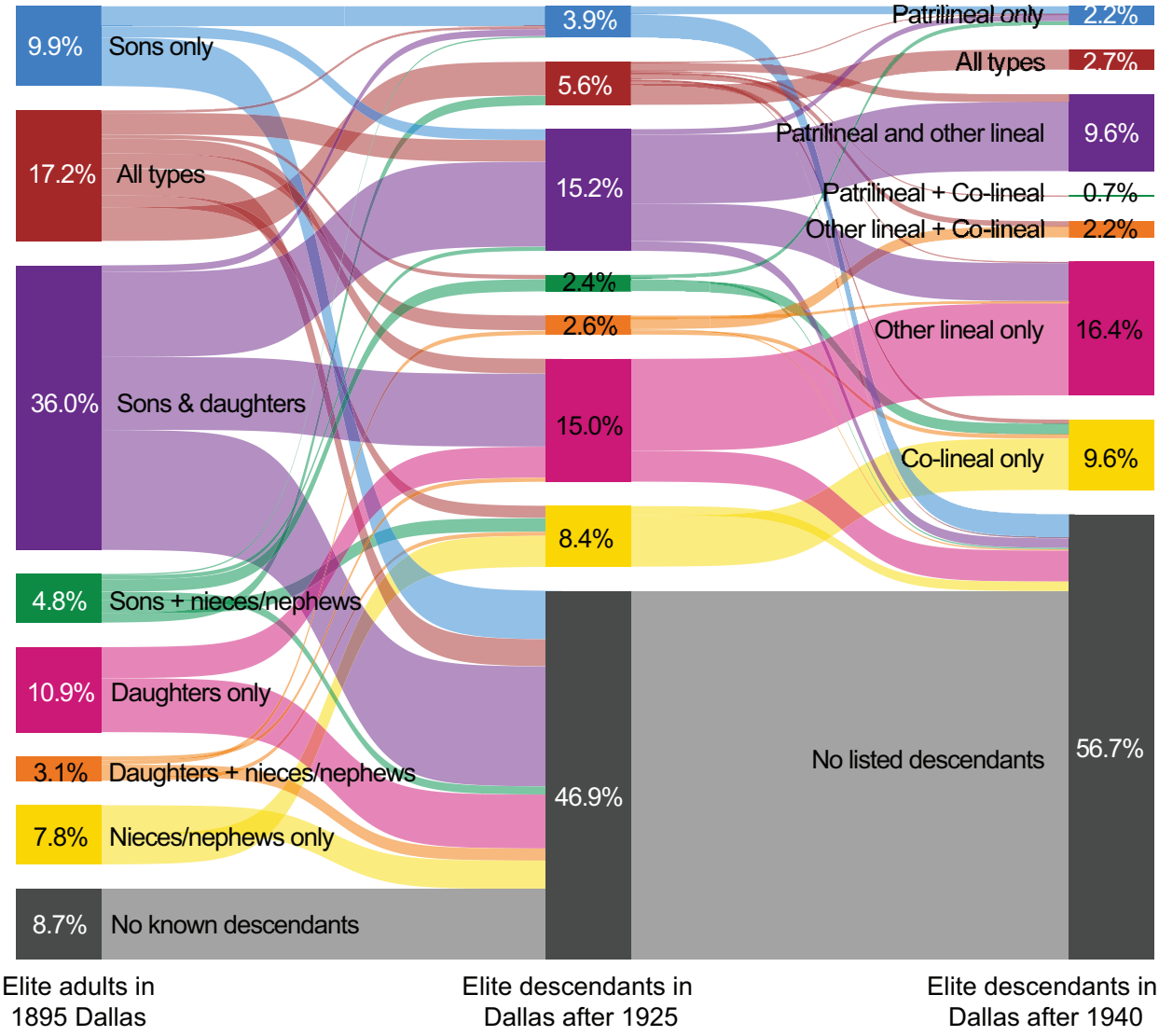


Figure 7. Full family persistence for 1895 elite elders



Patrilineal measures also underestimate the scope of elite persistence for nearly every persistent elder (94.9%). On average, persistent elders had seven (6.9) non-patrilineal descendants in the Dallas elite after 1940, and that number tended to be larger when elites had more children, nieces, and nephews to begin with. But the gap could be large even for elites who started out with relatively few descendants. Elizabeth Hogg McIntyre (1838-1915), for example, had one daughter, no sons, and no known nieces and nephews, but after 1940, all four of her

grandchildren and twenty of her great-grandchildren were nestled in the mansions of high society Dallas: hardly the end of her family, but certainly the end of her husband's patrilineage.

Persistence and the family web

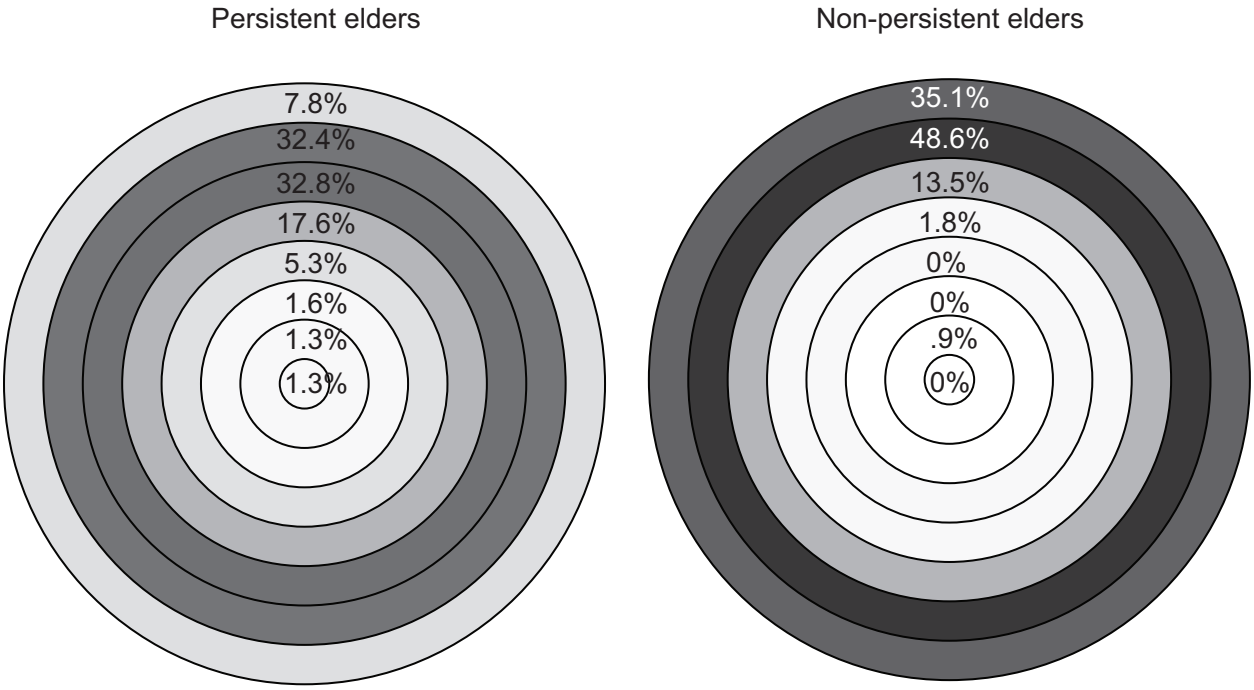
What did persistence have to do with the family web? Quite a lot. We can treat connection to the family web as a simple way of measuring whether an elite or their relatives married into Dallas high society. To understand the relationship between intermarriage and persistence after 1940, then, I will work with the cumulative family web as it was in 1940, excluding any marriages and births after that year.

Nearly all persistent elites (95.9%) connected to the web by 1940, compared to 66.9% of non-persistent elites. The association between persistence and web membership held across the number of starting descendants. Given the same number of children, nieces, and nephews, elites whose families connected to the web before 1940 persisted 32 percent more often, on average. Clearly, elite families who at least partially maintained themselves in high society over five tumultuous decades almost always intermarried with their elite friends and neighbors along the way.

Persistent elders also tended to be more deeply entangled in the family web, as measured by a *k*-core decomposition. A *k*-core decomposition is roughly analogous to peeling away layers of an onion. The first layer, or shell, includes all the people only connected to the web through one person, and the second layer includes all the people related to just two people in the web after the first layer is gone, and so on. Figure 8 depicts the distribution of persistent and non-persistent elders at various depths of the web by 1940. Compared to non-persistent elders, persistent elders were more deeply entangled in the web: on average, nearly six shells deeper

(12.0 compared to 6.3). Even holding constant the number of starting descendants, persistent elders tended to be about two (2.0) shells deeper in the web. Persistent elite families almost always connected to the web, and they connected more deeply than the families that dropped out.

Figure 8. *K*-core distributions of elders in web by 1940



Note: Each ring represents 5 k-core shells. The outermost ring includes k-core shells 1-5, and the innermost includes k-core shells 50-53 (the maximum coreness).

Elite persistence, reproduction rates, connection to the family web, and depth in the family web were interdependent and positively linked. Elite families with more heirs in the first generation had more elite descendants fifty years later, were more likely to connect to the web, and were more deeply enmeshed in the web when they did connect. We can read the family web as an artifact of the constitutive cycle of elite family persistence: endogamous marriage,

reproduction, and elite socialization. That cycle is only visible when we include women and kin ties outside the patrilineage.

RELATIONAL WORK IN THE FAMILY WEB

One could argue that even if women and kin relations beyond the father-son tie *technically* wove high society together, and even if persistence rates are *technically* higher with the inclusion of women and co-lineal descendants, the only practically consequential kin relationships were patrilineal; in that case, tracing full kinship webs would simply not be worth the trouble. It is certainly true that Dallas high society was intensely patriarchal, and generally adhered to a strict gendered division of labor, not unlike its contemporary analogs. But Dallas elite "class projects" were not unilaterally focused on the patrilineage (Hamilton and Armstrong 2021), as elite class projects have been in other times and places. Elites invested considerable resources in both sons and daughters, as well as nieces, nephews, grandchildren, cousins, and other kin, working together to ensure that the next generation of heirs could maintain themselves in the upper class. Here, I will provide three case studies, demonstrating that even in this highly patriarchal empirical case, relations between and with elite women fundamentally structured the economic lives of the upper class, and kin ties beyond the father-son bond frequently and fundamentally affected elite family persistence.

Women's work: Hazael Williams Beckett

Hazael Williams Beckett (1911-2006) was born in Dallas to a sprawling upper-class extended family. She left a memoir saturated with observations about the intertwined economic and family lives of the elite. Hazael was acutely aware that as an upper-class woman, she was

nominally barred from paid labor. “In those days,” Hazael (Beckett 1985:164) explained, “girls of a certain class were trained for nothing – not even to sew or cook – much less do something useful such as typing. They were supposed to marry, have children, and give nice parties. That’s all.” But it is precisely that labor Hazael dismissed as “nothing” – knitting together highly resourced families, producing successful heirs, and forming and nurturing advantageous social ties – through which upper-class women made their families more securely wealthy and high-status. And Hazael was a dutiful upper-class woman. When she graduated from college during the Depression, her mother explained that it was time for a husband to take over her expenses, freeing up resources for her adolescent sisters. She reluctantly accepted a proposal from Tom Beckett, Jr., an ambitious investment banker who had doggedly pursued her for years. Tom’s upwardly mobile parents were never listed in the social registers, and Tom and Hazael’s marriage formed their only connection to the family web. Hazael tied her high-status, precariously wealthy family to Tom’s securely wealthy, upwardly mobile one, providing benefits to both. She soon birthed and raised two upper-class children who were heirs to the resources of both families. Throughout their marriage, Hazael attended Tom’s work events as his “showcase.” She ably socialized with advantageous business contacts, and Tom, understanding “this would help him in business,” was “very proud of his choice of wife,” even as he openly concentrated his romantic attentions elsewhere (Beckett 1985:193-4). Hazael’s upbringing as a “[girl] of a certain class” did not actually bar her from labor – it simply siloed her into the kinds of unpaid labor that helped make the family web so durable.

In times of crisis, woman and non-patrilineal kin ties often kept elites from slipping down the class ladder. Two years into the Depression, Hazael’s father Harry lost his job. Her parents cut costs not only by marrying Hazael off, but also by selling stocks, firing domestic workers,

resigning from the country club, mortgaging the city and country houses, and moving their younger daughters from the exclusive girls' private school to the exclusive neighborhood public school. Harry went without paid work until 1933, when he boarded a streetcar and ran into Houston banker and distant cousin Beverly Harris. Three decades earlier, Beverly and his siblings were orphaned. Beverly was already an adult, but his brother David was only thirteen. Harry's mother Loucinda took David in and raised him to adulthood. Thirty years later, when Harry stepped onto a streetcar and told Beverly he needed a job, Beverly found him one, a favor that returned the Williams family to its usual financial footing. Hazael's family understood Loucinda's care of David as the impetus for Beverly's favor to Harry. Relational work expressed and reinforced bonds between non-patrilineal kin, serving as a multigenerational safety net for family members in circumstances temporarily threatening their elite status.

Socialization and security: Dorothy Cockrell Jalonick

Dorothy Cockrell Jalonick (1916-1982) was born to a well-known Dallas lineage. Her paternal great-grandmother Sarah Horton Cockrell was locally revered as Dallas's first home-grown millionaire, and Sarah's descendants operated at the heart of high society for multiple generations. But Frank Cockrell, Sarah's grandson and Dorothy's father, never quite reached the economic and social heights of his siblings and cousins. He quietly married the middle-class daughter of a carpenter, Clyde Holley, who died of tuberculosis when Dorothy was three. As was customary for elite white widowers, Frank left Dorothy in the care of a female relative- his sister Aurelia Cockrell Kurth, who was widowed, childless, and socially prominent. Aurelia raised Dorothy in a mansion staffed by multiple live-in domestic workers. A full-time socialite herself, she placed Dorothy in a constant whirl of age-appropriate high society events. Frank, on the

other hand, worked as a glass salesman and almost never made the guest lists of high society parties. He generally lived with his mother. Aurelia sent Dorothy to the most prestigious schools in Dallas, and when the time came, she sponsored Dorothy's successful 1937 debut. The society pages often described Dorothy as "the niece of Mrs. Robert L. Kurth" rather than the more traditional "daughter of Frank N. Cockrell and the late Mrs. Frank N. Cockrell." A year after her debut, Dorothy married George Washington Jalonick III, heir to a Dallas insurance empire, and lived the rest of her days in status and wealth.

The Cockrells were all born with a baseline of economic and social privilege. Aurelia, Dorothy, and Frank likely each possessed, at minimum, sizable trust funds from their ancestor Sarah Cockrell's original fortune- the kind of multigenerational elite social institution Mare (2011) pointed to as a driver of upper-class durability. As late as 1982, Dorothy's second cousin Mackie Cockrell Dealey reported that she had been living "quite comfortably" on her Sarah Cockrell trust fund for years (Fitzgibbons 1982). But it was her Aunt Aurelia's efforts, not her trust fund alone, that ultimately connected her to a successful and prominent husband, a union that would make her wealthier in adulthood than her father and would both maintain and augment her extended family's position at the center of high society. When parents like Frank grew distant from the upper-class center of their birth, extended kin often helped heirs access and maintain their socially elite status. The family web provided security over, above, and sometimes despite the single parent-child bond.

A town full of uncles: John Lingo Schoellkopf

I will close where I started, with the family of J. B. Wilson. Wilson's great-grandson John Lingo Schoellkopf (1938-2018), who was also Wilson's sister-in-law's first cousin thrice

removed, was born in Dallas to a debutante mother and a father "in investments." If, as a child, he toddled over to a shelf of Dallas social registers, he could find lineal ancestors in every single edition: depending on the year, some combination of both his parents, all four grandparents, and six of his eight great-grandparents. Also listed were his older brother, three uncles, two first cousins, six first cousins once removed, two great-uncles, eight great-aunts, one great-great aunt, and of course, at least 8,509 more distant relatives by blood and marriage. The family fortunes that variously combined in John could be traced back to Dallas's first decades as a white settlement, and included not only J. B. Wilson's cattle empire, but also the Schoellkopf saddlery fortune, two lumber companies, a host of real estate investments, and decades of re-investment and growth for all fortunes involved.

John did not need to work for pay. He wanted to be a journalist, so he dropped out of college and approached the editor of the *Dallas Times Herald,* a man he called "Uncle Jim." Uncle Jim, or James Floyd Chambers Jr., was the son-in-law of John's great-aunt Valerie, and he hired John immediately. John was not an especially talented reporter, and as a nineteen-year-old college dropout who could not type, he was certainly not qualified, but he proved capable enough, and Uncle Jim put John on the fast track to the editorship. John's coworkers called him the "staff nephew." In 1965, he married Margaret Grinnan, who debuted beside John's second cousin, James Floyd Chambers III, who was also Uncle Jim's son. John was rapidly promoted. He often forgot to pick up his paycheck. In 1970, John quit his job at the *Herald* and did what many heirs do: acquired an office, said he was "in investments," divorced, remarried, unsuccessfully ran for mayor, launched an industrial blueberry farm, and spent the rest of his days tending a laundry list of boards, clubs, and investments, both blueberry and non-blueberry (Atkinson 1975a). He died in Dallas at eighty.

While John's obituary mentioned that he worked at the *Herald* "as a cub reporter" and "in time…grew through the ranks," it did not mention Uncle Jim ("John Lingo Schoellkopf" 2018). Neither would any patrilineal measure of elite persistence, because Jim and John were connected through women. Full elite kin networks indicate important differences between a person like John Lingo Schoellkopf and someone with equal wealth and fewer connections. Schoellkopf inherited not only a massive fortune, but also a dense web of elite kin with their own fortunes, careers, and connections, who could help him get a job with no experience, run for mayor with no experience, marry a debutante with her own significant resources, and make timely investments that would grow his wealth. As his *Times Herald* coworker A. C. Greene observed, Schoellkopf was born into "a town full of uncles" (quoted in Atkinson 1975a). Those uncles were not part of a singular patrilineal dynasty; rather, they were connected to John across multiple surnames, households, and generations.

LIMITATIONS

Missing data

This study has two main missingness problems: missing kin ties, and missing elites. While looking through archival records, I regularly find more kin ties. Holding the population constant, then, the estimated percentage connected through the web is an *underestimate*, as is the average kin tie length between elites.

Elites are missing, as well. The social registers favored social elites who lived in Dallas over long periods of time, were friends or family of other elites, and/or had particularly large amounts of wealth, status, or power. These types of missingness generate *overestimates* of the cumulative percent connected through the web. Other types of missingness are more random,

like the elites who did not want to be listed, or elites whose information was lost or bungled during the register or dataset compilation processes; these missing persons likely generate, if anything, a slight overestimate. Some missing listees likely connected the central web and smaller clusters surrounding it; the compounding nature of such inter-cluster connections generates underestimates of the proportional size of the web.

The largest group of missing listees was "in society" only during the years no register was printed, 1914-24. I calculate simple upper and lower bounds on this estimation error by assuming a flow of new listees consistent with extant registers – about 2000 missing people overall. If not a single new listee across the missing years connected to the web, then the web would comprise 58.8% of the total population rather than 69.6%. If every single new listee connected to the web, it would comprise at least 72.8% of the population. Both scenarios are too extreme to be practically possible. It is much more likely that missing elites were connected to the central family web at rates similar to new listees in extant years who were in the register for less than a decade (60.9%), in which case the overall proportion of high society connected to the central family web would be about the same, 67.4%. All in all, even in an extreme case of missingness, where thousands of hypothetical missing elites were unrelated to anyone in the family web, the web still would comprise well over half of high society.

Selection criteria

Even if no social elites were missing from the dataset, the problem remains that the selection process was deliberately opaque. In the years 1925-42, a socially prominent editor drew up a list of every family she deemed eligible, and an anonymous board representing the five most prestigious clubs independently checked the list and omitted anyone they deemed insufficiently elite. No one could be listed without unanimous approval (Baird 1932). The scant information

available suggests that a similar process was used for earlier editions. Generally, a family needed some combination of wealth and status to be eligible. Individuals could be omitted "if there [was] serious gossip about" them or if they married someone "of inferior status" (Baird 1932:10-11). I have been unable to locate any records on who the anonymous committee members were for each edition or who they rejected. It is reasonably certain, though, that everyone listed was deemed by at least some prominent elites to be "in society." I will also note that although more information on the selection process would be helpful, the general mechanism is in many ways ideal: it is difficult to imagine a more reliable arbiter of social elite status than social elites themselves.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shown that most of Dallas high society in a fifty-year period was related in a single, 8,545-person family web. The web was hundreds of times larger and more complex than the largest patrilineal dynasty. Families wove themselves together through marriage, a practice typical of upper-class populations, meaning that there is likely some analogous central family structure in elite worlds of many different times and places. Because elites do not always have sons, patrilineal measures of family underestimate the rate and scope of elite persistence, and this gap widens over time. Persistent families almost all connected to the web, and they connected more deeply than non-persistent families. Most of the city's politically powerful, wealthy, and high-status individuals were connected to the web, and in times of crisis, elite kin helped each other remain powerful, wealthy, and high-status. Rather than flowing in a single direction from fathers to sons, as in a traditional model of class transmission, upper-class resources flowed through the web in multiple directions through multiple kinds of family ties,

including mothers, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. It was a central architecture through which elites acquired, maintained, and passed on the various resources that made them elite in the first place.

Together, these findings have important implications for the study of elites and of the family-based transmission of class more generally. First, they demonstrate the need to shift from a dynastic view of elite families to a network-based one. Second, and relatedly, they suggest that rates of elite downward mobility are overestimated in any study that relies on patrilineal family groupings. Third, they motivate a more population-based model of family-based inequality: one that investigates the flow of resources through networks over time, rather than treating resources as isolated properties that individuals are more or less likely to acquire based on parent resources and other characteristics. Finally, they point to the possibility of building fuller family networks for populations across the class distribution, following Mare (2011)'s call for a multigenerational approach to family-based inequality.

As I have described, family-based upper-class persistence studies typically assume that elite family structures are reasonably approximated as patrilineages. They take a group of elite men one point in time and estimate how many patrilineal descendants remained wealthy or powerful years later. This approach conceptually mirrors a traditional understanding of elite families as dynasties that live or die over time, and methodologically follows the paradigmatic emphasis on fathers and sons in social science work on mobility. The scope and scale of the family web demonstrates that this approximation is a truly radical simplification for endogamous upper-class populations. Elite families are not isolated groups defined by surname or father-son chains; they are complex structures variously connected to each other in upper-class webs.

The dynastic view of elite families is problematic not just because it is inaccurate, but because it leads to systematic overestimates of elite downward mobility. Patrilineages are structurally fragile. As soon as one generation fails to produce a successful son, the father-son chain ends, and the dynasty "dies." It is a common view – one that led one Dallas journalist, for example, to report that the Cockrell dynasty had "moved gracefully into history," and in the very same article remark on the sizable Cockrell trust fund of a prominent descendant with the surname "Dealey" (Fitzgibbons 1982). In the dynastic view, Mackie Cockrell Dealey was not a Cockrell, but in all the ways we might care about – actual family ties, actual family wealth – she certainly was. A full family network offers a more flexible, accurate basis for understanding patterns of elite persistence over time.

Full family networks are more accurate than patrilineages not simply because kin ties between and with women *existed,* but because those kin ties were conduits for important resources that helped maintain and augment upper-class status. Dallas elite John William Rogers (1951:340) observed that "the social group taken most seriously" in midcentury Dallas high society was "a fairly close-knit group of descendants of the prosperous early families who [had] a kind of tacit loyalty to each other and who [would] rally to one of their number in times of crisis." His observation is borne out by the data described here, which showed that there was family web, that the family web included the most socially prominent people in town, and persistence in the local elite went hand-in hand with membership and depth in the web. The systematic inclusion of women, and the multiplicity of kin ties beyond the parent-child bond, helps capture not only the connections between elite families, but also elite families' resilience in times of relative crisis.

The density of elite kin connections also suggests a more web-based approach to the study of family wealth. John Lingo Schoellkopf, the man born into a town full of uncles, was not the only one of J. B. Wilson's Dallas-based great-grandchildren to be listed in the registers. All of them were. They were (and are) also, by all indications, quite wealthy. Surprisingly, this would not necessarily be predicted by conventional wisdom on family wealth, which tends to assume that family money "naturally" dissipates over time – typically three generations – and that wealth managers and the wealthy themselves must work to prevent this natural process from occurring (Marcus 1992; Harrington 2016). This conventional wisdom has been increasingly challenged by studies in economic history, which suggest that family wealth regularly persists over the very long term (Barone and Mocetti 2016; Bengtsson et al. 2017; Ager, Boustan, and Erikkson 2021; Beckert 2022; Hällsten and Kolk 2023). Elite endogamy further challenges the assumption of family wealth dissolution: when many dynastic fortunes are connected, the question of whether fortunes have dissipated becomes increasingly impossible to answer with each endogamous generation.

The assumption of dynastic dissipation is related to the paradigmatic reliance on parent-child models of class persistence. As Mare (2011:13) argued, a two-generation model of class transmission suggests that "families who are unusually well-off in one generation are likely to 'regress' toward the average in the next," whereas a multigenerational perspective on class persistence methodologically and conceptually leaves room for the possibility of cumulative advantage. By combining a full family network with data on wealth, it is possible to describe the shifting distributions of wealth across a precisely connected multigenerational elite population rather than attempting to track – or simply expecting – the dissolution of isolated family fortunes.

Full family networks could also be combined with data on corporate and organizational networks, enriching studies of family capitalism and businesses.

Analytic techniques developed to study resource distribution and transmission in elite family networks could be useful for studies of family-based inequality across the population. Full family networks are not unique or uniquely important to elites. Elites are likely more densely intermarried than most non-elites, and by definition, they have disproportionately more resources, making their family networks a driving structure in the production and maintenance of durable inequality. But all people are connected in some way to webs of kin with various capacities to impact their lives. As work on family-based inequality continues to expand beyond parent-child ties, as more historical documents are digitized, and as family linking algorithms continue to improve, it will likely become increasingly possible to trace full family networks for larger, less geographically-bounded populations across the class spectrum. Elite family networks can aid in the development of analytic approaches that can tackle that kind of multigenerational, nonlinear complexity.

In sum, these findings tell a simple story. Elites tend to marry other elites. They tend to have children together. Those children inherit wealth, status, and power from both sides of the family, and many of them marry other heirs to various forms and amounts of wealth, status, and power. Like all people, elites tend to share and exchange resources with family members – giving gifts, making introductions, providing jobs, bequeathing money, and so on – and they have more resources with which to help their family members in the first place. Cumulatively, elite endogamy, reproduction, and relational work weave kinship webs that trap resources in a disproportionately well-resourced population. Patrilineal measures of family cannot capture this

process because they exclude most of the kin ties that matter for multigenerational elite persistence. Dynasties are brittle, but webs are strong, and the upper class is a web.

Chapter 2

The New Money Myth: Perceptions and Patterns of Upper-Class Mobility in Oil Boom Dallas, 1925-1942

INTRODUCTION

In 1954, Dallas oilman Clint Murchison made the cover of *Time* magazine. Under a banner reading "THOSE TEXAS MILLIONAIRES" sat his broad white face, topped with a cowboy hat, encircled by a wheel of golden dollar signs ("TYCOONS" 1954). Three years later, his name landed on the *Fortune* list of the wealthiest people in the U.S., marked as a new money oilman (Smith 1957). With his cowboy persona, nationally unknown surname, and folksy sayings[17], Clint embodied the archetype of the new money Texan millionaire. But even though Clint wore a cowboy hat, and even though he was new to the list of the richest men in the country, he was not, by any means, new to wealth. Clint was the son and grandson of bank presidents. He grew up in a block-long Victorian mansion staffed by three small homes of Black live-in domestic workers. His father was close friends with Nathan Adams, the Dallas banker who practically invented Texas oil loans, and in fact gave so many to Clint he was forced to continue doing so until Clint struck oil (Adams 1942; Wolfe 1989). Clint didn't move to Dallas until 1928, but he had cousins, aunts, and uncles in the Dallas white elite stretching back to its

[17] *Time* breathlessly reported, for example, that Clint made his money through "financin' by finaglin'" – which, upon inspection, seems to have been a perfectly ordinary combination of loans, partnerships, and business deals.

earliest days. He was even connected to John Neely Bryan, the first white man to settle in Dallas: two of his grandfather's cousins married two of John's wife's nieces[18].

Still, Clint's behavior played into the international stereotype, and into the story told in every extant account of Dallas high society during the oil boom: brash new money oil families arrived in Dallas in droves, and the resentful old money cotton families resisted their inclusion, but ultimately fell from monied grace. The case mirrors centuries of widely reported new and old money conflicts in Europe and the U.S., including New York City in the Gilded Age (Beckert 2001), Great Britain after World War I (Cannadine 1999), Florence during the Renaissance (Padgett and Ansell 1993), the medieval French aristocracy (Bouchard 2001), and even ancient Greece (Burris 2000:373; Gill 1994). Mills ([1956] 2000:50) observed in the twentieth century U.S. that "this game of the old rich and the parvenu began with the beginning of national history, and continues today in the small town as in the metropolitan center."

The Dallas case is an extreme example in that today, nearly a century after the kingmaking East Texas Oil Boom, the archetypal Texas oil millionaire is still synonymous with "new money." But as I will demonstrate, the upper class generally persisted through the purported turnover, and the wave of vulgar "new money" oil people was, statistically speaking, nowhere to be found. In the Texas case, and possibly in others, the new versus old money narrative describes industry-level economic change, and regime shift among the wealthiest elites, but does not describe patterns of mobility into and out of the upper class.

I join a long tradition of studies finding that that more often than not, elite families persist through economic depressions, economic booms, revolutions, and failed rebellions. "New" elites

[18] John Neely Bryan's wife Margaret Beeman Bryan's nieces, Margaret and Emma Beeman, married first cousins, both named William Lagow. The Williams Lagow were sons of Elizabeth and Nancy Murchison, respectively, sisters who were first patrilineal cousins with Thomas Murchison, Clint's paternal grandfather.

usually come from the old elite itself, or from just beyond its borders, and "old" elites generally maintain their status, or regain it within a generation or two. These studies have often responded to claims by elites and scholars that major changes to the socioeconomic and political fabric have resulted in a near-total elite changeover. Dallas in the 1930s oil boom is a good case with which to think about the relationship between elite perceptions and patterns of mobility because it offers (a) a new potential source of wealth, (b) the oldest, most entrenched high society in the region, and (c) a widely reported "new money" vs. "old money" clash. A novel dataset featuring the first full kinship network of an elite population in a U.S. city makes this case study methodologically possible.

After an overview of elite persistence studies, as well as my data and methods, I give a brief description of the historical case. Then I demonstrate that most cotton families persisted through the Great Depression, and that while oil families did join the Dallas elite at high rates during those years, they generally did so from upper classes of other cities and towns. Overall, the class backgrounds of high society oil and cotton couples were nearly identical, in that most were born rich. I address and reject the possibility that the much-discussed new money oilmen were simply crowded into the economic elite, and were not integrated into the social elite, by looking at the class backgrounds and home-based wealth of the merely rich oilmen. I show that most elites were related through some combination of blood and marriage to both oilmen and cotton men, and that they were increasingly closely related to oilmen over the course of the oil boom.

After establishing that there is a large gap between perceptions and statistical reality in this case, I then turn to social-psychological explanations that can integrate the qualitative records of high society life with the quantitative findings on the actual relationships between

industry and class background. I posit that upper class communities are often perceived and described in terms of their prototypical members. *Prototypical elites* are generally the most visibly wealthy elites in a community, with fortunes visibly amassed from regionally specific industries. Their positions at the top of a regime hierarchy are more volatile: when their fortunes are largely tied to a specific industry, then they are also tied to industry-level economic shifts. Focusing on prototypical elites as representatives of the full elite population generates a perception of widespread turnover even when most elites persist. I demonstrate this argument in the Dallas case by showing that while the overall percentages of high society homes owned by oil and cotton families stayed relatively steady over the 1930s, the most expensive homes did see a significant turnover from cotton to oil families. I conclude that elite narratives of economic change may be better understood as descriptions of shifts in prototypical fortunes, or regime change among the 1% of the 1%, rather than as descriptions of more broadly significant circulation within an upper class.

ELITE CIRCULATION

Estimating rates of elite persistence and openness

At least since Pareto (1935) introduced his theory of elite circulation, social scientists have estimated the degree to which elite populations persist and change over time. Estimates of elite persistence rates tend to cluster around extreme breaks in the socioeconomic fabric. One such cluster focuses on the post-Emancipation fate of the U.S. Southern enslaver elite, finding that former enslavers and their descendants generally maintained their relative wealth after Emancipation (Wiener 1975, 1978; Campbell 1982; Acemoglu and Robinson 2008), especially after one or two generations (Ager, Boustan, and Erikkson 2021). A spate of researchers

estimated turnover and persistence rates among the elite of former Soviet countries after the fall of the Soviet Union, finding generally they tended to persist, particularly economically, and that mobility into and out of the elite tended to be short-range (Böröcz and Róna-Tas 1995; Hanley, Yershova, and Anderson 1995; Szelényi and Szelényi 1995; Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley 2001; Rao and Hirsch 2002; Hanley and Tremain 2004). Others have asked similar questions about England in the seventeenth-century transition from feudalism to capitalism (Brenner 2006), and Kyrgyzstan (Guirkinger et. al 2022) and China (Alesina et. al 2021) from the early twentieth century until the present day, and have come to similar general conclusions: significant proportion of elite families tend to persist through major economic, social, and political changes, especially over two or three generations.

Closely related are the "open elite" studies. Using a variety of methods, scholars have investigated the degree to which various elite worlds admit newcomers. They have typically estimated the percentage of an upper-class group over time that accumulated wealth, status, and/or power in their lifetimes (Stone and Stone 1984; Jaher 1982; Padgett 2010; Schutte 2014; Korom, Lutter, and Beckert 2017; Schimpfössl and Monteath 2022). Or, rather than examining family histories, they have looked at the percentage of people in powerful positions who did not pass through elite institutions, or were members of marginalized social categories (Mills [1956] 2000; Domhoff 1967; Useem and Karabel 1986; Reeves et al. 2017; Worth, Reeves, and Friedman 2022)[19]. In every setting, scholars have found that elite populations were open to some degree, and that upward mobility has tended to be short-range.

[19] An elite population can have both high relative persistence rates and a high relative degree of openness, particularly when the population is increasing. Jaher (1982:96-97, 494-495), for example, estimated that the in 1892, the Chicago economic elite was much more open than the Boston economic elite, in that Chicago millionaires were more than twice as likely as Boston millionaires to be new to wealth. But he also estimated that elite persistence rates from 1860 to 1892 were practically identical in the two cities, largely because the total population of millionaires in Chicago increased at a higher rate than Boston.

Perceptions of elite persistence and mobility

The general findings of elite persistence and short-range mobility diverge significantly from the perceptions of elites themselves. Even though Proper Bostonians perennially bemoaned their impoverishment at the hands of new money interlopers (Amory 1947), Jaher (1984:73) estimates that 70 percent of ultra-wealthy Bostonians in 1835 had millionaire patrilineal descendants half a century later. In the South, former enslavers and influential historians (e. g., Woodward 1951) described Emancipation as a complete turnover in wealth and power, in which enslaver dynasties lapsed into impoverished obscurity, while new money industrialists took their place at the top of the heap. A reporter for the 1871 *Mobile Register,* for example, lamented that "'not one of the colossal planters survives'" even though at least 43 percent of wealthy enslaver families in 1860 Alabama were still presiding over massive fortunes and plantations in the same counties in 1870 (Wiener 1978:34).

The pattern goes back even earlier. Padgett and Ansell (1993) show that although the Medician faction of the early-fifteenth century Florentine elite had long been understood as a "new" elite challenging the oligarchic patricians, the two factions demonstrated no significant differences in the amount of wealth, the age of wealth, or neighborhood. In high society worlds throughout history, including every generation of the U.S. upper class since Jamestown, elites have mourned the decline and fall of "old money" families, and the rise and takeover of "new money" families (Amory 1960:19-32; Burris 2000:372). The "new money" families, in these narratives, are generally described as having been born into poverty, rather than the more typical upper-middle class. Where population-level estimates see elite persistence and modest, short-range circulation, elites themselves are more likely to see near-total upheaval.

Although elite turnover narratives invoke new and old money as crisp, self-evident groups, new and old money are fuzzy, contextually dependent folk categories. Indeed, within upper-class worlds, the boundaries between new and old are often explicitly contested, with various elites jockeying for the power to define the categories in ways that benefit them (Aldrich [1988] 1996). As Zelizer (1994)'s work makes clear, one person's millions do not necessarily have the same social meaning as another person's millions. The social weight of two fortunes of identical dollar value may vary according to the perceived origins of the money and aspects of the wealthy themselves: their sociocultural characteristics, kin ties, friendships, organizational memberships, and membership in various social categories, along with the intersections of those characteristics (Mills ([1956] 2000:52). Myriad context-dependent characteristics above and beyond sheer wealth play a role in the likelihood that newcomers will be absorbed into the upper-class fold. What may be crucial is how newcomers and their fortunes are perceived by the established upper class, which is not necessarily the same as their actual histories.

Although new and old money categories may be fuzzy and laden with unexamined assumptions, they can have long-range consequences in the archetypes of wealth, transcending their historical contexts such that such that entire regions and industries are associated with new or old money long after the perceived clash has subsided. Beginning at least with Mills [1956] 2000, Texan wealth, and particularly Texan oil wealth, has been consistently invoked as an exemplar of the *nouveau riche*, both by scholars and by upper-class scions themselves. Oglesby (1976) and Sale (1975) argued that mid-twentieth century U.S. politics were characterized by the "Yankee-Cowboy War," a struggle between liberal old wealth and right-wing Southwestern new money, exemplified by Texan oilmen. Jaher (1984:730) concluded his centuries-long history of U.S. local upper classes by observing that "newly minted cattle and oil millionaires" in places

like Texas had eclipsed the traditional elite. New Yorker journalist John Bainbridge (1961:1) began his book on oil millionaires, *The Super-Americans,* with the declaration that "Texas is a new boy, standing in relation to the rest of the United States as the United States stands to Europe, or, for that matter, as Rome stood to Athens." In his vision, the entire state was synonymous with new oil money. Not every Boston banker is born into the upper class, and not every major landowner in England is an aristocrat. But those industry-region combinations continue to be associated with old money, just as Texan oil millionaires, and Texas itself, are associated with the new.

Why do elite perceptions of upper-class change consistently diverge from statistically measurable reality? I argue that upper-class social worlds are often perceived and narrativized in terms of prototypical elites, rather than on the elite population level. Prototypes are not the average members of a category, but are rather "abstract summary representations of 'best examples' of a concept" (Monk 2022:9). The prototypical member of a local upper-class world is a king or a duke, not a minor noble; a billionaire tycoon, not a low-level millionaire lawyer. Prototypical elites are especially wealthy and powerful, belong to dominant social categories, and in capitalist societies are usually connected to a regionally specific industry. Thus, Mark Zuckerberg is a more prototypical Silicon Valley elite than a millionaire Palo Alto car dealer, because he is much richer and he works in tech. Quantitative studies of elites that rely on lists of the richest and most powerful individuals across regions and countries mechanically share this emphasis on tycoons and prototypes, because they analyze individuals of extreme wealth and power outside the context of the elite kin and social networks in which they are usually embedded. Economic booms and busts generate churn at the level of tycoons, and political revolutions generate churn at the level of rulers, even when elite populations more generally tend

to persist. Elites, and popular narratives of elite change, focus more on the prototype than on the population, and thus overemphasize change and underemphasize persistence.

In this paper, I demonstrate that although Dallas elites perceived a massive turnover in Dallas high society during the 1930s, in which new money oil barons toppled old money cotton dynasties, most cotton families persisted after 1940. Many oil families joined the Dallas elite, but they were usually from the upper classes of other cities and towns. I dig deeper into the social categories of supposedly old money "cotton people" and supposedly new money "oil people" to show that overall, their class backgrounds were nearly identical, in that most were born rich, and few were born poor. Further, elites continually intermarried, and most elites had both oilmen and cotton men in the family at some close distance of blood and marriage. I then suggest that elites may have perceived a cotton-to-oil turnover because they were focused on particularly visibly wealthy elites: whereas the percentage of high society homes owned by oil and cotton families remained relatively steady through the 1930s, the most expensive elite homes did see a significant shift from cotton to oil. I conclude that what elites and other observers often perceive as significant turnover in upper-class populations may be better described as shifts in prototypicality.

DATA AND METHODS

"Oil people" and "cotton people," like "old" and "new" money, imply simple measurements. In the classic stereotype, old-money dynasties emerged from an old, dying industry, while new-money dynasties emerge from a new and vibrant one. But, of course, reality is more complicated. Families are not bounded patrilineages – they are complex kin networks, not easily defined by surname, household, or father-son chains. Fortunes are not discrete, easily

countable piles of money, attached to single industries – they are constantly fluctuating and generally spread to some degree across industries, regions, and monies. Industries themselves are complicated, too: does a cotton gin manufacturer work in the cotton industry or in manufacturing? Does an oil lawyer work in oil or in law? How about a banker who specializes in cotton *and* oil *and* insurance? How about a housewife with a safe full of diamonds, twelve oilfields, two cotton plantations, a mansion, a working cattle ranch, and a generous slice of stocks and bonds?

This study does not fully capture the complexity of family, industry, and fortune in high society Dallas. Rather, it focuses on the people *perceived* as drawing wealth from oil or cotton – that is, oilmen, cotton men, and their wives – and then investigates their family backgrounds and places in the Dallas elite kinship network. It also focuses on *perceived* wealth, rather than total wealth, by leveraging the reported home values of Dallas elites in the 1930 and 1940 Census: while elites could not typically see each other's bank accounts or stock portfolios, they could see their houses, and those houses were socially meaningful.

The backbone of the paper is a dataset of every member of Dallas high society from 1895 to 1945 (n = 12,282), and most wealthy Dallas oilmen during the East Texas Oil Boom (n = 309). I supplement the elites dataset with Dallas County Census records from 1930 and 1940. About half of socially elite Dallasites lived in incorporated, uniformly wealthy and white enclaves in the middle of the city, University Park and Highland Park (Baird 1932); those neighborhoods serve as a rough approximation of the economic elite. I flesh out the quantitative data with a wide array of qualitative sources, including memoirs, histories, family archival records, newspaper articles, oral histories, and a high society newsletter. They contextualize and verify the broader statistical landscape, and vice versa.

The dataset of Dallas high society consists of every individual listed in the Dallas social registers from 1895 to 1945, along with their biographical information, occupational data, select organizational memberships, and complete kinship ties to other members of the social elite. Social registers are directories of upper-class families in U.S. cities, and are a standard measure of social elite status in historical studies. The Dallas registers were compiled yearly by a socially prominent editor, who sent a list of eligible families to an anonymous board representing the five most prestigious social and country clubs. Board members independently checked the list, omitted anyone they deemed insufficiently elite, and suggested names for consideration, which would only be added with unanimous approval from the rest of the board (Baird 1932). The Dallas registers were particularly exclusive: during each of the years 1925-45, about .5% of the Dallas population was listed in the registers, compared to about 1% of the New York City population (Accominotti, Khan, and Storer 2018). Although not every social elite was listed, most were, and it is reasonably certain that everyone listed was deemed by at least some prominent elites to be "in society."

I focus on the adults listed in the registers during the years around the East Texas Oil Boom, 1925-1942 (n = 3,819), drawing on the historically deeper dataset for ancestry information. Because not all wealthy oilmen were listed in the social registers, I also collected information on every member of the Dallas Petroleum Club (DPC) (n = 309). If an oilman was wealthy, Christian, and white, he could easily join the DPC, which was founded in 1934 as "just a place for a guy to get a good lunch and a million-dollar [oil] deal" (Wolfe 1989:108; Flournoy 2015). The DPC membership list approximates the population of oilmen who were wealthy in Dallas, but not necessarily socially elite enough to be listed in the registers.

I hand-coded biographical and kinship data for each person in the social registers and the DPC using information from *Ancestry.com,* newspaper archives, memoirs, family papers, and other archival sources. Dallas high society was densely intermarried, with at least seventy percent (69.6%) of the population eventually connected through close family ties in a single cluster that included most particularly wealthy, powerful, and high-status elites. The population was about eight percent Jewish, 92 percent Christian, and 100 percent white.

With help from a research assistant, I collected complete occupational data for every listed adult man in the oil boom years. Most men tended to work in a single industry across their lifetimes, and to be identified publicly by that industry. This was particularly true of men working in cotton and oil, who were often described in their obituary headlines as "Oilman" or "Cotton Man." In the rare case that the industry affiliation was less clear, we coded occupation based on the 1930 and 1940 Census records, prioritizing the year(s) a man was listed in the 1925-45 registers. These public identities as oil and cotton men did not encompass all those people who profited from either industry; elites, particularly the most entrenched ones, maintained sprawling investments that spanned oil, cotton, insurance, banking, railroads, and more. A phalanx of bankers, lawyers, and manufacturers attended to both industries, often at the same time. But as this study attempts to describe those people popularly identified with cotton and oil, rather than everyone who dipped a toe in oil or cotton ventures, I define oilmen and cotton men by public occupation alone. Oil and cotton wives comprise any woman who was married to an oilman or cotton man and listed in the social registers between 1925 and 1942.

About half (48.4%) of the adults listed in the 1925-42 registers were born into Dallas high society, in the sense that one or more of their parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles were listed in the registers before they were. The rest were newcomers, which is not the same as being

new to the upper class, since many newcomers grew up in the upper class of other towns and cities. I used Census data and newspaper records to gather basic information on the occupations of newcomer cotton and oil couples' parents and grandparents, and on their family wealth and prominence. I then grouped each newcomer into a class background group. Newcomers had "upper-class origins" when their families of origin had two or more of the following characteristics: live-in domestic workers, an expensive home owned outright, a debutante in the immediate family, regular mentions in their local newspaper's Society pages, a sizable inheritance (>$100k in 2023 dollars), and a father with a high-status job, such as a corporation executive, politician, or federal judge. I categorized newcomers as having "middle-class origins" if their parents owned their home, their father had a professional or management job, and their mother worked only in the home. I counted newcomers as having "working-class origins" if they grew up in rented homes, their mothers worked for pay, their fathers had working-class jobs, if I could not find their natal families, and/or if their Census records generally showed signs of financial precarity. If the case was unclear, I rounded down.

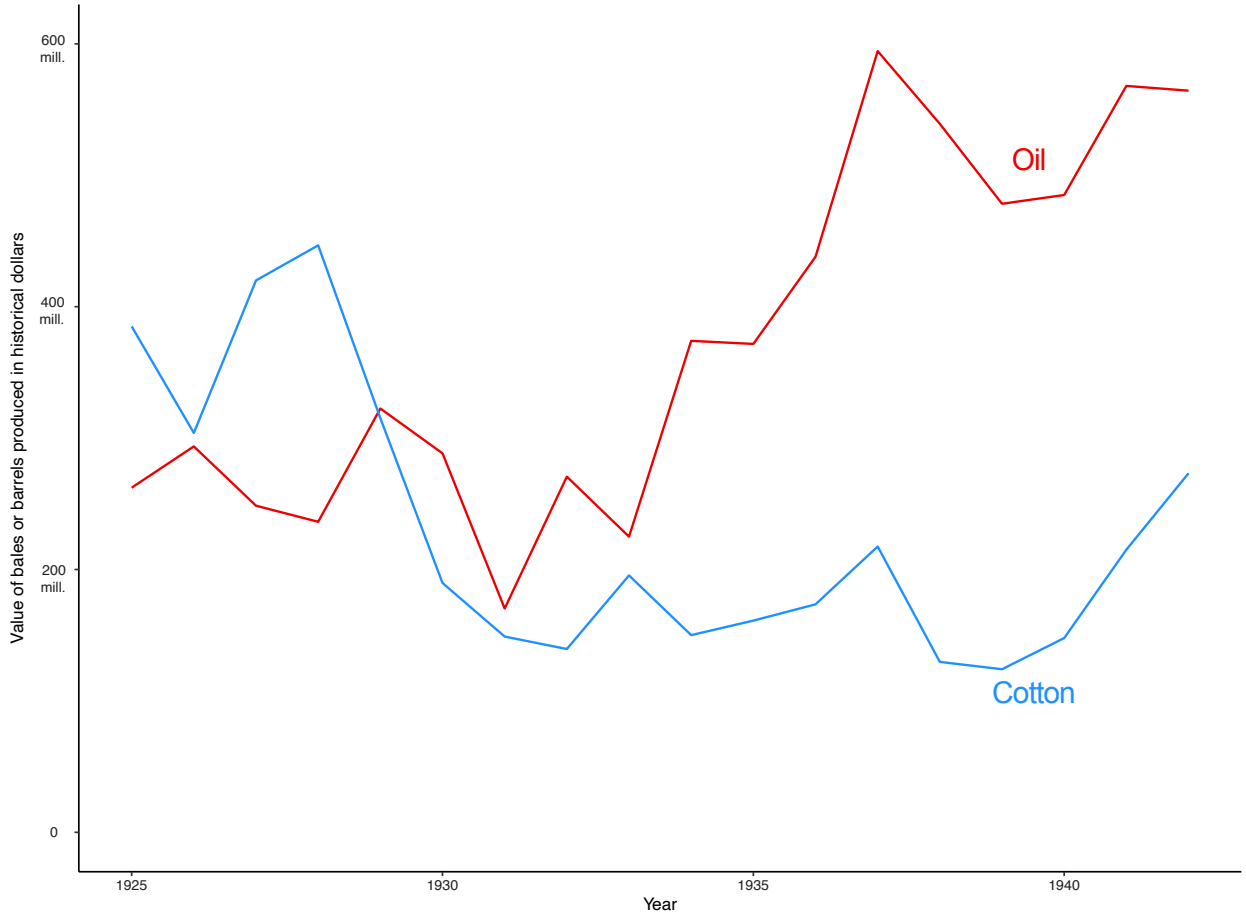
The dataset of Dallas high society is the first-ever full kinship map of an upper-class population in a U.S. city. In combination with the DPC membership lists and family background research for oil and cotton newcomers, it offers an unprecedented opportunity to systematically evaluate the family connections, industries, and backgrounds of a full elite population during a widely reported clash between new and old money. I will proceed with a brief overview of the historical case. Then I will turn to my findings – first, refuting the claim that new money oil families replaced old money cotton families in the Dallas elite, and second, offering social-psychological explanations for this divergence between perception and measurable reality.

THE EMPIRICAL CASE: COTTON AND OIL IN THE EAST TEXAS OIL BOOM

On October 3, 1930, a seventy-year-old con man named Columbus Marion "Dad" Joiner struck oil in an elderly widow's backyard. It soon became clear that her land sat on the edge of an oil field that was unprecedentedly vast. To this day, it remains the largest oil field ever discovered in the contiguous United States (McFarlane 2017). Within nine months, it was producing enough to account for over half the total U.S. production.

Private oil fortunes grew spectacularly large. Although Texas still had a reputation as a poor cowboy backwater, by the 1950s, Texan oilmen topped lists of the richest people in the country (Smith 1957). Oil fortunes grew so large in part because the oil boom coincided with the Great Depression. The major Northeastern oil companies were relatively cash-strapped, so independent oilmen could snatch up leases with little competition from better-resourced corporations. Labor and materials costs were especially low, making it easier for wealthy drillers to hoard the profits: some drillers literally paid their workers in beans. Low labor costs also meant that wealthier oilmen could easily hire spies, scouts, and geologists, giving them a sizable information advantage over less wealthy drillers (Presley 1978; Hill, Boyar, and Boyar 1994).

Figure 9. Oil and cotton in Texas, 1925-1942 (data from the *Texas Almanac*)



At the same time, the total value of cotton produced in Texas was taking a nosedive. Cotton had been the state's most important product since white enslavers began colonizing eastern Texas in the early 19th century. In the decades after the Civil War, the cotton-growing plantation labor system in the Blackland Prairies region around Dallas "grew at a faster rate than anywhere else in Texas or the rest of the South" (Smith et al. 2023:9-10). By the early 1900s, "cotton fields surrounded Dallas on all sides," visibly reminding residents of the crop's dominance (Edwards 1974:63). Nearly a fifth of the world's cotton was grown within 150 miles of the city, which had become the largest inland cotton market in the country. Many of the best-known Dallas elites worked as cotton brokers; others presided over cotton plantations just

outside the city; and many more inherited fortunes amassed from cotton and the enslavement of human beings before Emancipation. The only industry to rival cotton in the archetype of Dallas wealth was cattle, but cattleman comprised only 62 of the 12,282 people listed in the 1895-45 social registers.

In practice, cotton, cattle, and oil wealth often shaded into one another, in part because of land ownership. The West Texas oilfields generally lay under ranchland, and much of the East Texas Oil Field lay under cotton fields. To make significant oil money as a landowner required not just title to the land but the power to protect claims to the oil, which usually meant that the person in question was a member of the white landed gentry (McFarlane 2017). Some Black farmers owned small tracts of land in the oilfields, but white people regularly colluded to steal their mineral rights (Olien and Olien 2002; Presley 1978)[20]. In this literal sense, "old" landed wealth and "new" oil wealth were often one and the same.

Drillers did not have to own land, but they did have to be white, Christian men with some combination of money, connections, and luck. Even at rock-bottom prices with the best insider information, it still cost around $26,000 to drill an oil well- nearly half a million 2023 dollars- and only a fraction of those wells ever produced (Olien and Olien 2002). Oilmen needed loans to strike it rich. Dallas quickly became the "financial and service center for the East Texas oil field," largely because a Dallas banker named Nathan Adams developed specialized oil loans and

[20] White women were much more likely to profit as landowners than as drillers. The widow Daisy Miller Bradford, who owned the land where the oil boom started, was a moderately wealthy woman who inherited the acreage from her father; the boom made her even more wealthy. Like many wealthy landowners near the East Texas Oil Field, she was connected to the kinship network of Dallas high society: her brother-in-law was listed in the Dallas social registers and entangled in the family web. Dallas was the nearest city, and wealthy East Texan whites had been steadily moving there for decades, connecting the gentry of the city to the gentry of the countryside.

other Dallas banks adopted his tactics (Adams 1942).[21] But oil loans were available only to white men with some significant combination of economic and social capital.

In Dallas as a whole, oilmen comprised just over half of a percent of the adult male working population throughout the 1930s, and in fact, the percentage declined slightly during the oil boom years, from .63% in 1930 to .55% in 1940. The percentage was so small because oil workers inside the city were mostly high-level. Oilmen lived there when they worked for a company headquartered in Dallas, or when they were successful enough to require regular access to its bankers and lawyers. Dallas high society was a major draw for wealthy oilmen, as it was for wealthy people across industries, because it offered a concentration of elite institutions, resources, and potential friends and partners. Oilman H. L. Hunt said he moved to Dallas, for example, because "It made sense. His banks and attorneys were there," but also because he wanted his daughter Margaret to marry a socially elite man (Burrough 2009:119; Hill, Boyar, and Boyar 1994). Unsurprisingly, then, oilmen were more highly concentrated in the wealthy incorporated Dallas enclaves of University and Highland Park, which housed just six percent of workingmen in Dallas County but fully a third of its oilmen (Baird 1932). In Dallas, the much-discussed wave of newcomer oil people was a phenomenon limited to the economic elite.

At every level of the oil industry, white, Christian men monopolized profits. All women were barred from the oil fraternities and oil fields. White oilmen threatened to murder Black men if they worked anything but the lowest-paid jobs, and they informally barred Jewish men from joining oil fraternities like the Dallas Petroleum Club (Presley 1978). In one particularly

[21] Adams modeled the loans after ones had been providing to local cotton barons for years. He soberly explained, "my long experience in the financing of cotton had convinced me that any staple commodity, if properly warehoused or in transit to a receptive market, furnishes a suitable basis for credit extension" (Adams 1942:63-64). Adams was nestled at the center of Dallas high society, and connections to him could set a driller on the road to riches, which was exactly how it worked for Clint Murchison (Wolfe 1989).

notorious case, when members of the Osage Nation became enormously wealthy after oil was discovered on their lands in Oklahoma, powerful white people in the area began systematically murdering, marrying, and legally incapacitating Osage men and women in a partially coordinated effort to gain control of their land and oil revenues (Grann 2017). The Osage Nation is directly north of Dallas; many Dallas oilmen worked in the Oklahoma fields and vice versa. Although oilmen tended to talk about their industry as open and meritocratic – as a line of work in which anyone could "make it" – they vigilantly patrolled the boundaries of their fraternity, categorically excluding women, Jews, and people of color from their spectacular profits. In this obvious sense, oil money was not new, in that it flowed primarily to white, Christian men.

COTTON RICH, ROTTEN RICH

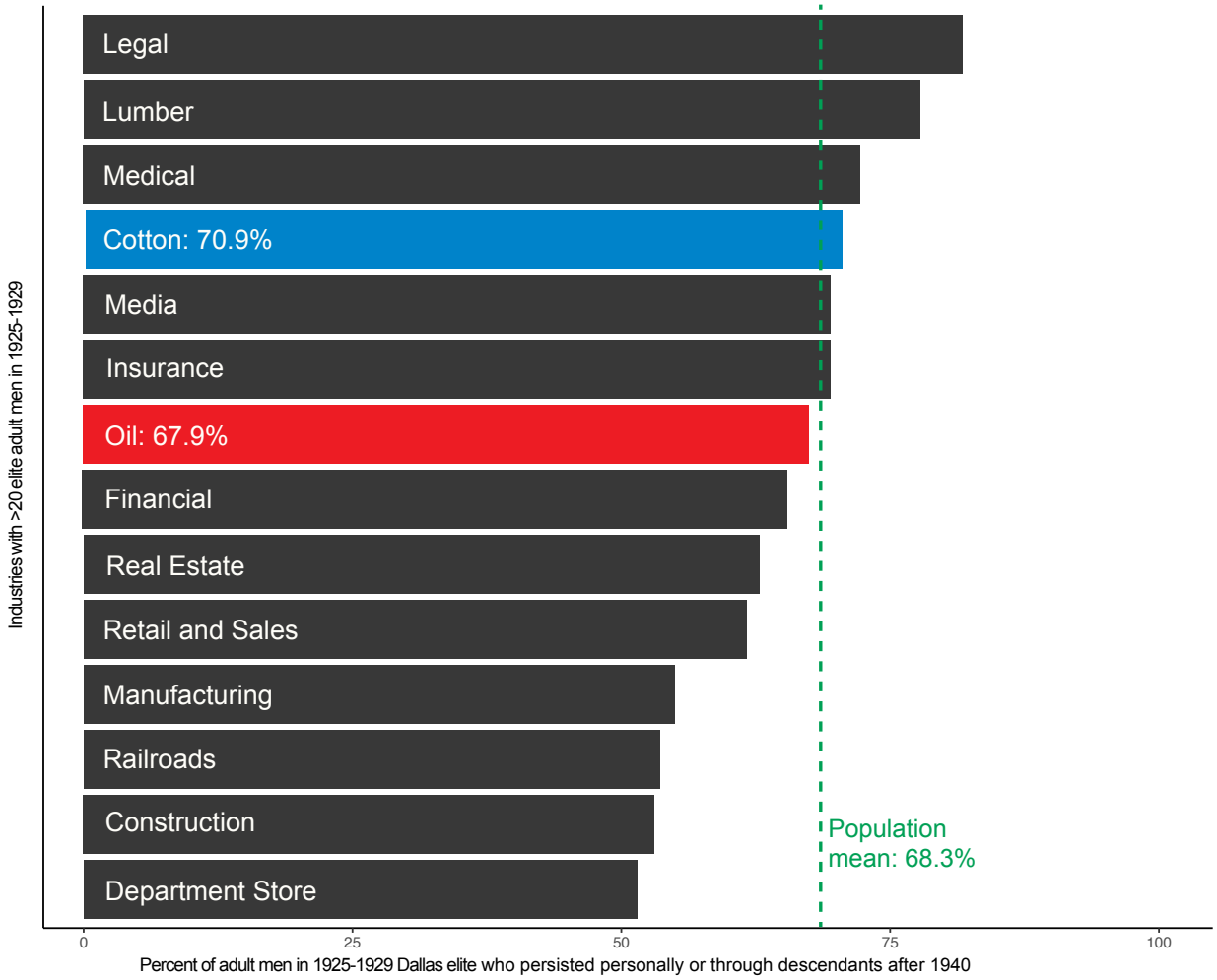
Cotton and oil people in Dallas high society

Members of Dallas high society told a consistent story about the 1930s: newly rich oil families arrived in droves, and old-guard cotton families snubbed them, but quickly fell from monied grace. Stanley Marcus (1974:246) of Neiman-Marcus remembered that during the oil boom, large numbers of oil families "decided to move in from the farms to take up residence in Dallas…but they were given a chilly reception by the old guard 'cotton families,' who regarded them as *nouveau riche*." A socialite wrote that at the premier boys' private school, students before the oil boom "were sons of cotton kings…but by the mid-1930s the school's ranks included dozens of sons of the newly rich oilmen [who]… fit in about as well as skunks at a barbecue" (Wolfe 1989:105). One *grand dame* reportedly announced to a dinner party that she would "rather entertain a colored man at her table than an oilman," a deliberately shocking claim in a community where explicit white supremacist views were the norm (Wolfe 1989:108). In

memoirs, newspaper articles, diaries, high society newsletters, at parties, and around dinner tables, Dallas heirs and heiresses consistently grieved the fall of the old-guard "cotton rich" at the hands of the new money oil people they called "rotten rich" (Maxson 2011).

Based on this standard narrative, we would expect that cotton families dropped out of high society at particularly high rates during the 1930s. Figure 10 compares the family persistence rates of pre-oil boom elites by industry. These are lower bounds on general elite persistence rates, as many of the families who left the Dallas elite simply moved to the elite of other cities and towns. Overall, 68.3% of elite adults in the 1925-29 registers persisted personally or through descendants after 1940. Despite widespread reports of the total demise of cotton families, they persisted at a slightly higher rate than other elites: 70.9%. Pre-boom oil families persisted at slightly lower rates: 67.9%. Industry-level persistence rates contradicted the cotton-to-oil turnover narrative, then, in that cotton families were, if anything, less likely to drop out of high society than elites overall.

Figure 10. Elite persistence through the oil boom and Depression by industry

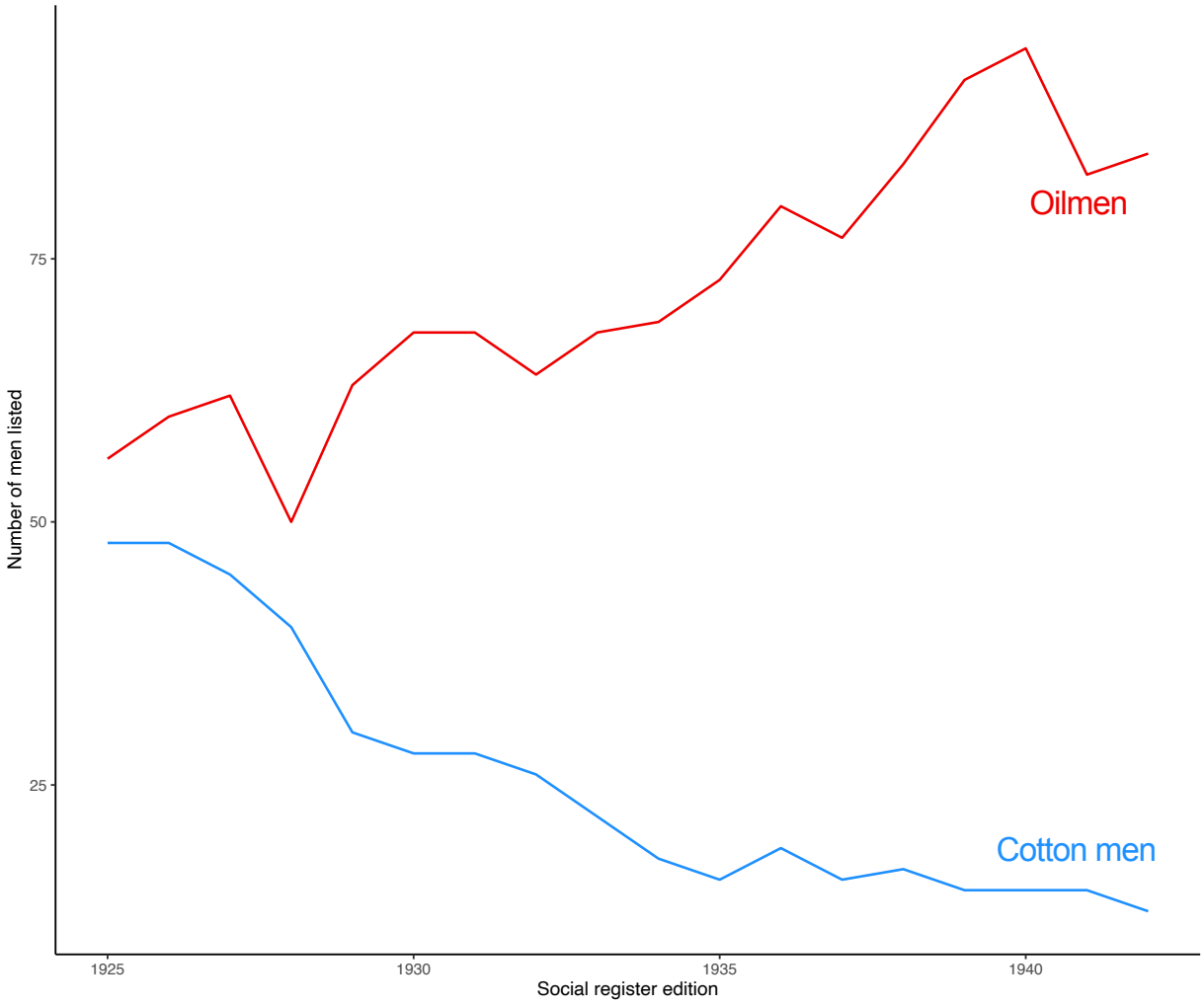


The Dallas social registers reflected the wave-of-oil-families narrative in that the number of oilmen listed in the registers increased each year during the interwar period, whereas most[22] other major industries, including the cotton industry, saw overall declines. While individual elites could drop out of the registers for many reasons, including divorce, moves, scandals, and death, the general declines likely stemmed from the Great Depression, when many old-timers

[22] The only other industry to grow in number within high society was the medical industry, though no one seems to have complained about an avalanche of *nouveau riche* doctors.

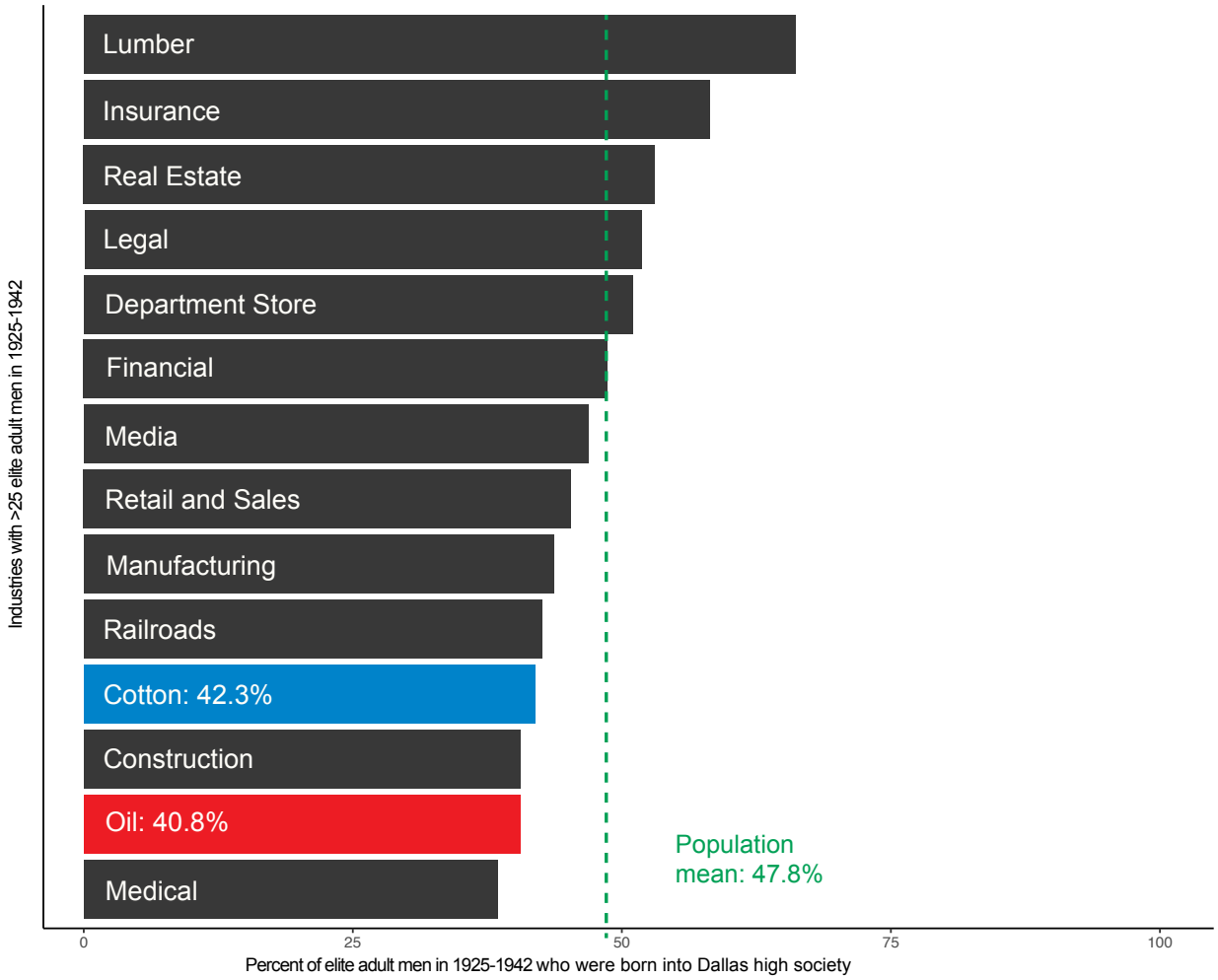
became too cash-strapped to keep up with the "social whirl." The number of cotton men listed dropped each year, even as cotton families generally persisted, because young Society men were not joining the cotton industry at replacement rates, and some cotton families dropped out temporarily before regaining their social footing soon after 1940. Oil was booming, cotton was failing, and the Dallas social registers reflected those industry-level trends.

Figure 11. Number of oil and cotton men listed in Dallas social registers



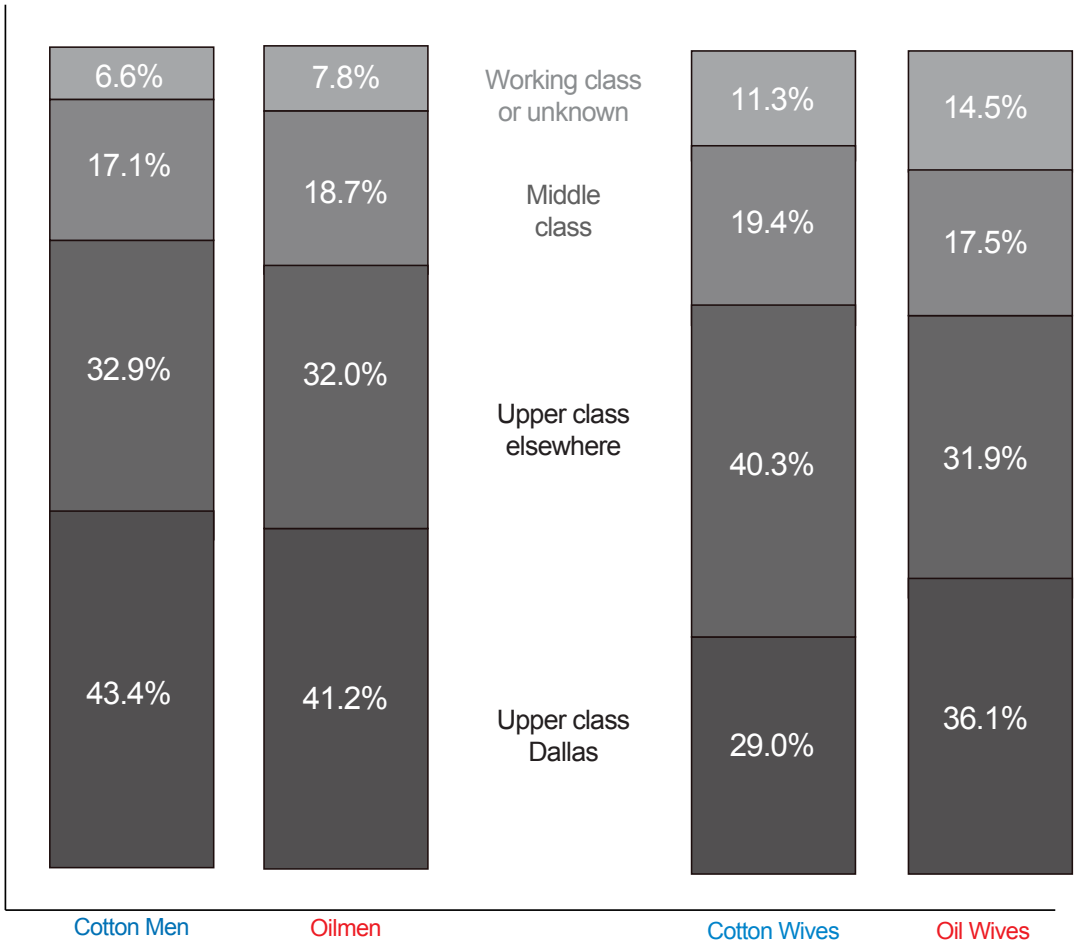
A reasonable hypothesis based on the surge of listed oilmen would be that oilmen had, on average, shallower family roots in Dallas high society than cotton men. But cotton and oilmen were born into Dallas high society at similar rates: 42.3% for cotton men and 40.8% for oilmen. And neither cotton nor oil people were as ancestrally embedded as the adult male population in general, 47.8% of which had at least one Dallas high society elder. All in all, oilmen were no newer to Dallas high society than cotton men.

Figure 12. Elite men born into Dallas high society, by industry



Elites born into Dallas high society had upper-class backgrounds, by definition. But what about the newcomers? A systematic analysis of the class backgrounds of oil and cotton men demonstrates that although practically every extant qualitative description of oil and cotton men during this time characterizes oilmen as new money and cotton men as old money, their class backgrounds were nearly identical: most were born rich (73.2% of oilmen, and 76.3% of cotton men). Few were born poor (7.8% of oilmen, and 6.6% of cotton men). The differences between their class background distributions were negligible, particularly compared to the overwhelming, consistent characterization of oilmen as "new money" and cotton men as "old money."

Figure 13. Class backgrounds of oil and cotton elites, 1925-42



The class backgrounds of oil and cotton wives looked much like the class backgrounds of oil and cotton men, in that few were born poor, and most were born rich. But the difference between genders was bigger than the difference between industries. Oil people were slightly more likely to have grown up poor and slightly less likely to have grown up rich than cotton people. In comparison, oil and cotton women were almost twice as likely as oil and cotton men to have grown up poor. In the world of oil and cotton families – supposedly the poles of a new-to-old money continuum- the person most likely to have been truly "new money" was a woman. I will return to this finding in the Discussion and Conclusion section.

All in all, cotton and oil people in high society Dallas had practically indistinguishable class backgrounds. Both oil and cotton people were more likely to be new to Dallas than the elite population overall. They were rarely new to money: many cotton and oil people had grown up in the upper classes of other cities and towns. Class background was more patterned by gender than by industry, but only modestly so. Despite the widespread stereotype of oil people as "new money" and cotton people as "old money," oil people were no "newer" to Dallas or wealth than cotton people in any statistically meaningful sense.

The merely rich Dallas oilmen

But perhaps the vulgar "new money" oilmen were never listed in the social registers, and were instead crowded around the edges of high society – concentrated in the economic elite, and excluded from the social elite. It is true that the merely rich oilmen of the Dallas Petroleum Club were much less likely to have been born rich than the socially elite oilmen – 52.7%, compared to 73.2%. They were also more likely to have been born poor, although the percentage still was not particularly high – 14.0%, compared to 7.8%. The middle-class born contingent was nearly twice

as large among the merely rich oilmen as it was among the socially elite oilmen (33.0%, compared to 18.7%). Even among the merely rich oilmen, half were born upper-class, and upward mobility was much more likely to have been short-range than long-range.

The merely rich oilmen were also less wealthy than the socially elite oilmen, as measured by home values. They were almost twice as likely to rent their homes. When they did own homes, they were worth about half as much as the homes of socially elite oilmen, and thirty percent less than social elites overall. The most parsimonious explanation for this difference is that the merely rich oilmen were simply not as rich as the average high society participant – or at least not as visibly rich.

If Dallas oilmen were disproportionately excluded from high society, they should have been less likely than other wealthy men to be included in the social registers. But oilmen took up an even larger share of the social registers than they did of the wealthy neighborhoods, even before the oil boom began. Fully 12.4% of oilmen living in Dallas County were listed in the 1940 edition of the social register, compared to about of 3.8% of all working men living in the wealthy neighborhoods, and .4% of adult working men in Dallas County overall. All else being equal, then, any given Dallas oilman in 1940 was thirty times more likely to be listed in the social registers than any given adult working man in Dallas, and three times more likely to be listed than any given wealthy man. Even though oilmen were supposedly kept out of "everything worthwhile" by established cotton families, they were kept out of the social registers at lower rates than wealthy men across industries.

Wealthy men across industries were excluded from high society, and they, too, likely had fewer upper-class backgrounds and less expensive homes than their socially elite counterparts. Especially given that oilmen were listed in the social registers at higher rates than other wealthy

men, it seems unlikely that even among the merely rich, oilmen were uniquely likely to be new to wealth. The much-talked-about wave of spendthrift "new money" oilmen was, statistically speaking, nowhere to be found.

All in the family: Oil and cotton kin

The characterization of cotton people as "old money" and oil people as "new money" implies that men married women from their own class backgrounds: cotton heirs married heiresses, and new money oilmen married new money women. For oil couples, this assumption was even featured in a *New Yorker* cartoon. As oil pours out of a rig in the background, a man runs to his tiny shack and apparent wife, who is literally wearing rags. "It's wonderful, Harry!" says the caption. "How late does Neiman-Marcus stay open?" (Richter 1956). But yet again, the stereotype was not reflected in any statistically measurable reality. An analysis of the class backgrounds within all oil (n = 188) and cotton (n = 74) couples demonstrates that in both industries, most marriages were between two people born into the upper class. There were no rags-to-riches marriages at all among cotton couples, and among oil couples, there were only four.

Figure 14. *New Yorker* cartoon of an oil couple



Among the oil and cotton couples that included at least one person born into Dallas high society, the cotton couples tended to feature a more deeply rooted husband, in the sense of the number of Dallas high society elders he had, and the oil couples tended to feature a more deeply rooted wife. These oil couples diverged significantly from the "new oil money" stereotype. Many of the deeply rooted women were debutantes, and almost all married newcomer oilmen from upper-class families. Dallas Society heiresses individually relied on income from capital rather than from labor, and it was often necessary to marry men with large capital reserves or high incomes to remain wealthy. From the perspective of the newcomer oilmen, locally

established Society wives were a fast track to the social connections that could entrench their status and augment their wealth in a new location[23].

Debutantes represented the most socially elite Christian daughters in Dallas, and they were particularly likely to marry oilmen. Twenty-four (12.9%) did so during the oil boom years. (The only kind of husband debutantes chose more frequently were lawyers, who represented 18.8% of all first husbands.) Only two (1.1%) married cotton men. The marriages between deeply-rooted debutantes and wealthy newcomer oilmen immediately connected those newcomers to the Dallas elite kinship web, which encompassed at least seventy percent of the cumulative population of 1895-1945 Dallas elites in a single cluster. By 1945, most (74.0%) socially elite oilmen in Dallas were connected to the central web of kin.

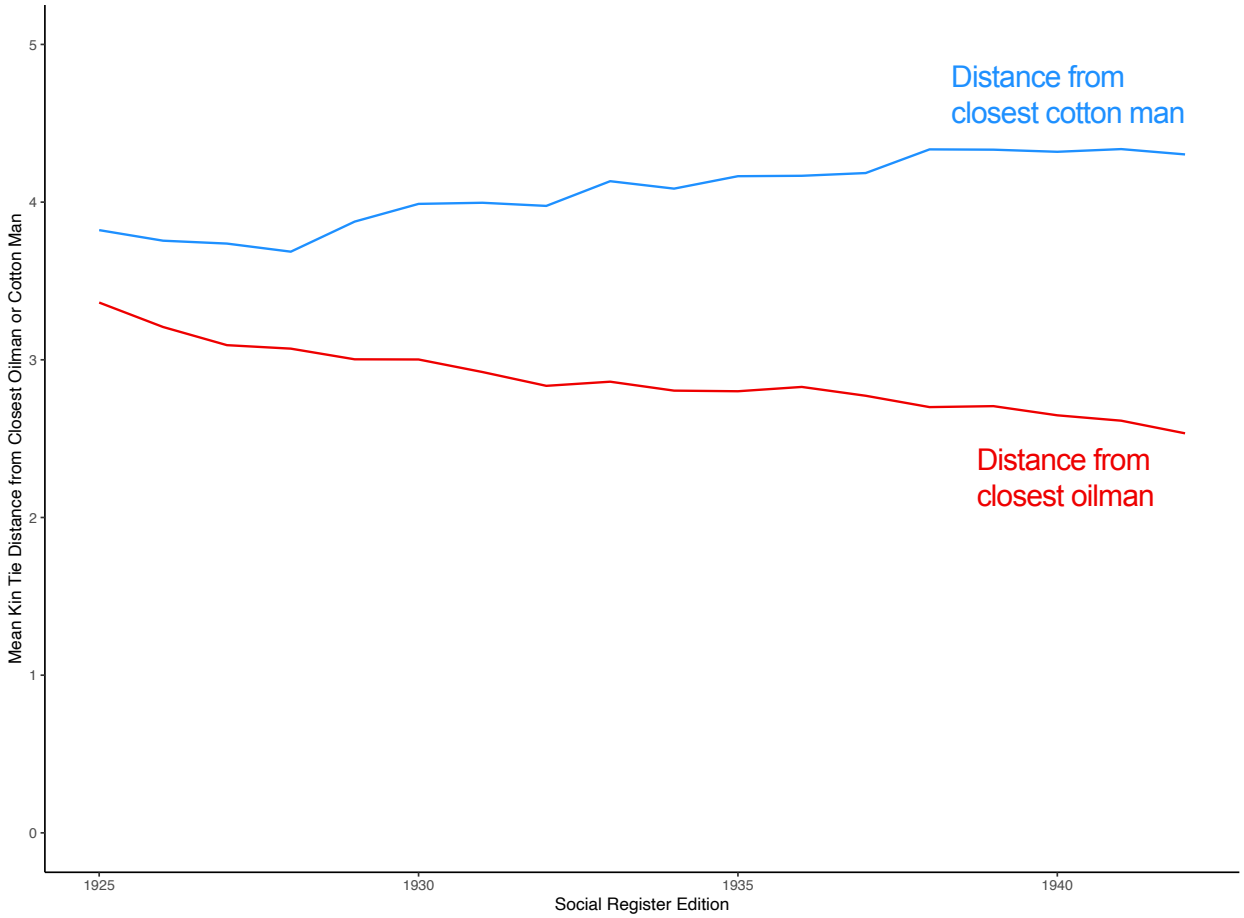
This was another way that the folk categories of new oil money and old cotton money were inaccurate: industries regularly combined in the same family, and this became increasingly true over time, as wealthy heirs and heiresses adapted to shifting economic conditions. Notably, the sons of cotton barons were more likely to work in oil than any other industry but cotton. Take, for example, the Earl Fains: Earl Fain I (1873-1961) was a cotton broker, Earl Fain II (1907-1980) was an oilman, and Earl Fain III (1932-2018) was an oil industry analyst trained on Wall Street. The collective result was that by the close of WWII, most oil and cotton men were ultimately related to one other by some distance of blood and marriage.

Throughout this time period, then, most members of Dallas high society had an oilman and a cotton man somewhere in the extended family - about 70-80 percent for both industries across social register years. As young Society people increasingly became oilmen and married

[23] Similarly, English noblemen were not supposed to draw income from market-based labor, and for hundreds of years married the daughters of wealthy outsiders when they needed infusions of cash; in return, their in-laws gained prestige and social connections that could entrench their families' wealth and status (Stone and Stone 1984).

oilmen, the average kin distance between Dallas elites and their nearest oilman relatives decreased, going from 3.4 kin ties in 1925 to 2.7 in 1942. In contrast, the average kin distance from cotton barons increased, going from 4.2 to 5.2, reflecting the overall decline of cotton as a lucrative upper-class career. Here, one kin tie is the distance between a person and a close family member: spouse, parent, child, aunt, uncle, grandparent, or first cousin. By the 1942 social register, then, the average elite might have an oilman as a spouse's brother-in-law, and a cotton man as a spouse's brother-in-law's brother-in-law. In the upper-class family web, both oil and cotton were ubiquitous, but oil was even more so.

Figure 15. Elites' average kin distance from oilmen and cotton men over time



The fact that most social elites were related to oilmen – and even more closely related to oilmen than cotton men – contradicts elite claims that oil people were distinct from established high society families. One unusually clear-eyed local socialite, John William Rogers (1951:278), observed that even though Dallas elites tended to regard oil people "as a group apart," they were in fact so increasingly entangled through birth, marriage, friendships, and organizational affiliations that by 1950, "trying to set them apart [was] a little like attempting to isolate in your bloodstream the portion that is your maternal grandfather." But high society observers may not have seen their oilman grandfathers, fathers, sons, nephews, and brothers as true "oil people," even as they emphasized increasingly distant connections to cotton barons, living and dead. New oil money was a folk social category, and not an accurate description of the distribution of industries and class backgrounds in the Dallas family web.

TEXAS IS A NEW BOY

As I have demonstrated, the widely reported clash between new oil money and old cotton money in Dallas did not line up with statistical reality at the level of the high society population, in that most cotton families persisted through the oil boom, most oil people were born upper-class, and most elites had both oil and cotton men in the family. So why did socialites invariably describe the 1930s as an invasion of *nouveau riche* oil people, met with resistance from old guard cotton people? And why didn't other industries, like insurance, banking, or the medical industry, get similar narrative attention? I argue that while the new-versus-old-money narrative did not describe actual mobility patterns into and out of the upper class, it did describe a shift in the prototypical Texan elite from a cotton baron to an oil millionaire. I make this argument in four parts: (a) prototypical regional elites are often associated with regionally-specific industries,

and are usually particularly wealthy relative to other elites, (b) whereas the elite population saw modest change and overall persistence through the oil boom, among the most visibly wealthy elites, cotton-to-oil turnover was real and dramatic, (c) the oil boom made some oilmen rich on a scale largely unprecedented for Texas, attracting considerable attention from the national media, which characterized all rich Texans as newly rich oilmen, and (d) all of these factors triggered a shift in the *prototypical wealthy Texan* from a cotton baron to a new money oilman, which some elites vocally resisted by distancing themselves from the new money oilmen and aligning themselves instead with the older cotton baron prototype.

It is striking that even though Dallas elites tended to describe themselves in terms of "cotton people" and "oil people," and sometimes in terms of cattle barons, most (84%) elite Dallas men worked in other industries. Oil, cotton, and cattle were more symbolically important to Dallas high society than other industries, at least in part because they were relatively unique. Regional upper classes are often associated with regionally specific industries. Silicon Valley is home to wealthy lawyers, investment bankers, and real estate moguls, but it is widely known for tech fortunes. At various times, Chicago's and Cincinnati's elites have been associated with meatpacking, Pittsburgh's with steel, Los Angeles's with movie studios, Detroit's with cars, Boston's with shipping, and San Francisco's with gold mining. In Dallas high society, adult men were always most likely to be bankers, lawyers, insurance executives, or real estate investors. But every twentieth century regional U.S. upper class had rich bankers and lawyers, and *not* every upper class had cotton and oil tycoons. Further, elites who were not oilmen or cotton men often profited from those industries, either directly or indirectly.

Perhaps most importantly, the cotton and oil kings were disproportionately represented among the wealthiest of the wealthy Dallasites – the one percent of the one percent, as is likely

true for the regional entrepreneurs of upper classes in other places and times. Upper-class worlds are constitutionally hierarchical in at least two senses: (a) they are defined by their position at the top of various resource hierarchies, and (b) within the upper class, there are still further, increasingly steep internal hierarchies (Khan 2015; Hecht 2017). Wealth and income in capitalist economies generally have exponential distributions. Elites are concentrated in the tails of those distributions, where the wealth and income gaps grow increasingly large. In other words, while Dallas elites were alike in that they were usually much richer than non-elites, within the world of high society, the richest families were many times richer than their friends and neighbors. They typically held more symbolic importance to the Dallas elite, and often worked in cotton or oil.

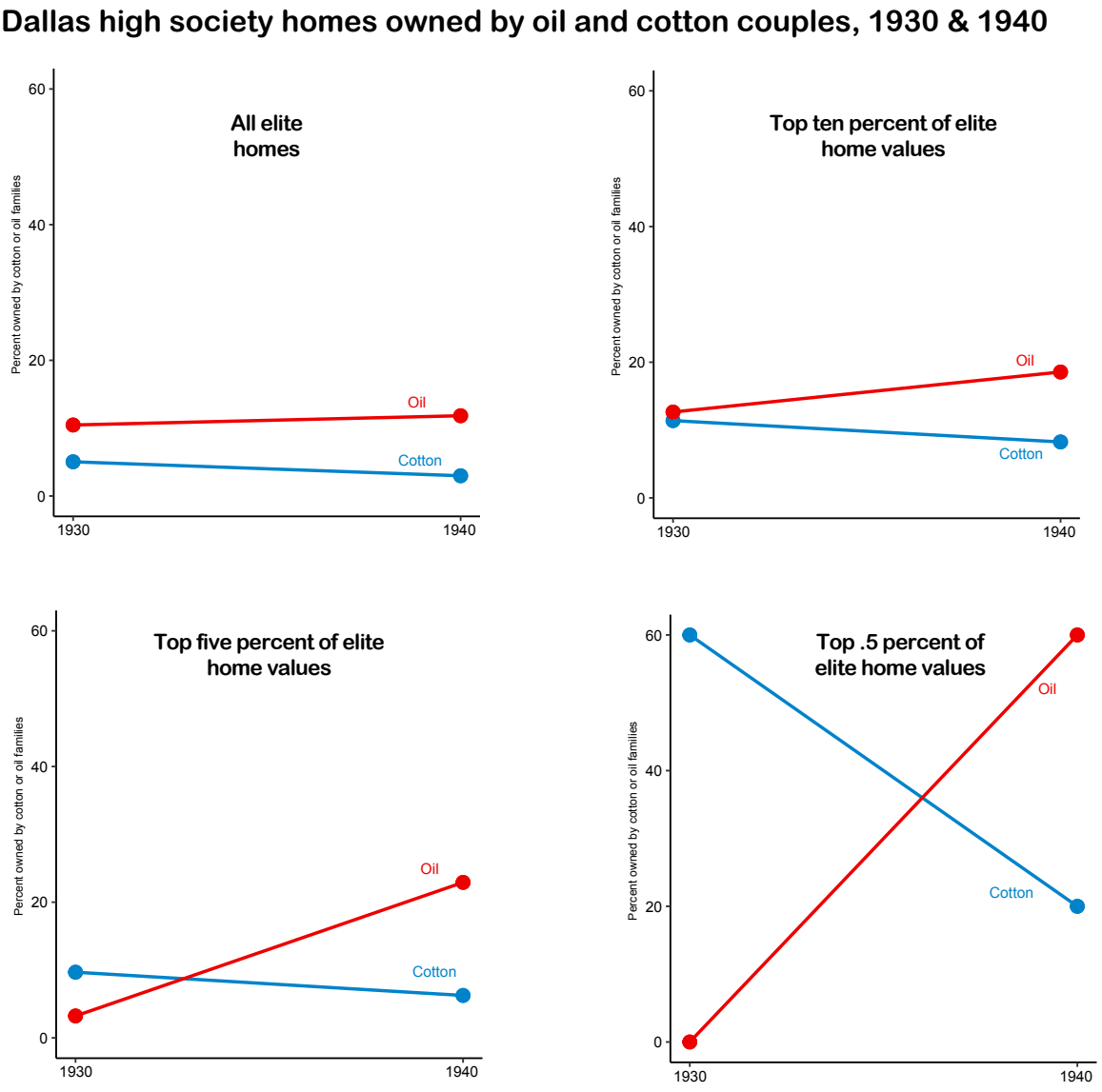
Fortunes amassed in booming industries by individual tycoons tend to be both larger and more volatile than family fortunes spread amongst multiple people and invested across multiple industries (Korom, Lutter, and Beckert 2017). That means that the most extreme tail of the elite wealth distribution, where prototypical regional elites tend to be located, may be characterized by more churn than the elite population overall. We can see this pattern play out in the Dallas elite home values reported in the 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census. Home values are useful for approximating perceived wealth because homes were visible to other local elites. And like wealth more generally, home values were exponentially distributed across the high society population.

Figure 16 depicts the share of high society homes owned by cotton and oil families at various segments of the elite home value distributions in 1930 and 1940. Overall, cotton and oil families owned high society homes at the same rates as other families throughout the oil boom and Depression. Among all elite mansions, the story of cotton and oil families was one of modest change and significant persistence.

But the more expensive the high society mansions were, the more the share of cotton families declined, and the more the share of oil families increased. At the top ten percent of high society home values, cotton and oil families began with similar proportions of elite homes, and ten years later, oil families had acquired a slightly larger share, and cotton families a slightly smaller one. At the top five percent of homes, the pattern was stronger: cotton families began with a larger share than oil families and ended with a much smaller one.

The pattern was most marked at the very top of the distribution. In 1930, the five most expensive estates in Dallas represented just half of a percent of high society homes, but twenty percent of the total value of high society home wealth. These estates were (and are still) quite prestigious in Dallas, resting on multi-acre, walled-off lots in the heart of the city. Three of the five belonged to cotton families in 1930, and zero belonged to oil families. Over the following decade, two cotton couples and one cattle couple sold their sprawling estates to oil people, leaving oilmen with three of the local palaces and cotton men with only one. These transfers were major news among the elite, many of whom regularly attended parties and other social events at the famed estates. At the level of the high society population, the oil boom years may have been characterized by modest change and considerable persistence, but at the level of tycoons, prototypes, and palaces, the oil boom years were a revolution.

Figure 16. Dallas high society homes owned by cotton and oil couples



What made matters worse is that outside of Texas, a growing national obsession with Texan oil wealth was leading outsiders to assume that any wealthy Texan was a brand-new oil millionaire. Beginning in the late 1930s, *Life* and *Fortune* ran regular, breathless features on the "new" Texan rich. Reporters and novelists flocked to Texas to chronicle the wild spending and brash behavior of the "new money" Texas oilmen (Bainbridge 1961). In 1957, *Fortune* published a landmark list of the wealthiest people in the country, and slotted the listed wealthy into only

two categories, “Inherited Wealth” and “Oil.” The accompanying editorial characterized the “new rich” as mostly Texan oilmen, even though Texans represented only a quarter of the listed “self-made” fortunes, and even though most of the supposedly “self-made” Texan oil fortunes belonged to men with wealthy parents (Smith 1957). In the midst of this publicity, Dallas socialites found that when they made their regular pilgrimages to Europe, New York, and California, strangers began to assume that the wealthy visitors from Texas must be new money oil millionaires (Lewis 1984).

Both in and outside Dallas, the archetype of a Texan was changing. Gordon-Reed (2021:17-29) observes that even today, “the image of Texas has a gender and a race: *Texas is a White man*,” but that the *kind* of white man has changed over time. From the perspective of early wealthy white Texans, the archetypal Texan was a “Slave Plantation Owner.” The first wealthy, white settlers were mostly enslavers; indeed, they started the Texan “War of Independence” to secure legal protection for enslavement[24]. But the locally prevalent Slave Plantation Owner archetype was subsumed under three newer, nationally known Texan archetypes. When a few cattle fortunes exploded to stratospheric heights after the Civil War, the Texan became a Rancher and a Cowboy. Then came oil wealth, and “the Oilman soon challenged the Cowboy and the Rancher as the archetypal Texan” (2021:20). The new Texan, in his narrative distance from plantation slavery, and his association with West Texas, “a part of the state relatively devoid of Black people,” “quiets the noise a bit and avoids the tragic element in Texas history,” which is, of course, slavery, land theft, and genocide (2021:29). Texas became a newly rich white boy.

[24] It is difficult to overemphasize how strongly Dallas elites tended to identify with their families’ histories of enslaving Black people, even decades after Emancipation. Like wealthy white people across the South, they erected Confederate statues, threw plantation-themed parties, and published “Lost Cause”-oriented books, poems, and plays. Several designed their homes to exactly replicate old family plantations. Dallas hosted the Confederate Veterans Reunion in 1902, and elites competed to host as many former soldiers as possible (Dealey 1966). Twenty-nine different elite Dallas men were given the first and middle names “Robert E. Lee.”

From the perspective of some Dallas elites, avoiding the "tragic element" of slavery and genocide was a public relations strategy. Around the time of the oil boom, many sociopolitical elites, particularly the ones whose businesses were closely tied to investors outside the South, began to talk about Dallas and themselves differently. Their imagined Dallas shifted from a Confederate stronghold headed by benevolent, aristocratic patriarchs to a cowboy utopia built wholesale and history-less by enterprising businessmen (Phillips 2006; Graff 2008). The discursive shift aligns with the narrativized transition from cotton, associated with enslavement, to oil, associated with supposedly "self-made," independent white men. Perhaps the transition was uncomfortable for some established elites whose self-image was more closely tied to inherited enslaver wealth. It may have been particularly uncomfortable for elite white women, who, excluded from the "skill"-based logics of men, relied solely on the logics of inheritance and white supremacy to justify their upper-class status. It makes sense, in that context, for many elite Dallasites to emphatically distance themselves from the new money Texas oilmen.

Regardless, the symbolic transition was a successful one. It was reflected in and reinforced by the dominant narrative of "new money" oil people overtaking "old money" cotton people, by the tangible reality of cotton-to-oil turnover at the upper echelons of elite mansions, and by the national press's fascination with fabulously wealthy Texan oilmen. The foundation of white wealth in Texas was enslavement, land theft, and genocide, but the archetypal rich Texan was not a Slave Plantation Owner; few Texans were newly rich white men, but Texas is still a new white boy.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The standard narrative of industry and family in high society worlds – in which new industries and newly wealthy families co-emerge, toppling resistant old industries and families – is a folk model of socioeconomic change at the top of the class distribution. This folk model assumes that fortunes from economic booms primarily accrue to strivers from the lower and middle classes. But the kind of person most structurally able to profit from an economic boom is a person born to considerable wealth, status, and power. The brouhaha about vulgar Dallas "oil people" was, at best, a misperception. It was a misperception that bolstered the legitimacy of supposedly meritocratic or "open" elite, and that served the interests of businessmen who wanted to portray Dallas wealth as clean and new.

Even though the narrative about new oil and old cotton money did not correspond to the actual distribution of class backgrounds within the industries across the elite population, it did correspond to a material and symbolic shift among the upper echelons of the upper class. The decline of the cotton industry and the rise of the oil industry generated a turnover among tycoons, challenged established narratives about the basis of elite wealth, and bolstered efforts to market Dallas to investors outside the South. The prototypical wealthy Texan was no longer an aristocratic cotton baron: he was a cowboy-hatted, new money oilman. That image persists today.

The focus on prototypical fortunes rather than elite populations is supported by the tendency within quantitative elite studies to focus on individuals – e.g., the *Forbes* 400, or the *Who's Who* – rather than interconnected upper-class communities. Lists of elite individuals are easier to compile than upper-class kinship networks. They yield essential insights about the shifting characteristics of people with extreme wealth and in visible positions of power. But they

cannot describe the actual relational worlds elites are embedded in. Estimating rates of elite turnover by looking at the very top fortunes – the richest people in a country, or the world – overemphasizes mobility, and underemphasizes persistence. Clint Murchison, for example, was not related to anyone else on the *Fortun*e list, but he was connected to a deep, sprawling kin network of upper-class heirs and heiresses across Dallas and East Texas. In other words, being "new" to the list of the richest people in the world is not the same as being "new" to wealth (see also Schimpfössl and Monteath 2022). Multidimensional data that capture the kin networks, social networks, wealth sources, and other characteristics of upper-class communities can enrich our understanding of the way resources actually move and persist within elite populations over time.

It is possible that many other reported clashes between new and old money may reflect a shift in the local prototypical elite rather than broader patterns of elite mobility. It is difficult to say because data contextualizing individually powerful and/or wealthy elites within upper-class communities are rare and time-intensive to compile. Consistent findings of elite persistence in multiple historical cases, even where elites describe a near-total turnover, suggest that this may be true. Moreover, these narratives do align with a shift in the prototypical regional elite: in Gilded Age New York, for example, from a Knickerbocker merchant to a railroad baron; in post-Soviet Russia, from a powerful government official to a new money entrepreneur. High-profile, anecdotal cases often neatly illustrate the new and old money story at the level of Aristotelian cognitive typification (Monk 2022). They reflect the way elites described their worlds, but they do not reflect the statistical reality of who elites were, who they married, who they socialized with, and who made money in the oil boom.

The finding that class origins differed more by gender than by industry, and that upper-class cotton and oil wives were slightly more likely to have been born poor or middle class than their husbands, points to the need for more work on women's mobility into the upper class. In this empirical context, the gendered difference is striking particularly because it directly contradicts the way elites themselves described their backgrounds. Throughout this time period and across industries, elite obituaries, memoirs, and family histories generally characterized men as having "earned" their exalted position through hard work and genius, and women as having inherited it. More precisely, the elite life histories of men tended to emphasize that they started off as a messenger boy or an oil roughneck or a cotton picker and then clawed their way up to the top of the wealth-status-power ladders through sheer gumption[25]. Elite women, on the other hand, tended to join as many ancestry societies as possible, and their obituaries frequently mentioned that they were descended from kings, or at least a notable Confederate general.

This divergence even showed up in their childhood reading preferences. Newspaper heir Ted Dealey (1966:48) remembered that around the turn of the twentieth century in high society Dallas, boys read Horatio Alger books, in which poor white boys become rich through hard work and character, and girls read Elsie Dinsmore books, in which an eight-year-old white plantation heiress is beautiful, blonde, and pious. Jake Hamon Jr. (1902-1985), the millionaire oilman son of a millionaire oilman father, remembered that he "read all of the Horatio Alger books, with their rags-to-riches plots" because he identified so strongly with the "poor boy" (Presley 1978:279). But even though oil and cotton wives were twice as likely as their husbands to have been born poor, I have never found a single instance of a Dallas high society woman in this era publicly claiming she grew up anything but upper-class.

[25] Usually, this was true in a literal sense, though the "oil roughneck" often had a rich oil baron father, and the "messenger boy" often worked at his uncle's bank.

Upper-class white women did not say they accumulated wealth through their own hard work, because with rare exceptions, they were not supposed to work for pay at all; indeed, not working for pay was a symbol of their families' upper-class status, and working for pay in almost any job was a potential embarrassment (Ostrander 1984; Zelizer 2005). Even today, the white upper class of the U.S. is characterized by the same gendered division of labor. At the top of the wealth distribution, men overwhelmingly draw large incomes from prestigious jobs, and women spend their days doing unpaid charity and relational labor (Kendall 2002; Yavorsky, Keister, Qian, and Thébaud 2023). Independently wealthy women, like those listed in the *Forbes 400*, have always been overwhelmingly heirs, rather than people who accumulated fortunes in their lifetimes – so much so that Edlund and Kopczuk (2009) used the proportion of women among the ultra-wealthy as a measure of the relative prevalence of dynastic wealth (Khan 2015). For white women in the United States, the most populated pathway into upper-class adulthood has long been some combination of inheritance and marriage. And for white women with no upper-class elders, that leaves marriage. But no Society woman wanted to appear to be a "gold digger," a woman who acquired money and status solely through her husband. A systematic analysis of all women who married their way to wealth is beyond the scope of this paper, but it can and should be done, for Dallas and for other upper-class worlds.

The assumption that newly wealthy families and wealth from new industries are coterminous may be so common in the U.S. in part because it serves as a kind of categorical sequel to the rags-to-riches stories that have shored up the meritocracy myth since at least the Gilded Age. If profits from emerging industries overwhelmingly flow to "new" families, and if high society in general is best characterized by a struggle between those families and "old" ones, maybe *any* family can be new, no matter how much money and social power it starts with. For

believers in the ideal or reality of meritocracy, this is a more appealing characterization of elites than would be a statistically realistic assessment of the overwhelming multigenerational continuity of wealth and power. In any case, the evidence presented here demonstrate that elite perspectives on new and old money should not be taken at face value. From the perspective of U.S. elites, the rich Texan has been archetypally a New Boy for at least a century. In reality, Texan wealth has always been like wealth anywhere else in the country: disproportionately amassed by the rich white children of rich white parents.

Chapter 3

The Gender of Inheritance in an Upper-Class Family Network

INTRODUCTION

Wealthy Dallas widow Margaret Jalonick (1831-1899) originally planned to split her fortune equally between her four children, George, Isaac, Edwin, and Emma. But then her daughter Emma got divorced. Margaret amended her will, explaining that it was her "duty" to leave Emma most of the estate, since Emma, as an upper-class white mother of a young son, was not supposed to work for pay. Emma's three brothers assented: they did not need bequests as large as Emma's, because they were busy building fortunes of their own. They likely also knew that in the densely intertwined family, social, and economic worlds of the local elite, a financially insecure sister could have been both embarrassing and bad for business. One year later, catastrophe struck, when Edwin suddenly drowned with his wife and two children in the infamous Galveston Flood. He and his wife left their estates to their two surviving children, Edison and Helen, who moved in with their maternal grandparents. When the orphaned Edison reached adulthood, his uncle Isaac gave him a job. Isaac, who had no children, died three decades after Edwin. In his will, he left a trust fund for his divorced sister Emma, her son Hartwell, and his orphaned nephew and niece, Edison and Helen. He also designated Edison president of his company. He excluded his brother George's branch of the family, ostensibly because George, who had long ago purchased their father's business, was alive and even wealthier than Isaac. Then George died with four children, leaving the largest bequest to his unmarried daughter Margaret. Emma died last, leaving her remaining fortune to her son, who

had, in the meantime, changed his surname to Jalonick. Through decades of linked bequests, the Jalonicks collectively ensured that the whole family could remain stably upper class, despite rancorous divorces, early deaths, and spinsterhood. The most financially vulnerable Jalonicks – unmarried women and fatherless children – inherited the most wealth, allowing them to maintain a minimum upper-class lifestyle. And of course, all the family's lucrative jobs and trusteeships went to men, who died richer than their sisters.

The Jalonicks were typical of their social world. In white upper-class Dallas during the first half of the twentieth century, a rigidly patriarchal society, women inherited more wealth more often than men. This was true even when excluding bequests to spouses, which mostly flowed to widows. Women were not wealthier than men, who were freer to accumulate fortunes through market-based labor, and they did not have as much financial control as men, who typically served as their trustees and financial agents. Upper class family "class projects" worked to secure status and stability for women, and economic control and opportunity for men (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2021). Collectively, elite family wealth distributions nurtured a broad, deep upper class kinship network, in which men accumulated wealth and women maintained it.

Inheritance is once again becoming a major driver of wealth inequality (Piketty 2014; Savage 2021; Beckert 2022; Bessière and Gollac 2023). But as Beckert (2022: 6) has noted, "inheritance and inheritance law have…never received the attention in sociology they deserve, given their centrality to the long-term stability of the stratification order." Accordingly, there is much we do not know about the way wealth is variously transferred in wealthy populations. The results in early twentieth century Dallas upper class are surprising because extant data indicates that in most patriarchal populations for centuries, men have inherited more than women

(Shammas, Salmon, and Dahlin 1987; Smith, Kish, and Crawford 1987; Hrdy[26] and Judge 1993; Betzig and Weber 1995; Chan 1997; Estudillo, Quisumbing, and Otsuka 2001; Izuhara 2002; Deere and Leon 2003; Moors 2003; Hacker 2010; Aoki 2013; Toktas and O'Neil 2013; Clark and Cummins 2015; Roy 2015; Harari 2019; Castañeda Garza and Crozer 2022). This case offers a different model of gendered family wealth strategies – one that is perhaps closer to contemporary U.S. upper class practice than other historical examples. By combining comprehensive data on upper-class kin ties, information about the size and distribution of estates, and qualitative accounts of wealth transfer and management, this paper aims to sketch a clear but nuanced picture of gendered wealth flows in an intricately interconnected upper class. The upper-class kinship network is important, because it allows us to see how testators divided their wealth among all living relatives, revealing how frequently testators chose to leave extra wealth to daughters, sisters, and nieces. The qualitative data allows us to put the wills in context with broader upper-class family wealth strategies, in which men made their families richer, and women kept their families rich and high-status.

This paper will proceed as follows. After an overview of the literature on inheritance, wealth, and gender, I describe the data and methods, and I discuss this case in historical context. The empirical analysis begins with a description of five general bequest patterns in Dallas wills, and the gendered logics testators used to match properties to heirs. I then use qualitative data to sketch out the gendered flows of wealth hidden by supposedly equal bequests of property. Finally, I zoom out to describe elite estates in the context of the county population and discuss

[26] Dr. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, a renowned anthropologist who co-wrote several useful studies of inheritance practices, was born deeply entangled in the Dallas and Houston elite family webs. Inheritance has certainly played a central role in her own life: she has tycoons and debutantes in every direction of her family tree, including co-founders of Humble Oil and Texaco (her paternal grandfather, Robert Lee Blaffer, and a great-grandfather, William Thomas Campbell, respectively), legendary Texas banker Wirt Davis (her maternal grandfather), and multiple Dallas debutantes, including her mother Camilla, sister Joan, and at least eight cousins.

the circulation and capture of wealth by upper class communities. I conclude with a discussion about the gendered wealth transfers among the wealthy, and how those transfers may sustain larger-scale inequality.

BACKGROUND

Inheritance in law and practice

Inheritance law is arguably "the most fundamental institutional anchor of the intergenerational protection of great fortunes" (Beckert 2022:6). But it varies across jurisdictions in at least three main ways: (a) degrees of testamentary freedom, meaning how free testators are to choose where their property goes, (b) the legal rights various relatives have to various portions of the estate, and (c) taxation (Beckert 2008; Friedman 2009). Testamentary freedom can vary considerably. In common law jurisdictions like the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., testators are relatively free to leave their wealth to whomever they'd like, but in civil law contexts like Brazil, France, Germany, and Japan, testators are typically required to split their fortunes equally between children (Finch and Mason 2000; Beckert 2008; Pugliese, Belleau, and Biron-Boileau 2022). The U.S. allows a parent to completely disinherit a child, whereas "most countries in Europe and Latin America simply do not allow this" (Friedman 2009:36). Sometimes inheritance laws mandate non-partible inheritance; for example, many interpretations of Islamic inheritance law state that all children must inherit, but daughters receive half the share of sons (Moors 2003). One more extreme example is patrilineal primogeniture, a practice in which testators pass the bulk of their estate to the eldest male heir, as they did for centuries in aristocratic England (Starr 2019). Inheritance laws have generally become more inclusive over time, as daughters, widows, and children born to unmarried parents have been given more rights to larger portions of the

estate (Beckert 2008). These shifts are significant. As Starr (2019:36) argues, inheritance laws and norms can be conceptualized as "rules of change" that entrench social structures by regulating the intergenerational transmission of wealth, particularly during periods of low economic growth. As such, they are "often constitutive of the dominant class."

Inheritance also varies in practice. Even in nominally strict testamentary regimes, "people are not always rule-followers," and their decisions about how to bequeath their wealth do not consistently reflect laws or even social norms. Rather, "rules of inheritance create a context for individual and family strategies" (Starr 2019:37). For example, even after primogeniture became law in colonial New York in 1683, "most men either ignored or evaded the law," preferring instead to split their property more equitably (Narrett 1976: 419). Under Jewish inheritance law in Israel, widows and daughters are legally prohibited from inheriting in many cases, but Rabbinical Courts regularly allow testators to circumvent these strictures by framing bequests as inter vivos gifts (Hacker 2010:341). Conversely, in contemporary France, even though testators are legally required to distribute their estates equally between their children, families and legal professionals regularly find workarounds that advantage eldest sons (Bessière 2022; Bessière and Gollac 2023). After the introduction of more gender-equitable inheritance laws in mid-twentieth century India, parents began giving inter vivos gifts of land to sons to avoid bequeathing land to daughters (Roy 2015). In Palestine, daughters are legally guaranteed an inheritance, but at least until the early 2000s, they typically deferred their rights in favor of their brothers, who in turn became obligated to materially provide for their sisters throughout their lives (Moors 2003). Individual and family strategies also come into play after death because wills can be challenged in court. In practice, this means that even technically total testamentary freedom is often limited: testators that diverge too much from social norms leave their wills especially open to legal

contests (Madoff 2014). Inheritance law shapes, but does not entirely determine, inheritance in practice.

Inheritance is not only a set of laws and norms that people follow to various degrees, but also an intimate familial transaction. Bequeathment is a meaning-laden act. Just as inheritance and intestacy laws rank and sort between types of kin, socially categorizing some as more legitimate heirs than others (Beckert 2008), bequests are a way in which individuals "can and do…mark the boundaries of *their own* kin group" (Finch and Mason 2000:86). As testators write their wills, they do relational work, making patterned, consequential choices about the magnitudes and types of bequests that match the various interpersonal ties in their lives (Zelizer 2005). Shared inheritances, like summer homes, businesses, or trusts, can encourage cohesion between heirs (Balfe 1999), and can simultaneously generate tension. Disputes between heirs reflect, exacerbate, and generate family conflicts that can last for generations. On the intimate scale, bequests can express love, care, and trust, but also repudiation, mistrust, and/or disappointment. Bequests shift the distribution of wealth within families, sometimes dramatically.

These intimate choices, made in the context of varying legal regimes and social norms, shape the wealth distribution on the population scale (Zelizer 2005: 27). Particularly under conditions of low economic growth, where new accumulations of wealth are rarer, bequests sketch the boundaries and contours of an upper class. They aggregate up across families to concentrate types and amounts of wealth within gender categories. And in many contexts, including the U.S., bequests also maintain and constitute racialized class inequality by keeping most wealth in the white, upper-class extended family.

Women' wealth

Most wealth data is collected at the household level. But as Zelizer (1997:43) points out, "the distribution of money among family members is often as lopsided and arbitrary as the distribution of national income among families." Household-level wealth measures are a "fig leaf over the disquieting fact that women are poorer than men" (Bessière and Gollac 2023: 29). Available individual-level data make it clear that men have long been wealthier than women. They are also, even today, much more likely to accumulate fortunes through market-based labor. That means that at the upper echelons of the wealth distribution, women are underrepresented, and their wealth is disproportionately inherited (Korom, Lutter, and Beckert 2017; Keister, Thébaud, and Yavorsky 2022). This fact is so empirically consistent that economists Edlund and Kopczuk (2009) even use the proportion of women among the wealthiest .01% in the U.S. as an indicator of the power of inherited wealth over time (Khan 2015).

Men have been not only more able to amass fortunes through market-based labor, but also more likely to amass fortunes through inheritance. Testators around the world have explicitly favored sons over daughters for centuries – particularly eldest sons. On the individual level, the general explanation for favoring eldest sons is that testators want to consolidate income-producing capital in a patrilineal dynastic line. On the population level, the general explanation is that concentrating fortunes in singular male heirs entrenches an aristocratic upper class, rather than diffusing wealth across the population (Starr 2019).

Still, inheritance has become more gender-equitable across the globe since the early twentieth century (Izuhara 2002; Beckert 2008; Toktas and O'Neil 2013; Roy 2015; La Ferrara and Milazzo 2017; Harari 2019). Widows have acquired more legal rights to their husbands' properties at death, and because wives usually outlive husbands, women disproportionately

benefit from conjugal bequests (Hacker 2010). As stepfamilies become more common, wealth transmission can develop a "matrilineal tilt," because remarried men tend to funnel resources to new wives and stepchildren, whereas women tend to continue supporting their children even after remarriage (Pugliese, Belleau, and Biron-Boileau 2022). Inheritance laws around the world increasingly mandate the equal treatment of sons and daughters, and in many jurisdictions with testamentary freedom, probate data have shown that testators nominally split their fortunes equally between all children (Shammas, Salmon, and Dahlin 1987; Judge and Hrdy 1992; Finch et al. 1996). At minimum, these findings illustrate that gendered inheritance practices usually benefit men, but do vary over time and across jurisdictions.

Even when inheritance portions are nominally equal, men and women have tended to inherit different forms of wealth. Men have been more likely to inherit non-fungible, income-producing properties, like land and family businesses, and women have been more likely to inherit cash, trusts, or durable consumption assets, like homes, dowries, furniture, and jewelry. This general pattern shows up in a variety of contexts, including contemporary France (Bessière and Gollac 2023), late-twentieth century Palestine (Moors 2003) and the Philippines (Estudillo, Quisumbing, and Otsuka 2001), China until the twentieth century (Chan 1997), the English aristocracy for nearly a millennium (Starr 2019), and enslaver families in the U.S. South (Jones-Rogers 2019). Individually and collectively, these practices benefit men. They make nominally gender-equal bequests unequal in practice (Bessière and Gollac 2023).

Finally, women have tended to have less control over their wealth than men, particularly when they are married. In many English common law jurisdictions, including most of the U.S. until the mid-nineteenth century, a married woman's property and income belonged to her husband under the law of coverture (Zelizer 2005). In the early twentieth century U.S., observers

noted that the same rich wives who "could order 'anything from countless stores where they had a charge account'" often 'could not give ten cents to a beggar,'" because their husbands were so reluctant to give them even the smallest amounts of cash (Zelizer 1997: 49). When women have wanted to access, grow, and manage their separate wealth, they have usually had to manage relationships with male proxies. This lack of direct control over wealth is classed. As Bessière and Gollac (2023:2-4) have observed, in poorer families, where women are seen as responsible for making ends meet, "money problems are women's problems," and in wealthy families, where men control most family resources and investments, "looking after capital is a man's prerogative."

In sum, women's wealth has long been different than men's wealth in magnitude, source, type, and degree of control. As inheritance and property laws have become more gender-equitable globally, the wealth transmission patterns across upper-class networks have likely changed. Context-varying gendered "family wealth arrangements" both reflect and shape the strategies wealthy families use to preserve their wealth and status (Bessière and Gollac 2023). Work is still needed to map these varying upper-class wealth strategies and connect them to the varying constitutions and durability of upper-class populations (Beckert 2022). Dallas from 1895-1945 provides one model of upper-class family wealth arrangements, in which elite testators built private, gendered safety nets to keep all their close kin in the upper class.

Dallas 1895-1945 in context

Early twentieth century Dallas is a good case for understanding upper-class gendered family wealth arrangements, because it shares so many demographic and legal features with the contemporary U.S. elite, but unlike contemporary elite populations, features systematic, publicly

available data about estates, bequests, and kinship. Demographically, it differs from the contemporary U.S. upper class more in degree than in kind. Dallas from 1895-1945 had an exclusively white upper class, where marriages were all heterosexual, gender roles were strictly enforced, and men held most of the direct economic and political power. In the U.S. today, "most of the upper class are white and in heterosexual marriages to similar others, and gender expectations are clearly demarcated, underscoring men's political and economic dominance" (Hamilton and Armstrong 2021:105). Wealthy women, then and now, have usually inherited their wealth from kin and/or husbands (Edlund and Kopczuk 2009). Traditional gender divisions of labor, then and now, have served as a "signal of class position, prestige, and white privilege" (Yavorsky et al. 2023:4; Keister, Thébaud, and Yavorsky 2022). The birth rate was higher a century ago, so in contemporary contexts, fortunes are likely to be split into fewer portions, on average, than those described here.

The legal context was quite similar to contemporary Texas, and featured many of the protections for women that are increasingly common globally. Texan testators have always had total testamentary freedom, and intestacy law has treated men and women equally. Crucially, Texas is a "community property" state, which means that in the absence of a prenuptial agreement, any wealth a person acquires during marriage belongs equally to their spouse – except for inheritances and gifts, which are separate property. Other community property jurisdictions include Sweden, South Africa, Germany, France, and eight other U.S. states, mostly in the West. Community property laws give many married women more access to wealth than they would have otherwise; in the U.S., women living in community property states tend to be wealthier (Edlund and Kopczuk 2009:171). The wealthy Texans of this study were highly conscious of these laws and the differences they made for gendered power dynamics: in the

1950s, Texan elites told one *New Yorker* reporter that relative to wealthy women elsewhere, "the position of the millioned women" in Texas was particularly "sublime" because of the "independence stemming from community-property legislation" (Bainbridge 1961:205). These laws have long played a large role in gendered wealth dynamics within and across Texan families, as they have in other legal contexts with testamentary freedom, gender-equitable intestacy laws, and/or community property regimes (Harbury and Hitchens 1997).

The two most salient differences between this case and its contemporary analog are (a) the degree of legal control married women had over their wealth, and (b) the varying role of taxation and the wealth management industry. First, until 1967, Texan husbands had the right to act as their wives' financial agents, managing their separate properties and investment income. Wives could not participate in any major financial transactions without a husband's signature, but husbands were also legally responsible for wives' expenses under the "doctrine of necessaries" (Zelizer 2005). Even when men and women "owned" wealth equally, husbands had more legal control over and responsibility for their wives' wealth than they do today. Second, estates were entirely untaxed for a third of this time period, between 1895-1898 and 1902-1916. The federal estate tax was adopted in 1916. In the interest of consistency, the calculations I offer here do not include deductions for inheritance tax. The tax landscape undoubtedly affected elites' wealth distribution plans overall, encouraging them to distribute much of their estates before death, but it is less clear how it affected elites' choices about matching portions and properties to heirs. There are no detectable differences in the portions allotted to various kin in this relatively small sample between taxed and untaxed years. The differences are likely to be found in the magnitude of the estate in a taxed year compared to what it would have been in an untaxed year, and the set of properties that were declared in the probate process. A larger sample of estates data

may reveal differences between taxed and untaxed years, a question, however, that is beyond the scope of this paper.

DATA AND METHODS

Data sources

The data consist of (a) the full population of the Dallas white upper class from 1895-1945, as measured by the social registers (n = 12,282), (b) all known kin and marriage ties between them, (c) information on the sizes of 1,434 Dallas county estates, 440 of which belonged to people in the social registers, and 55 of which belonged to people with close kin ties to elites in the social registers, (d) information on the distribution of the elite estates, including a total of 1,957 bequests.

Social registers were directories of white social elite families that were popular in U.S. cities until the mid-twentieth century, and are a relatively standard measure of upper-class status in historical studies. Drawing on multiple supplemental archival and newspaper records, mainly from *Ancestry.com* and the *Dallas Morning News,* the hand-constructed data include comprehensive biographical data for each person, including kin ties to other elites in the dataset. I also draw on myriad qualitative sources, including newspaper and magazine articles, memoirs, and family papers, to understand the documented bequests in the context of broader family wealth arrangements.

Bequeathment records come from two sources: all wills filed for probate in Dallas County between 1895-1908 and digitized in *The Portal to Texas History* (n = 716), and estate notices published in the *Dallas Morning News* between 1895-1945 (n = 728). The probate records represent all wills filed for probate in Dallas County between 1895-1908. I collected the

estate sizes, death years, and genders of all decedents, and coded bequests for the upper class, which I define here as anyone ever listed in the social registers (n = 122), or who had close family members in the social registers (n = 54). They represent 44.7% percent of elites who died as adults in Dallas during that period.

The estate notices are an over-sample of elite wills over a larger swath of years – 1895-1945, though most of them were published between 1932-1945. The *Dallas Morning News* periodically sent reporters to probate court, then published short announcements valuing some estates and explaining how they would be divided. I searched for, read, and coded all estate notices that included phrases found commonly in the genre, like "will filed" and "probate." I focus primarily on the estate notices corresponding to people in the social registers (n = 336), which represent 20.9 percent of all people in the social registers who died as adults in Dallas between 1932-1945, and 8.7 percent of those who died between 1908-1932. I also include their close kin (n = 34). Seven estates were in both the probate records and the estate notices. In each case, the estate notice accurately summarized the size and distribution of the estates as detailed in the probate files. When combining estate and probate records, I include those duplicate estates only once. Finally, I collected all known legal disputes over the elite estates in the data (n = 27), which I searched for systematically in the *Dallas Morning News* and *Lexis Nexis*. For comparison, I adjusted the values of all estates and bequests to 2023 dollars.

Altogether, the data describe the estates of 18.6% of social elites who died at age 35 or older in Dallas between 1895-1945, plus 72 of their close kin. They represent a nearly complete sample of white upper-class Dallasites whose estates went through probate court from 1895-1908, and a roughly representative sample of the same for 1908-1945. People whose wills were not probated included those who did not have property whose transfer needed to be legally

documented (e.g., deeds to land, which required documentation, versus diamond necklaces, which did not) and those who distributed most of their estates before they died. Relative to all elites who died in Dallas during this time period, people in the estates data were disproportionately male, more likely to die with a surviving spouse, and slightly more likely to die with multiple surviving children, siblings, nieces, and nephews.

Data limitations

The quantitative data limitations are numerous and common to most studies using probate records. We do not have systematic data about inter vivos transfers. We do not have data on the estates of most people who died in Dallas during these years. Most importantly, we do not know the extent to which nominally equal bequests were equal in practice. As such, the quantitative results should be read very strictly as nominal distributions at death for elites who probated their wills in Dallas, rather than a complete record of the transmission of wealth in Dallas.

The sizes of the estates are underestimates of testators' wealth, and the sizes of elite bequests are underestimates of the full scope of wealth transfers from decedents to their heirs. This is particularly true of the years with inheritance taxes. To avoid taxation, elites routinely undervalued assets, hid assets, and made inter vivos gifts (Murrah 1981; Lewis 1984; Beckett 1985; Sanders 1988; Hill, Boyar, and Boyar 1994). As they do today, wealthy people distributed their wealth among family members throughout the life course, but especially during dependent kin's transitional moments, including schooling, weddings, and first home purchases (Hamilton and Armstrong 2021; Higgins 2022). None of these transfers are comprehensively tracked in the quantitative historical record.

I draw on qualitative data from memoirs, court cases, and newspaper articles to contextualize the quantitative results and sketch out patterns of wealth transfer invisible to the probate process. The combination of data on probated estate sizes, elite bequests, the full upper-class kinship network, and comprehensive biographical information on each elite individual is unique and instructive. It allows us to put the upper class in context by estimating Dallas wealth gaps by gender and class, to compare bequests to full sets of living kin, and to make some qualitative sense of the bequests elites did make.

MATCHING PORTIONS TO PEOPLE

Wills are typically written in one of two basic ways: - "total estate" wills, in which the testator "simply rolls up all his or her possessions into a single package and then bequeaths this in specified portions to named individuals," and "composite wills," in which "different items are specified in the will and bequeathed to named individuals," and the residue is bequeathed in specific portions (Finch and Mason 2000:68). Most wills in these data were total estates. In the following section, I treat all the estates as if they were total estates, focusing mainly on the distribution of fictionally fungible portions, rather than what kinds of wealth made up those portions.

Although most (84.5%) Dallas elites exercised some form of testamentary freedom, in the sense of diverging from intestacy laws, their choices were still highly patterned. Their strategies clustered into five basic types: (1) partible, (2) all to spouse, (3) need-based, (4) patrimonial, and (5) philanthropic legacy. Together, the "partible" and "all to spouse" approaches to wealth distribution describe 78.6% of known estate distributions. The three less common types of wills tended to cover large estates, to come from people who died without spouses or children, and to

have been contested in court. For each will type, I also calculate the family persistence rate- the percentage of testators who died before 1940 and who had any descendants in the social registers after 1940. Need-based wills had the highest persistence rate at 54.5%, and philanthropic wills, most of which came from testators without spouses or children, had the lowest at 16.7%.

Table 1. Will types

Will type	Number of wills	Percent	Percent women	Known legal disputes	Perc. disputed	Median estate size	Family persistence rate
Partible	192	42.6%	39.1%	4	2.1%	$859,543	51.3%
All to spouse	155	34.4%	18.1%	4	2.6%	$511,633	43.2%
Need-based	80	17.7%	35.0%	12	15.0%	$1,212,703	54.5%
Patrimonial	13	2.9%	0.0%	1	7.7%	$561,269	45.4%
Philanthropic	11	2.4%	36.4%	5	45.5%	$4,093,061	16.7%
Missing bequest information	*44*	----	*34.1%*	*1*	*2.3%*	*$1,082,158*	*59.0%*
Total	*495*	-----	*30.3%*	*27*	*5.4%*	*$841,068*	*49.3%*

Partible wills (42.6%) adhered to a formal, tiered equality, in which all kin of the same type received the same nominal portion of the estate. The partible framework matches the basic pattern of inheritance and intestacy laws in most contemporary contexts. These testators split their fortunes equally within tiered kin categories, regardless of gender or perceived need, with closer kin types receiving larger portions. They were disproportionately likely to be women, and their estates were averagely sized, compared to the collection of estates overall. A little over half of these testators' families (51.3%) persisted in the Dallas elite after 1940 – just slightly above average.

The second-most common type of distributional plan (34.4%) simply left the entire estate to the decedent's surviving spouse. Like the partible wills, these wills were rarely challenged in court. These estates tended to be about half as large as the collection of estates as a whole -

suggesting that the strategy may have stemmed in part from an effort to ensure a basic level of wealth for the surviving spouse. The persistence rate was lower than average, 43.2%.

A significant minority of elites distributed their estates based on perceived relative need (17.7%). Most of these testators gave more to female kin than male kin of the same type, particularly when their daughters, sisters, or nieces were unmarried. The reasoning was that women needed the inheritance more, because they were not supposed to work for pay. These extra bequests were socially expected. Buckner McKinney (1872-1932) felt the need to explain in his will, for example, that he had "made no provision" for his unmarried sister Hallie because "she has fairly substantial means of her own." The beneficiaries of these "need-based" wills were hardly destitute, but they had less independent access to wealth than their sibling and cousins. By providing them with extra bequests, decedents ensured that all their close kin could maintain their upper-class status[27]. These testators had particularly large estates, and their choices were particularly likely to attract legal disputes from disgruntled kin receiving lesser portions. Their families were also the most likely, out of all the will type groups, to persist after 1940 (54.5%).

Just thirteen wills (2.9%) exhibited a *patrimonial* strategy. In these wills, men left a single favored male relative – usually an eldest son – larger bequests than other kin of the same type. All the testators who chose a patrimonial strategy were men, and most bequeathed a majority share in the family business to one male heir, splitting the rest between other kin. Their persistence rates were slightly lower than average at 45.4%. What is striking about this type of will is how rare it was, particularly given the intensely patriarchal nature of early twentieth

[27] It is possible that these extra bequests to women may have been forms of compensation for care work. Hartog (2012) found that many early twentieth century New Jersey testators promised extra bequests to relatives in exchange for caregiving in their old age. In upper class Dallas, no testator explicitly marked extra bequests as compensation for completed care work, and none of the known inheritance disputes alluded to such promises. Given that most upper-class Dallasites hired live-in domestic workers to do household cleaning, cooking, childcare, and care of the elderly, this exchange of bequests for eldercare may have been less pronounced in elite Dallas than in New Jersey overall.

century Dallas high society. Qualitative data indicate that many more bequests of family businesses to male heirs took place outside the probate process.

Finally, eleven elites (2.4%) focused on their *philanthropic legacy*, leaving more than half of their estates to one or more charitable causes. Most died without a spouse or children, and indeed, their family persistence rates were very low at 16.7%. Their fortunes were also much larger, on average, than any other subgroup, probably because they did not distribute as much of their wealth among kin before death. Typically, philanthropic wills attracted lavish praise from the press and the Dallas elite community as a whole – as long the testator's Dallas elite kin were considered securely wealthy. W. W. Samuell, a doctor and landlord who died with an independently wealthy wife and no children, left most of his millions to the Dallas park system in a 21-word will that was "the talk of the town" (Kovach 2009). Dallas elites quietly criticized his decision, arguing that he should have left more of his fortune to his sister Bettie, a popular debutante and a mother of three daughters who had recently been diagnosed with cancer, and whose husband had lost his job (Beckett 1985; Sanders 1988). When testators' relatively financially insecure kin belonged to the Dallas elite, popular upper-class opinion marked them as deserving of decedents' wealth – even more so than the city as a whole. This social expectation likely drove many of the need-based bequests other elites made in their wills.

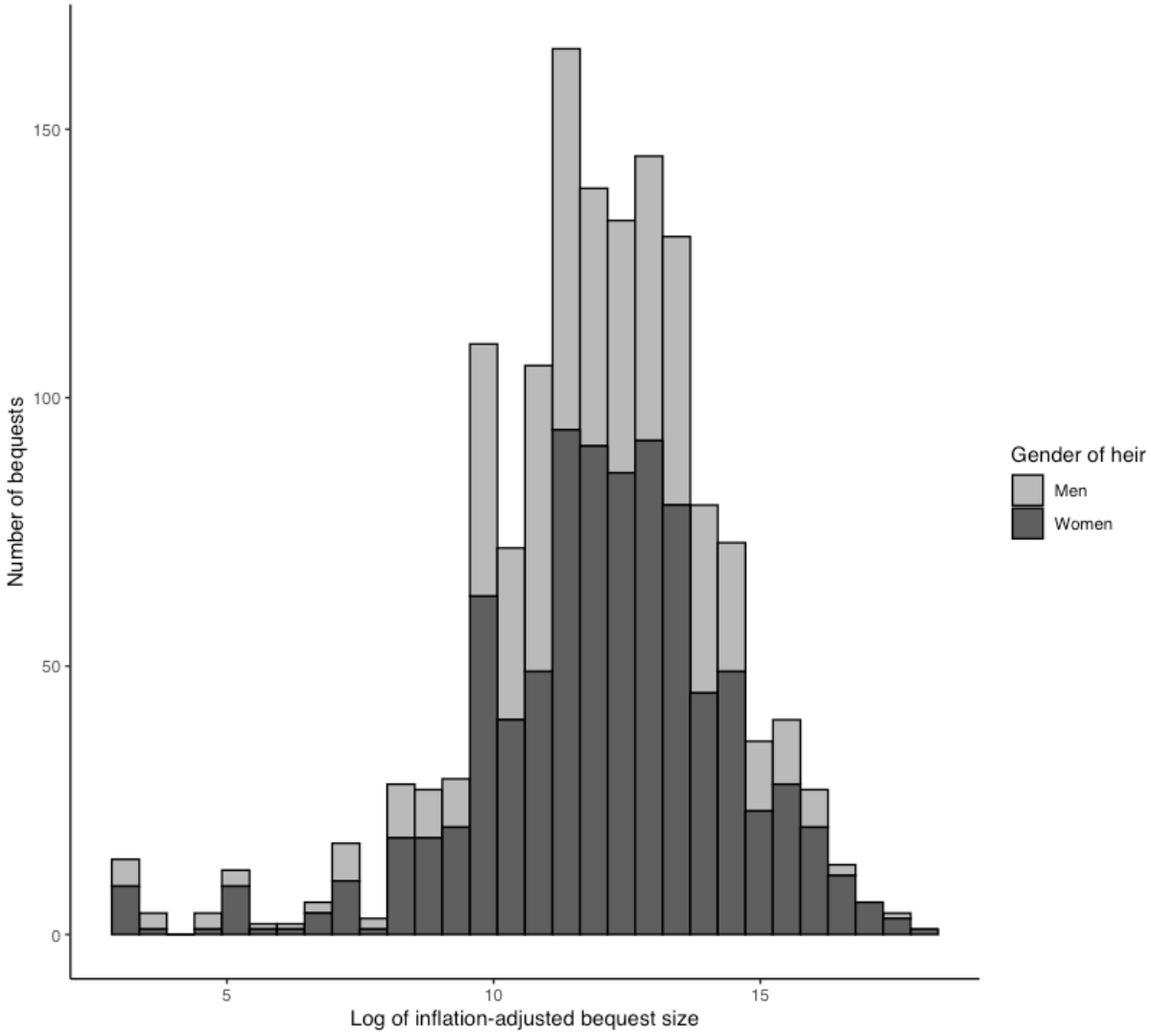
Overall bequests

Among the upper class, women inherited more than men in several senses: more often, more on average, and more in total. This was true even when excluding bequests between spouses, which disproportionately flowed towards women. Figure 1 depicts the distribution of bequest sizes by recipient gender. Exclusive of spouses, women received nearly twice as much

wealth as men as a percent of total bequests. Overall, nearly seventy percent (68.1%) of total inherited wealth went to women, a quarter (24.3%) went to men, 6.8 percent went to charitable organizations, and 0.8% went to unnamed relatives and friends.

Most (69.8%) bequests went to spouses and children. But a significant portion flowed elsewhere, especially to sisters, who received 8.8% of total known wealth. (Brothers, in contrast, received just 1.7%.) The sibling gender gap can be largely attributed to relative-need-based bequests. Beyond the 6.8% going to charity, just 1.9% of the wealth flowed to non-family members, including employees, friends, and relatives of employees and friends. Inheritance was a family affair that went well beyond spouses and children, and that disproportionately benefited women, at least at in terms of portions distributed at death.

Figure 17. Bequest size by recipient gender



But all these distributional patterns are based on the convenient fiction that fortunes are fungible. In reality, splitting large, diversified fortunes into equal portions is functionally impossible. For example, the widow and nine children of cattle baron Christopher Columbus Slaughter (1837-1919) were equal heirs to his millions, but they could not agree on a plan to manage his ranchland, so they appraised it, split it into ten parts of supposedly equal value, then selected their tracts in turn by drawing slips out of a hat. The rest of the estate was divided similarly. But the children who had randomly drawn tracts in Cochran and Hockley counties proved especially lucky two decades later: oil was discovered there in 1937, giving those heirs about twenty million dollars a year by 1975 (Murrah 1981:133-4). Few fortunes were as large as Slaughter's, but most were composed of multiple, variously fungible wealth types. Unless estates were completely liquidated before division, even intentionally equal divisions of property could advantage some heirs over others.

MATCHING PROPERTIES TO PEOPLE

Overview of known transfers

To fully understand the gendered flows of wealth, we must look beyond inherited "portions" to inherited types of wealth. In Dallas, women inherited more family homes, life estates in trusts, and personal property. Men inherited more stocks in businesses. These patterns align neatly with the long-established gender of wealth in upper class worlds, in which women's wealth is concentrated in durable consumption goods, and men's wealth is concentrated in income-producing capital.

Table 2. Bequest types

Type of bequest	No. bequests	Percent of wealth	Median bequest	Percent female heirs	Most common recipient type
Trust	318	45.3%	$433,577	61.1%	Daughter
Total estate (any portion)	540	29.5%	$220,399	59.0%	Son
Residue (any portion)	248	14.2%	$163,723	63.9%	Daughter
Cash	427	2.3%	$31,667	60.7%	Charity
Real estate	70	2.0%	$150,255	52.3%	Daughter
Stock	29	1.6%	$1,151,127	28.6%	Employee
Family home	22	0.8%	$421,068	100.0%	Wife
Life insurance	20	0.4%	$120,760	61.8%	Wife
Personal property	103	.02%	$3,993	61.9%	Daughter/Son

Men's inheritances: Accumulation and control

Stocks were the only type of wealth that disproportionately flowed to men. The largest such bequests came from newspaper publisher Edwin Kiest, who left millions in the *Dallas Times Herald* to eight male employees. He left nothing to his executive secretary Mary Collett, another knowledgeable employee, even though he allegedly promised her a sizable bequest (Castleberry 1994). He left stock in trust to his sister and niece, who could only receive the dividends, and designated his male employees as trustees. Most other stocks flowed from fathers to sons and uncles to nephews. Men, in this context, were expected to involve themselves in the rough-and-tumble world of business, and women were expected to refrain (Zelizer 2005). When elites wanted to match stocks to people, then, they usually selected men.

The value and volume of stock transferred to male heirs during the probate process are vast underestimates. Family businesses were particularly valuable "structuring assets" that were often transferred before death (Bessière and Gollac 2023). For example, as he approached old age, cattle baron W. J. Lewis began to "place as much of his property as possible into his

children's hands before he died" to avoid taxes. He transferred the title of his 56,000 acre Shoe Bar Ranch to his only son William Jr., and divided another 33,000 acre ranch among his three daughters. His wife Willie "secretly resented" his decision, believing that he should have split the family business equally between all his children (Lewis 1984: 127). But she did not intervene: even though Willie had a legal claim to half her husband's wealth, she believed that he ultimately had the right to decide what to do with "his" ranching empire.

Sometimes men divided the stock in their family businesses equally, but concentrated control over the business among male heirs. Six years before his death, newspaper baron G. B. Dealey (1859-1946) put his majority share in the private Belo media company in trust. He and his wife had one recently deceased son, one living son, and three living daughters, all of whom had children. Under the terms of the trust, the families of his five children would receive equal dividends after Dealey's death. Five years after the last of his children died, the trust would dissolve, and their descendants would receive the stocks. In the meantime, his surviving son, a son-in-law, and a longtime friend would wield total control over the company. Dealey chose this structure in part because he did not want the women in his family to have control over the business – especially his daughter Annie. He refused to give Annie's sons jobs, as he did for all his other grandsons, because he believed that if her sons worked at the company "Annie would be down here every day telling us how to run everything." At one point, he had even tried to have her committed to a mental institution. But with the trust structure, Dealey ensured that he could leave his children nominally equal bequests without leaving them equal control. As time went on, his son and most of his grandsons earned both dividends and wages from the company, while his daughters and granddaughters simply received the dividends (Elkind 1985). His great-

grandson Robert Decherd ran the corporation until 2013, and still owns a majority share. Even when bequests of stock were equal, actual control almost always went to men.

Women's inheritances: Status and security

Men's inheritances enhanced their financial control and ability to accumulate wealth, and women's inheritances enhanced their status and financial security. Women were particularly likely to inherit trusts, which were usually controlled by male trustees. Male trustees were their relatives, bankers, or lawyers, who would manage the investments and pay out the income and principal according to the decedent's terms. Trusts are based on a "legal fiction" that divides ownership into two components, with the financial benefits of ownership going to beneficiaries, and the control and responsibilities of ownership going to fiduciaries (Harrington 2016). For testators, this division offers both tax advantages and the tantalizing possibility of control from beyond the grave. Husbands leaving trusts to wives often included the stipulation that if their wives remarried, they would lose access to the income, and the property would be split between their children or the husband's relatives. Children and grandchildren often received the income until later adulthood, after which they received the principle, the idea being that an older heir would handle the wealth more responsibly. Other trusts held for the duration of the recipients' lives, passing to charities or the recipient's heirs after their death. Trusts allowed testators to give women and children the security of reliable access to wealth without giving them full control over that wealth.

Elite women did carve out a modest realm of financial control through durable consumption goods, which also disproportionately flowed to them. Antiques, jewelry, china, clothing, and art signified cultural capital and "old money," conferring status on both skilled

collectors and their families. One of the best-known antiques collections in Dallas belonged to Ela Hockaday (1875-1956), the founder of the exclusive girls' Hockaday School. Ela used antiques to demonstrate her cultural capital to elite families and as a form of financial investment. Visits to her cottage to see the famed collection were "considered top-ticket in Dallas society" (Best 1983:20). On school trips to Europe, Ela instructed her students to invest in financially strapped families' heirlooms. As late as 1988, one graduate remarked, "thanks to Miss Hockaday… many of us who graduated in the Twenties are 'silver and china rich.'" Ela's long-time housekeeper Exie Tunson remembered that whenever Ela herself needed some extra money, "she'd just sell off a little Rockingham china" (Alumnae Association of Hockaday School 1988:66). When Ela died, her nieces and nephews inherited the collection, keeping some of it, donating some to the school, and converting the rest to cash in an enormous estate sale. Antiques not only displayed collectors' cultural capital; they stored and augmented wealth, functioning as a kind of savings account that women could easily access without permission from men.

Upper-class women stored even more symbolic capital and material wealth in the form of jewelry, which they needed to dress appropriately for formal social events. They received gifts of jewelry regularly from relatives, fiancées, and husbands, which publicly marked them as highly valued kin and wives. As elite Dallas jeweler Arthur A. Everts opined, "jewelry, fine silver, and beautiful china owned by any woman are visible symbols of the love someone holds for her" ("Forum Hears Dallas Jeweler" 1938). Inherited jewelry was particularly prized, because it marked women as "old money" heiresses. Elizabeth McDowell Welch set aside $41,000 worth of jewelry for a future great-niece named after her sister, including "the two little rings that belonged to my little daughter now deceased." Miranda Morrill left twenty-seven separate

bequests of personal property, mostly to women, including her niece Kate Church, who received "my diamond cross pin and the onyx pin that belonged to my mother." The detail and care with which testators matched jewels to heiresses reflected the jewelry's importance, symbolically and financially. They tied the pieces to previous owners – "my little daughter now deceased" or "my mother" – enhancing the symbolic value of the bequest by connecting the recipient to a multigenerational chain of heiresses.

In times of relative need, valuable jewelry, like antiques, gave women a measure of independent financial control and security. Importantly, gifted jewelry was the recipient's separate property, rather than part of a married couple's community estate. During the Great Depression, W. J. Lewis told his wife Willie they needed to cut back on expenses. She "felt it essential" that their daughter Betty graduate from the elite Hockaday School, but Will did not, so Willie arranged to spread the tuition payments out, "leaving behind as security a beautiful amethyst necklace and earrings that Will had given me" (Lewis 1982:102). Although she had a legal right to half her husband's fortune, accessing that fortune against her husband's wishes would have been more difficult than simply using the gifted necklace. Gifts and bequests of personal property, which were largely hidden from the probate process, carried enormous symbolic weight for the women involved, and they also gave women a small degree of financial independence, which they often used to maintain their family's social standing. Of course, they were rarely as valuable as the family businesses that primarily passed to men.

The gendered family system: Accumulation and security

These gendered bequests worked together to contribute to the long-term durability of family wealth. When Dallas families entered the ranks of the wealthy, or when their family

fortunes grew from large to enormous, it was almost always because men accumulated more wealth through their businesses and investments. And when family fortunes started to slip, women stepped in, using their resources to ensure that the family appeared minimally upper class. The qualitative record is dense with Dallas women using their wealth – trusts, blue-chip stocks, jewelry, and antiques – to maintain the family's upper-class status when their male relatives could or would not. Willie Lewis, who used her amethysts to keep her daughter at Hockaday, remembered that her mother's inheritance bought them a house when her father's business failed (Lewis 1988); Bettie Williams sold off her inherited stocks to keep their family afloat when her husband temporarily lost his job (Beckett 1985); Earle Caruth used a portion of her inheritance to send her son to Harvard Business School during the Depression (Sanders 1988); Minerva Miller used her inherited mansion to house numerous relatives (Crowell 1941). In short, men grew the family fortunes, and when necessary, women maintained them.

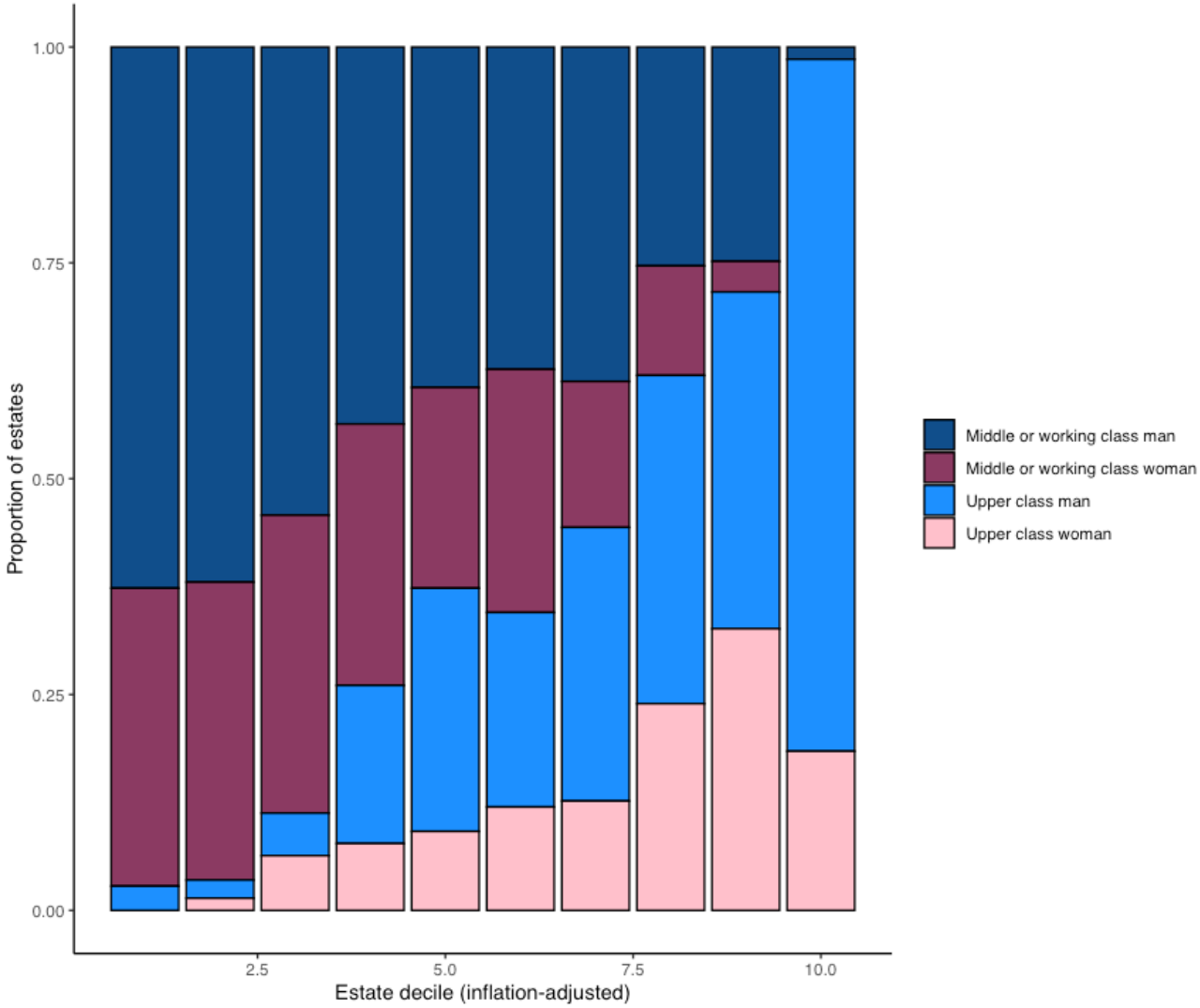
Across class and racial categories, women tend to do more care work than men. In the wills described here, extra bequests to sisters and daughters were often accompanied with verbal requests to house and lend money to other relatives when needed. And women regularly heeded these calls, housing orphaned and elderly relatives, giving loans to brothers and cousins, and properly socializing their children, nieces, and nephews. Storing the whole family fortune with a few male heirs, none of whom were expected to bear the brunt of family care work and socialization, may have been a riskier long-term family wealth arrangement than spreading property more equitably between kin. That way, if a son or nephew failed to maintain or accumulate his fortune, his sisters and aunts could and did step in.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

How did these upper-class family fortunes relate to wealth in the larger population? Unsurprisingly, in Dallas as a whole, white upper-class testators were richer than everyone else. White elites comprised about three percent of the Dallas County population in the years 1895-1908. They comprised 22.6% of the population with probated wills, and they died with 78.0% of the reported wealth. Their median wealth at death was seven times higher than other testators. This was also true of the collection of estate notices, in which elites were overrepresented. White elites comprised 54.0% of the population with estate notices, and they died with 92.9% of the reported wealth. Their median wealth at death was five times higher than other testators. Most of the population never had their wills probated at all, often because they had very little property, so the wealth gap in estate sizes at the level of the county population was undoubtedly much larger.

Only one estate notice was published for a person of color – a Black woman named Libby Benson (1880-1940) who amassed her modest fortune ($510,938 in 2023 dollars) as a landlord and boardinghouse keeper. People of color were vastly underrepresented in the probate and estates data because they were vastly underrepresented among the wealthy. Since the city's inception in 1841, white Dallasites had enslaved Black residents, exploited all people of color, and violently barred any non-white person from amassing wealth. In 1940, the year she died, Libby Benson was one of only six Black people in the entire county who owned a house worth at least $215,000. White people owned 2,413 houses worth at least that much (U.S. Census). In early twentieth century Dallas, as in the rest of the U.S., wealth was overwhelmingly white.

Figure 17. All known estate sizes in Dallas 1895-1945 by gender and class



Estate sizes also varied by gender, but not nearly so decisively. Men's wealth varied more than women's, in that all the very largest and the very smallest estates belonged to men. Just as men were more able to accumulate massive fortunes in their lifetimes, they were also more able to become deeply indebted, occasionally dying with a negative net worth. No woman died with a negative net worth in these data.

On average, men were wealthier than women, though this was less true among the upper class. The gender wealth gap among all known Dallas County estates, calculated as the ratio of women's median wealth to men's median wealth, was 0.84. Among upper class testators, women

had a higher median estate size than men, with a wealth gap of 1.09. Due to the relatively small number and high variability of estates, these estimates are relatively uncertain. The fact that women's wealth at death even approached the size of men's likely stems from the fact that Texas is a community property state. In California, another community property state, Judge and Hrdy (1992) found no significant differences by gender in estate sizes during the same time period.

We can combine the elite kinship network with the collection of probate records to get a basic sketch of total bequest flows in Dallas during this time period. White upper-class families were intricately interconnected through marriage, as well as through social, economic, and political ties. Kin ties alone wove together nearly seventy percent (69.6%) of the cumulative Dallas upper class from 1895-1945 in a single, 8,545-person family web. In a broad sense, Dallas high society, like many upper-class worlds, was more like an enormous extended family than a set of isolated dynasties. Despite making up just three percent of the population at the turn of the twentieth century, this interrelated upper class inherited most (at least 64.1%) of all probated wealth in Dallas County from 1895-1908. The rest went to the heirs of non-elites (22.0%), to charitable institutions, often headed by Dallas elites (5.3%), and the heirs of elites who were not in the Dallas upper class dataset (8.6%), most of whom lived outside Dallas. The amount of wealth that flowed out of Dallas high society through bequests was likely matched, at least to some degree, by inheritances that flowed into Dallas high society from kin living elsewhere. Overall, inherited wealth mostly circulated within the big white upper-class family.

This birds-eye view challenges an old idea – that partible inheritance practices within families may reduce inequality across a population. The idea stretches back at least to Thomas Jefferson, who believed that abolishing primogeniture in the U.S. would entirely block the development of an entrenched American aristocracy (Beckert 2008; Starr 2019). If Dallas elites

followed more traditionally patrimonial wealth strategies, like concentrating all their bequests in single male heirs, it is possible that more wealth would have flowed out of the Dallas elite family network, because not all testators had male heirs in Dallas. Regardless, it is clear that primogeniture is only one of many inheritance practices capable of constituting a durable upper class.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, in this rigidly gendered upper-class world, where men were supposed to build fortunes through market-based labor, and women were supposed to acquire fortunes through inheritance alone, women inherited more wealth more often than men. Men were more likely to inherit income-producing capital, like majority shares in family businesses, which gave them a chance to accumulate ever-larger fortunes. Women were more likely to inherit trusts, which were typically controlled by men, and valuable personal property, which afforded them status and a small degree of financial independence. Gendered bequests formed a family system, in which men accumulated and sometimes lost wealth, and women maintained upper-class status. Rather than dissipating across the city population, most inherited wealth in Dallas simply circulated among the enormous Dallas upper-class extended family.

To understand the multigenerational persistence of family fortunes, we must understand how wealth is distributed within wealthy families, particularly by gender. Bessière and Gollac (2023) have demonstrated that family wealth arrangements are still highly gendered today, even in contexts that legally and ideologically adhere to ideals of gender equality. These results reinforce their findings, by showing that in a very different historical context, supposedly equal bequests were rarely equal, and often gendered. They also complicate those findings by showing

how in some ways and forms, and even in an explicitly patriarchal context, gendered inheritance practices can benefit women.

These findings raise more questions than they answer. Future research should continue to examine how bequeathment practices, particularly among the wealthy, vary over time and across contexts. Perhaps the tendencies of early twentieth-century Dallas elites to bequeath more wealth to women has faded away as women's market-based labor and financial independence have become more acceptable. But because refraining from market-based labor is still a marker of whiteness and upper-class status, this is not a given. Much more data is needed to fully understand the impacts that varying inheritance practices can have on the constitution and persistence of upper-class populations.

Future research should attend to the gendered meaning of inheritance across contexts and over time, and the population-level consequences of those gendered meanings. During the twentieth century, elites generally shifted from aristocratic to meritocratic justifications for their advantages (Khan 2011), which has made inheritance morally fraught for wealthy families (Sherman 2017). This shift toward meritocratic rhetoric began with men. In early twentieth century Dallas, male heirs regularly attributed their wealth to hard work and business acumen, but heiresses, who were not supposed to work for pay, still justified their advantages through birth. Will Caruth Jr., the billionaire heir to thousands of acres of prime Dallas land (Byrd v. Caruth 1974), claimed that all he inherited from his father was a grand piano (Sanders 1988). In contrast, his sister Mattie, who inherited her own massive trust, openly characterized her wealth as inherited (Byrd 1978). In the Dallas case, perhaps the wealth and property that flowed to male heirs was more likely to be "hidden" as inter vivos transfers, or as property male heirs "bought"

from their fathers at favorable rates, not only to avoid taxes, but also to satisfy gendered meritocratic myths.

Contemporary wealthy testators who justify their wealth through meritocratic beliefs similarly make bequests in ways that frame recipients as deserving workers rather than cossetted heirs. Higgins (2022) found that ultra-wealthy testators in contemporary Northwest England frame inheritance as "morally acceptable" by (a) tying transfers to the completion of normative life events like education, marriage, reproduction, and the purchase of a home, and (b) tying transfers to "productivity" by categorizing them as seed capital, salary top-ups, and wage doubling. These practices convert morally problematic "unearned" wealth to wealth "earned" through the performance of responsibility, hard work, and providing for a family. They are also likely profoundly gendered in their practices and consequences, given that upper-class worlds are still characterized by disproportionately heterosexual marriages and traditional gendered divisions of labor. Future work should investigate the extent to which tying intergenerational transfers to market-based labor, marriage, and reproduction may variously advantage heirs by gender and sexuality.

Among the world's richest people, heirs are generally less wealthy than those who have accumulated fortunes in their own lifetimes, but their wealth is also more durable (Korom, Lutter, and Beckert 2007). This difference in longevity stems in part from the fact that inherited wealth tends to be stored in more stable forms, like a diversified set of trusts and blue-chip stocks. In contrast, recently accumulated wealth tends to be stored in more volatile forms, like a majority share of a publicly traded technology company – a risky practice, because as one wealth manager told Higgins (2022: 1278), "companies do go bust, I'm afraid." This division between stable inherited wealth and unstable accumulated wealth echoes gendered inheritance patterns in

Dallas. Among the wealthy, women are disproportionately heirs, and have tended to inherit their wealth in particularly stable forms, like trusts and jewelry. It follows that even though women are underrepresented among the independently wealthy, particularly among the very largest fortunes, very wealthy women may also be disproportionately likely to remain wealthy over time. In contemporary upper-class worlds, women's wealth may still typically provide families with status and security, and men's may more typically be sites of accumulation and control.

Partible and need-based inheritance practices moderate wealth inequality within propertied families, giving upper-class women a measure of "independent means." Those heiresses mostly marry wealthy men, who can then make their families much richer, while relying on the security of their wives' wealth in times of trouble. In this way, partible and need-based inheritance practices work together with elite endogamy to build a deep, securely wealthy kinship network. A wealthy heir with two rich parents and many rich cousins, siblings, aunts, and uncles is likely more securely wealthy than an heir whose family members depend on him for money. This broad-based, inheritance-fueled safety net is not the only way to perpetuate an upper class, as the English aristocracy's thousand-year use of primogeniture illustrates (Starr 2019). But is likely much closer to typical upper-class practice today in countries where married women have independent property rights.

Still, distributing wealth more equally within upper-class families is not the same as distributing wealth more equally across a full population. In Dallas, upper-class wealth did not "dissipate" when people died as much as shift a node or two over in the upper-class kinship network. Partible and need-based inheritance practices made upper-class white women more independently wealthy, and may have made upper-class family networks more durably wealthy, but they did not make poor families richer.

Conclusion

The Strength of Kin Ties

"*The power elite is composed of men* whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences."
C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* ([1956] 2000), p. 3-4; emphasis mine

"I'm building a sociological system of science and women have only such a place as they themselves make in it."
C. Wright Mills, Letter to his parents from the University of Texas, quoted in Judis 2001

C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) went to high school in Dallas. He lived with his parents, elder sister, and maternal grandmother in a three-bedroom house in a middle-class white neighborhood, several blocks and a railroad track away from the heart of the upper class. His father was an insurance salesman whose job dragged them all over Texas; his mother was a housewife from a family of small-time ranchers. Later, Mills would dismiss the provincial upper classes of Dallas and other hinterlands as relatively inconsequential. For him, the real "power elite" were men with important jobs who made decisions on the national scale.

Still, one imagines that Dallas might have had some influence on Mills[28]. During his teenage years, power was quite visibly monopolized by a small group of rich white men presiding over all the powerful local institutions. The mayor was up-and-coming businessman Charles E. Turner, a candidate hand-picked by the upper-class Citizens Charter Association (Acheson 1977). The speaker at Mills's graduation was the elite federal Judge William Hawley Atwell, who instructed the white, mostly middle-class student body to not "complain" about the

[28] It certainly did on his high school friend and classmate Dan Smoot, who would become an influential right-wing conspiracy theorist, similarly concerned about shadowy elite cabals (Judis 2001; Miller 2015).

"supposed lack of opportunity," which according to him was "always there" ("High School Days End" 1934*)*. Soon after, the folksy bank president R. L. Thornton formed the Dallas Citizens' Council, a group of the city's "yes and no men." Each week, these millionaire corporate executives sat together at the top of a skyscraper, making decisions that affected the whole city (Fairbanks 1998; Phillips 2006). On the city scale, the Dallas of Mills's youth and adulthood looked very much like the cabals of powerful people in powerful positions featured not only in Mills ([1956] 2000), but also in other classic twentieth-century conceptualizations of the elite (Brandeis 1914; Michels 1915; Pareto 1935; Mosca 1939; Keller 1963; Thometz 1963; Domhoff 1967; Useem 1984), and myriad recent works defining elites by their occupations (Ellersgaard, Larsen, and Munk 2012; Chu and Davis 2016; Reeves et al. 2017; Denord, Lagneau-Ymonet, and Thine 2018; Larsen and Ellersgaard 2018; Friedman and Reeves 2020; Rossier et al. 2022; Worth, Reeves, and Friedman 2022; Ellersgaard and Larsen 2023; Matsumoto and Okazaki 2023).

Mills's entirely reasonable perspective was that elites are best defined as people in positions at the top of institutional hierarchies, because those people make the decisions with the largest-scale impacts. He largely pushed kinship networks themselves to the side. He knew there was a family-based U.S. upper class, and described it at length, but he saw that upper class as secondary to the real decision makers. Decision-makers shared backgrounds and perspectives; the degree to which they came from upper class families was an open question ([1956] 2000:11). Family may have been important for "the noble cousins that once ruled various European nations," but less so in the dynamic United States, where the upper class was constantly turning over thanks to "the historic thrust of commerce and industry" ([1956] 2000:12).

In this, Mills echoed Schumpeter's classic proposition that the upper class is like a bus: passengers get steadily on and off, and the bus itself stays the same (Schumpeter [1919] 2014; Beckert 2022). His dismissal of families echoes the thinking of the major white male sociologists of the midcentury U.S., who argued that kinship was no longer centrally important to the workings of politics and the economy, owing to factors like the decline of the extended family and the managerial revolution (e. g., Parsons 1951; Bell 1960). This shift was a deep one, affecting and reflecting increasingly dominant individualistic measures of class. As Betty Farrell (1993:15) observed, "the pervasive belief in the decline of the family as an institution with macrostructural political and economic consequences correlates closely with the individualistic orientation of social class that pervades much of American sociology." Mills and his peers were writing at a particular point in world history, when mobility was unusually high, at least for white men in Europe in the United States (Piketty 2017). But today, particularly as the inheritance of wealth has once again become a central predictor of life chances, myriad scholars have joined Farrell's effort to bring the family back into the study of wealth and power, demonstrating, for example, that wealthy families regularly persist over the very long term. Of course, it is hard to see those multigenerational continuities if you only focus on billionaires and warlords in isolation– bracketing out their spouses, parents, siblings, cousins, and children, and noting only that the surnames have changed.

Studies of the positional and income-based elite continue to yield essential insights about the shifting characteristics of rich and powerful people. For example, they teach us about time-varying rates of occupational inclusion for historically marginalized categories of people (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1998; Hjelbrekke and Korsnes 2016; Reeves et al. 2017; Yavorsky et al. 2019; Ginalski 2020; Worth, Reeves, and Friedman 2022). Approaches that center

interlocking elite families, like this one, offer a different perspective – one that is particularly well-suited to work on historically-situated inequality in any social system where inheritance, broadly defined, plays an important role in the life course.

In re-centering elite families, I most fundamentally take a Zelizerian approach to inequality, in which intimate exchange is constitutive of the economy (Zelizer 2005). By definition, elites monopolize disproportionate resources (Khan 2012), and like most people, they typically share their resources primarily with family members. In this way, elite kin ties are particularly constitutive of the population-level distribution of resources. Kinship networks in general can be read as measurable embodiments of Zelizer's micro-to-macro linkages, in which the shifting, lopsided patterns of individual, intimate transactions variously aggregate into larger-scale systems of inequality. Families structure inequality because they are the locus of intense, regular resource exchange.

Because full elite kinship networks are rare and time-intensive to compile, particularly when combined with over-time information about their resources, there is still much to know, about the Dallas case, and about elites and their families more generally. I have only partially covered a few basic topics – kinship, mobility, and inheritance. In this conclusion, I will trace some future lines of inquiry that I think might be particularly fruitful, as richer family network data becomes increasingly available for many populations.

The most portable concept from this dissertation is the family web, described at length in the first paper. As I have argued, the Dallas elite family web is not the only one of its kind. Given that the ingredients seem to be near-universals– elite endogamy and reproduction – analogous upper-class family webs have undoubtedly formed to various extents all over the world and throughout history. How might these webs compare to the Dallas white upper class of

1895-1945? How do those variations and continuities correspond to the dynamics of power and inequality within their respective full populations? How do they correspond to the history of extraction and exploitation within their respective full populations? Inequality and scale do not always go hand-in-hand – bigger populations are not necessarily more unequal (Graeber and Wengrow 2021), and rural areas often have precipitous, deeply entrenched wealth gaps (Baker 2022; Edin, Shaefer, and Nelson 2023). We need more analogous information about elite family webs to better understand the extent to which upper-class populations vary in structure and size, and how those variations might matter for everyone else. As more and richer data sources and analytic techniques emerge, this will become increasingly possible, and even likely.

Indeed, newly rich family data are already pushing forward work in stratification. Hällsten and Kolk (2023), for example, use rich Swedish registry data to look at families over seven generations in a particular region. They measure family in two main ways – (a) looking at cousin correlations to the fifth degree, and (b) averaging over ancestor characteristics within generations. Fascinatingly, they found that paternal lines were no more correlated with descendant outcomes than maternal lines, even though the inheritance system was largely patrilineal for the earlier generations. Fernholz and Hagler (2023:1) combined the *Forbes* 400 list with carefully compiled kinship data, finding that "there has been a simultaneous rise in concentration and decline in mobility among the wealthiest U.S. family dynasties from 1985-2020." Full family networks could be used in any of those ways, and in still others. For example, with even fuller family networks than I have used here – ones that are not so exclusive to the upper class – "new/old money" could be measured not as a binary category defined by industries or fathers, or even as a scalar measure of family privilege, but as kin distance from poverty and/or the middle class, or as the percentage of an immediate kinship network that is not

minimally wealthy. In general, these innovations in measurement point us toward a network-based perspective on inequality, where resources are unequally distributed across networks of intimate ties, rather than across isolated individuals who are more or less likely to have those resources based on their individual characteristics.

The family web could also dovetail fruitfully with ongoing work on the shifting compositions of positional elites over time. I have mostly emphasized elite persistence in this dissertation, but elites do change. One of the most important contemporary changes in the U.S. is that the elite is increasingly open to people in historically marginalized social categories – namely, Black people, other people of color, and queer people. As Shamus Khan's work has consistently demonstrated, "inclusion" can be quite limited in scope, and it is certainly not the same thing as equity (Khan 2011, 2012; Accominotti et al. 2018). Indeed, the upper class rarely changes *that* much- in the United States, the wealthiest among us are still overwhelmingly white and in heterosexual marriages defined by traditional divisions of labor (Yavorsky et al. 2023). Further, we know that resource distributions within families are, in Zelizer (1997:43)'s words, are "often as lopsided and arbitrary as the as the distribution of national income among families" (Bessière and Gollac 2023). Given these findings: what do contemporary upper class family webs look like? To what extent do these webs look different now that the elite is marginally more open to people of color, and now that more kinds of marriages (interracial ones, gay ones) are legal? How are resources distributed within and across contemporary upper-class webs, especially by gender, race, and sexuality?

When they are deep enough, full family networks can directly link systems of inequality to their historical antecedents. For example, in Dallas, we have seen how enslavement and land theft directly enriched white settlers whose families are still entrenched in the elite today. In the

U.S. more generally, white supremacy, slavery, segregation, and the legal prohibition against interracial marriage have collectively meant that the most densely-resourced webs of legally sanctified kin have historically been completely white. The prohibition against interracial marriage was in and of itself a factory for the legitimization of whiteness as a racial category (Pascoe 2009) and a kind of heritable property (Harris 1993), largely excluding Black people from the transmission of white wealth and whiteness itself, even when they have been biological heirs of their wealthy white enslavers and exploiters. Inequalities between Black Americans have direct historical antecedents in intimate, parasitic ties with white enslavers and exploiters. Colorism, which continues to stratify Black outcomes in this country, began with enslavement, when "lighter-skinned slaves were favored by slave owners" and "tended to have direct kinship ties to Whites through the sexual violence by Whites that created this population of lighter-skinned Blacks in the first place" (Monk 2021:78). Even today, the Black elite in the United States is disproportionately light-skinned (Graham 2009). Kinship networks can model these parasitic, exclusionary relationships more directly than incomes and occupations can alone.

Many other questions remain about the relations between local, national, and international elites. Given a nation or culture area and the same general time period, local elite family webs are undoubtedly connected to one other to varying degrees. In this dissertation, I have treated the Dallas elite family web largely as an isolated entity. But from the start, the Dallas elite intermarried with elites of other places, and those patterns varied over time. They most frequently intermarried with other Texan elite family webs, especially San Antonio, Galveston, Houston[29], but their connections went much wider. Ultimately, the Dallas upper class encompassed heirs to many of the best-known American dynasties, including Du Ponts, Pews,

[29] One of the children of those marriages, in which a Dallas debutante moved to Houston to marry an oil drill manufacturer, was the aviator heir Howard Hughes.

Busches, Balls, Morgans, and Roosevelts, as well as minor aristocrats from England, Italy, and Switzerland – all of whom were ensconced in older, more heavily resourced elite family webs. To what extent did marriage alliances between regional elite family webs line up with business ties and trade routes? How were various resources distributed across them? How did the wealth distribution across elite family webs compare to the wealth distributions across their corresponding full populations? How did the structure of the variously connected national and even international family webs relate to the flows of wealth and power overall? These answers are undoubtedly complex: as Mills ([1956] 200) pointed out, the upper classes "of all the small towns in America cannot simply be added up to form a national upper class," nor can the study of a single community like Dallas simply generalize as "the American System" (45). But they are answerable, given considerably more data.

A central concept from the second paper, "prototypical elites," could also open potentially fruitful lines of research. Prototypical elites seem to play an outsized role in folk understandings of elite persistence and change. But as I have demonstrated, they are not necessarily stand-ins for their corresponding elite populations. To what extent do various elite populations have identifiable prototypical members? How do the prototypical members of elite populations compare to the populations they are variously embedded in? What factors contribute to changes in elite prototypicality, and what are the consequences, if any, of those changes? This line of investigation would be part of a larger effort to see individually ultra-rich and powerful elites in their fuller relational contexts.

The third paper, on inheritance, was a first pass at the methodologically complex process of sketching the flow of resources through the family web over time. But bequeathments at death are just one part of the story. Many more data sources and populations are needed to build a

network-based, historically situated understanding of unequal resource flows through populations. One promising next step is to focus on land, which is a particularly measurable, well-documented form of wealth. In Dallas, land is finite, and historical ownership is part of the public record. By combining land ownership records with the kinship network, it is feasible to trace the movement of this concrete, finite, increasingly valuable resource through the family web over time. When and to what extent did city land ownership concentrate and dissipate in the upper class, and among which upper class families? How was land ownership distributed by gender, religion, and other intra-elite divisions? How did land ownership relate to other forms of power – like political power and social status? To what extent did it dissipate and concentrate in families over time? Fuller information on wealth flows, particularly the flow of a concrete material resource like land, would contribute to a broader project of building a historically situated, network-based understanding of inequality.

All in all, the sheer existence of upper-class family webs tells us a lot about wealth, status, and power. It means that many of the most highly resourced among us are often ensconced in webs of love, care, trust, and obligation mostly with other highly resourced people. This has implications for the way elites see the world – the perspectives and experiences they take most seriously. It is likely a central reason why, despite the stereotype of old money *noblesse oblige,* old money heirs are more rabidly right-wing than new money tycoons (Burris 2000). And of course, it has implications for patterns of elite entrenchment. The more insulated elites are from kin connections with non-elites, the more likely they are to persist over the long term, forming extremely durable, long-term "dynastic cores," to borrow a term from Toft (2022).

Elites are not the only people whose families affect their lives. Each of us is born into a family web of our own, with varying degrees and distributions of resources. If we expand our

view far enough, those webs are all connected, such that every person is related to every other person who has ever lived, at least at some distance. For the most part, the connections between us are so meandering and untraceable as to be practically meaningless. But in some social locations, the kin ties come fast and short and thick, tangling into densities of bequeathments, gifts, favors, and mutual responsibilities. As I have argued, elite populations are fundamentally structured by this family entanglement. To understand the long-term dynamics of inequality, we must examine the web of kin that surrounds and connects disproportionately resourced individuals, because resources are not truly held alone: they are held in concert with and in relation to others. These resource-rich relations are lopsided, shifting, historically constituted, and consequential on very large scales. Without women, we simply cannot see them.

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Appendix

The Dallas Elites Dataset

Data entry

I have been steadily hand-constructing the Dallas elites dataset since 2017. The basis of the dataset is the social registers, which I went through one by one for each published register between 1895-1945, adding everyone inside. The social registers were organized by household, and married women were typically listed under their husbands' first and surnames. Children were listed under parents. I added each individual to a data frame of Individuals, assigned them a unique five-digit random ID, and connected spouses and parents and children together in a data frame of Relationships (see below). I then looked the individuals up on *Ancestry.com* and in the *Dallas Morning News* archives, and/or other sources if needed, using Census records, birth and death certificates, burial records, obituaries, and more to find the parent's families of origin and the future spouses and children of the children. If any of those kin were in the dataset, I connected them.

By far the most time-intensive aspect of the process was tracking down the first and maiden names of married women. So far, I have been able to track down the birth names of all but 30 women (.4% of the 8,433 women in the full dataset as of this writing). Most parents listed all their children as soon as they were born, but some did not. In the interest of consistency, I add any living minor children of listed parents, and mark those children as listed in the registers in the years their parents were listed and they were living in their parents' household. I sometimes discover I have missed a child, and then the population listed in the social register and covered in this dissertation grows.

Although this dissertation largely focuses on the people who were listed in the Dallas social registers from 1895-1945, the dataset itself is considerably larger, covering 17,137 people at the time of this writing. I add people not listed in the social registers for various reasons, including: they were part of an elite family that moved to Dallas, but died before they arrived or before the registers were published; they were wealthy and prominent in Dallas, but did not live there during the years the registers were published; they were wealthy or politically powerful in Dallas, but were never listed in the registers; they never lived in Dallas, but were significantly connected to Dallas elites through kin and social ties; they were in a club or organization I am studying; and/or they are otherwise interesting and enmeshed in the Dallas white elite world. Because I add these elites unsystematically, I do not include them in the population of focus for any of the three papers here, drawing on their information only when needed.

I am continually finding and sifting through new data sources, and often they provide new ties for the kinship network. For example, a description of a wedding party in a high society newsletter may mention that Janet Jenkins was a cousin of Emily Joyce. In those cases, I verify the connection with at least one other source, and if it appears to be legitimate, I add it to the data. (For a full list of sources, please see the end of this Appendix.)

This is a relational database. I enter data into six spreadsheets linked by individual, organization, and residence IDs:

- Individuals: Each row consists of an individual with a unique, random five-digit ID. In that row, I enter individual-specific information. Variables used in this paper: Names (first, last, middle, maiden, suffix), gender, racial category, birth and death dates and locations, arrival and departure years in Dallas, occupation(s), estate size at death, home

values in 1930 and 1940, Christian/Jewish religious affiliation, debut status and year, never married (binary), never had kids (binary), and listing in the social registers (binary by year).

- Relationships: This file is specific to kin relations. Each row links two individual ID numbers to a kin tie type, such as "Parent-Child" or "Sibling." For marriages, I also include the start year, end year, and whether they ended in divorce or death, although data entry for marriage dates is only 59.3% complete at this time. For directly-coded cousin and Aunt/Uncle-Niece/Nephew relationships, I include notes about how they were related – for example, "Sarah's mother was Ellen's sister" – and an additional column that codes the genders of the intermediate relationships, so that I can use them to build matrilineal and patrilineal networks. For example, an aunt and niece connected through a brother/father would be "an_wmw"; two female first cousins connected through their fathers would be "cf_wmmw." When the relationships were cross-generational like aunts/uncles-nieces/nephews or parents/children, rather than lateral, like siblings or cousins or spouses, I put the senior member of the relationship in the first column and the junior in the second. This is for clarity and consistency, and also so that it is easier to construct directed ties in the network for certain kinds of analysis, when needed.
- Organizations: This file lists organizations alongside a unique 4-digit organization ID. It is not complete. Organizations include schools, universities, clubs, churches, and companies.
- Memberships: This file attaches person-IDs to organization-IDs, along with the years of membership, if I have them. It is complete only for the organizations utilized in this paper

as external measures of elite status: the Idlewild Club, debutantes, and the Dallas Citizens Council.

- Homes: This file is not complete enough to be usable. Eventually, it will list home addresses, along with longitude/latitude, home values, and other residence-specific information.
- Residences: This file is not complete enough to be usable. It links individual IDs to residences by year.
- Rel_Random: Here I add random dyadic relationships that strike me as important or interesting, like "maid of honor," "lifelong best friends," "he named his boat after her when they were teenagers," "she sold him a house in 1931 for $30,000," or "they were sued for bank fraud together in 1908." It is unsystematic and so far, I use it solely to easily store and search for details about relational histories.

Data analysis

For analysis, I take the hand-coded data in the Excel workbook, save the sheets as .csv files, and import them to R. I primarily use base-R and the dplyr package to clean the data, and I use the ggplot package to graph it. For network analysis and visualization, I use the igraph package. I made the Sankey plots in the first paper with the ggsankey package, and I made the *k*-core distribution plots by hand in Adobe Illustrator. I exported all plots as PDFs and edited them in Adobe Illustrator for readability.

The kin relationships I have hand-coded in the Relationships file are almost all parent-child (69.2%) and spousal (24.7%) ties. I hand-code aunt/uncle-niece/nephew, grandparent-grandchild, and cousin ties when no closer ties between the individuals existed in the dataset. I include cousins at a greater distance than first cousins only when qualitative data indicated that

the individuals acknowledged each other as kin, and when there were no closer ties between them in the data. In those cases, I make a note in the sheet explaining the tie's inclusion.

Once I import the data into R, I calculate and add direct aunt/uncle-niece/nephew, grandparent-grandchild, and first cousin ties using the spousal and parent-child ties. Under this construction, I only include aunt/uncle-niece/nephew ties by lineage, not marriage: so if Sarah's mom's sister is Ellen, and Ellen is married to William, then Ellen is Sarah's aunt but William is not Ellen's uncle. Similarly, I do not include direct stepparent-stepchild relationships: they would be connected instead by two kin steps- parent-child to spouse.

I code both adopted and biological children using the same parent-child relation, simply adding a note if the historical record states that the child was adopted. The elites in these data had numerous biological children and relatives they never acknowledged legally or publicly, many of them Black. They also undoubtedly adopted white children they passed off as biological. My primary interest is not in genetic ties, but in publicly acknowledged, legally legitimized kin, because those legitimized kin were most heavily involved in the exchange of material and symbolic resources – inheritance, socialization, status, and so on.

Using igraph, I constructed an undirected, unweighted network with those kin ties. The network is undirected and unweighted because the direction and relative closeness of kin ties, while important for many empirical questions, were not essential to general questions about the overall clustering of the network, and about elite persistence. To construct the patrilineal network graphs for the first paper, I took the full matrix of kin ties, filtered it to only include father-son ties, and then constructed another undirected, unweighted network in igraph.

When I constructed networks of the point-in-time webs, including the "living family web," or "living patrilineal graph," (Figures 4 and 5), or the kin distance graph (Figure 15), I

took the full matrix of relationships from the cumulative web and filtered it to include kin ties only between elites who were listed in the registers by that year and were still alive, and spousal ties only between elites who were married by that year and were still alive. If I did not have the start date of a marriage recorded, I imputed it based on the year the younger spouse turned twenty-one. I include spousal ties between divorced couples in years both were still alive. In patrilineal case, I only included parent-child ties between men who were listed in the registers by that year and were still alive. For the full living kinship graphs, overall relatedness is underestimated, in that kin who were more distantly related than first cousins and whose mediating family members were dead or not yet listed would not be connected in the living web (unless they were also connected some other way through living and listed kin). It is a conservative measure of overall relatedness.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL ELITES IN THE FAMILY WEB

Social registers are collections of social elites, and my findings do not directly generalize to other analytic groupings, such as all wealthy families or all politically powerful people. But even though social, economic, and political resources are analytically distinct, in practice, they often coincide in the same person and family. The degree to which they coincide varies by person and population. In this population, almost all social elites were wealthy and many were powerful. Basic measures of economic and political power- estate notices, mayorships, and membership in a powerful political organization- suggest that a majority of very wealthy and powerful people were also socially elite, and that most people who were both socially elite and wealthy or powerful were also connected to the central family web (see Figure 1 in the main article).

Practically all members of high society were wealthy, and the most socially elite were considered particularly wealthy (Baird, 1934). Participation in any elite social club, party, ball, or charity organization was expensive, requiring regular, large payments for membership fees, custom gowns, lavish meals, donations, and the like. In that sense, any consistent participation indicated that a person at minimum had access to a sizable stream of cash. And as the period in question began one or two generations after the first white settlement of Dallas, it is less probable than in older cities that any significant number of impoverished "old money" scions would be included at the upper echelons of society despite their lack of funds. But there were wealthy people who lived in Dallas over those fifty years who were never listed in the social registers, so none of the proportional findings in this study apply to all wealthy Dallasites. It is likely that a kin network for all wealthy people would show a lower level of overall relatedness, but that is an empirical question that cannot be answered with the data at hand.

Still, it is possible to estimate the overlap between wealth, social elite status, and connection to the family web. I have made two such estimations which I describe briefly in the first paper. The first uses home values from the 1940 Census. The tabulated Census records for Dallas county indicate that home values of $20,000 and over were in the top 1.5 percent of home values in Dallas county that year. The number of elites with those high home values in the web and social registers are based on hand-coded 1940 home values in my dataset, and on the years those elites lived in Dallas. I have likely missed home values of some elites, so the estimated percent of this particular wealth elite that was listed in the social registers is an underestimate.

The other estimate of the overlap between the registers, the web, and the wealth elite uses a collection of estate notices published in the *Dallas Morning News* between 1895 and 1945 (n = 730). The newspaper periodically sent reporters to probate court to monitor the legal distribution

of estates. When the wills of wealthy or otherwise notable people were filed, reporters published short announcements valuing the estates and explaining how they would be divided. I searched for, read, and coded all estate notices that included phrases found commonly in the genre[30]. The data are suggestive, not conclusive. Rather than consisting of an ideal random sample of all bequeathments at a certain size, they are skewed towards the largest fortunes. Social prominence likely skewed the sample as well, but the directional influence is unclear[31].

Altogether, half (46.6%) of people whose estates were detailed in the newspaper were also listed in the social register, representing 13.5 percent of all people in the social registers who died as adults in Dallas between 1895-1945. Their inflation-adjusted estates were, on average, valued 7.7 times larger than estates belonging to the unlisted. Among those whose estates were published in the newspaper, then, social elites at death were significantly wealthier than non-elites. Figure 2 in the first article shows that the pattern was largely consistent across deciles: whereas the bottom decile of estate sizes was made up of just 19.2% social elites, the top decile was 91.8% socially elite. Larger estates also disproportionately corresponded to people in the family web. Whereas only 19.2 percent of the smallest decile of estates belonged to people in the family web, most (83.6%) of the top decile did. While not conclusive, the data support the intuitive idea that the wealthier people were, the more likely they were to also be in high society. And they also bolster the validity of the family web as an analytic tool in the study of wealth inequality: at least in the context of estate notices and home values, wealth and connection to the web were positively correlated.

[30] For example, I searched "estate valued," "probate docket," "left an estate," "for probate purposes," and "estate was valued," turning up thousands of results, 730 of which were Dallas estate notices in the pertinent time period.
[31] Possibly a reporter would be more likely to publish an estate notice about a social elite versus a non-social elite, particularly at the relatively lower estate sizes, reasoning that the socially prominent dead were more newsworthy than socially obscure ones. But it is also possible that they would be less likely to publish estate valuations for the most socially powerful if their families would not want such sensitive information made so public.

Just as my findings do not generalize to all economic elites in Dallas, they do not generalize to all political elites. But this population of social elites included many politically powerful people, and in general, adult men in high society were much more likely to wield political power than other adult men in Dallas. Almost all city mayors from 1895-1945 (75%) were listed in the social registers alongside their families. Importantly, the socially elite mayors were listed in the registers because they were mayors – every single man was listed before he was elected, and when mathematically possible, he was listed from childhood[32]. All but four (80%) were connected to the central family web. This pattern mirrors the one found in estate notices, where social elite status and kin connections to the central family web corresponded positively and consistently with other kinds of resources.

The same pattern shows up in a broader measure of political power, the Dallas Citizens Council, founded by prominent banker Robert E. Lee Thornton in 1937 as an exclusive club of the city's "yes and no men" (Hill 1996:122). The council, by all historical accounts, maintained an iron grip on city politics for decades; it was practically impossible to get elected or to pass a city ordinance without its support (Rogers 1951; Fairbanks 1998)[33]. At first glance, the Council seems like a case in point for a classic Millsian cabal of powerful men making decisions on behalf of everyone else. In many ways, that is an accurate read, though it is not a comprehensive one. The founding members of the Dallas Citizens Council were deeply connected to high society. Most (70.8%) of the original members were listed in the social registers, meaning that members were much more likely to be members of high society than not. Most (84.0%) of the

[32] The single exception is Franklin Pierce Holland, who was elected mayor the same year the first social register came out, rendering it impossible for his listing to precede his election.
[33] New members typically had to demonstrate their political power in order to join (Wright 2013:6). Even if not all politically powerful people were on the Dallas Citizens Council, then, it is reasonable to assume that all members did hold a significant amount of political power.

socially elite members also belonged to the central family web. Such a finding supports the argument Domhoff (1967) has been making for decades: that individual Millsian power elites have come disproportionately from a national upper class that, due to schooling, endogamous marriages, and other social entanglements, share fundamental orientations toward the world. And like the estate notices, home values, and mayoral backgrounds, the Dallas Citizens Council membership list suggests that although not all economic and political elites were in the social registers, most were, and most of those were in the family web.

Sources used in the construction of the Dallas elites dataset:

Archival papers

The DeGolyer Library at SMU:

- Everett Lee DeGolyer, Sr papers
- Nell Goodrich DeGolyer papers
- Stanley Marcus Collection
- Isabel Cranfill papers
- Standard Club papers

University of Texas at Arlington:

- John W. Carpenter papers

Dallas Historical Society

- George Bannerman Dealey papers

Collections housed at the Portal to Texas History

- *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*
- *The Dallas Herald*
- Dallas County Probate Records
- *Norton's Union Intelligencer*
- *Lancaster Herald*
- *The Dallas Express*
- Dallas Genealogical Society Records

Collections compiled by Ancestry.com

- Manuscript records of U.S. Federal Census, 1840-1950
- Alabama, Texas and Virginia, U.S., Confederate Pensions, 1884-1958
- California, U.S., Death Index, 1940-1997
- Dallas, Texas Directory, 1889-1894
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- Tarrant County, Texas, U.S., Probate Index, 1800-2012
- Texas, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1903-1932
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Blogs and websites

- Paula Bosse's excellent Dallas history blog: www.flashbackdallas.com

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