

# THE INHERITANCE OF THE CONSULATE IN THE ANTONINE PERIOD: A PROBLEM REVISITED

G. P. BURTON

## INTRODUCTION

SOME YEARS AGO two contrasting analyses (the first by Professor Keith Hopkins and myself, the second by Professor Geza Alföldy) of the social composition of the imperial senate and of the inheritability of the consulate were promulgated. In a recent article in this journal Johannes Hahn and Paul M. M. Leunissen returned to the fray.<sup>1</sup> Their interesting and thoughtful critique has prompted me to reconsider the question of the inheritance of the consulate in the period A.D. 138–180. In this article I will try again to show that the hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary in the Antonine period is unwarranted. The argument of this article proceeds in four stages. First, “Background,” I rehearse the two contrasting hypotheses. Secondly, “A Critique of a Critique,” I examine the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis put forward by Hahn and Leunissen. Thirdly, “Sons and Fathers,” I re-examine the problem of gaps in our surviving data, especially the problem of suffect consuls whose names do not survive (the *ignoti*). Here I hope to provide a method of treating this problem which is logically and statistically superior to the rather cursory analysis in *Death and Renewal*. Fourthly, “Brothers,” I re-emphasize the significance of the relative paucity of brothers attested as consuls who were, in turn, the sons of consuls.

## BACKGROUND

In chapter 3 of *Death and Renewal* Keith Hopkins and I essayed a large-scale analysis of the social composition of the senate and especially of holders of the consulate during the principate. We had hoped, via intergenerational

The following works will be cited by author's name and abbreviated title: G. Alföldy, “Consuls and Consulars under the Antonines,” *Ancient Society* 7 (1976) 263–299 = Alföldy, “Consuls and Consulars”; *id.*, *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninen* (Bonn 1977) = Alföldy, *Konsulat*; J. Hahn and P. M. M. Leunissen, “Statistical Method and Inheritance of the Consulate under the Early Roman Empire,” *Phoenix* 44 (1990) 60–81; K. Hopkins and G. P. Burton, “Political Succession in the Late Republic,” in K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) 31–119 = Hopkins and Burton, “Political Succession”; *id.*, “Ambition and Withdrawal: The Senatorial Aristocracy under the Emperors,” in K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) 120–200 = Hopkins and Burton, “Ambition and Withdrawal.”

I would like to thank my friend Keith Hopkins for incisive and entertaining discussion and criticism of earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>1</sup>Hopkins and Burton, “Ambition and Withdrawal”; Alföldy, “Consuls and Consulars”; Hahn and Leunissen.

analysis of senatorial membership and of holders of the consulship, to refute both the traditional view that membership of the senate was hereditary and the recently propounded hypothesis that, during the Antonine period, the consulate was hereditary.<sup>2</sup> Our statistical analysis concentrated on the best known stratum within the senate, consuls. We took either 1 in 4 or 1 in 2 (or both) samples of known consuls for four selected periods. We concluded on the basis of the known succession rates that entry to the senate was not hereditary, and attempted to show that the low rates of succession could not be explained purely by invoking the hypothesis that rates of fertility among the Roman aristocracy were exceptionally low. Three major facets of the data underpinned our argument. First, known succession rates to the consulate were low. Only about one quarter (27%) of consuls in our sample had a consular father.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, we compared the succession rates of ordinary and suffect consuls. Ordinary consuls were much more likely to have had a consular son than suffect consuls. The differential rates of succession implied that there were many sons of suffect consuls who did not reach the consulate.<sup>4</sup> This attested difference in rates of succession provided an important link in our argument that low fertility by itself could not explain the low rates of attested succession in what was purportedly an hereditary body. Thirdly, we emphasized the comparative rarity of attested examples of brothers becoming consuls, especially among suffect consuls.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore we argued that our statistical analysis and the inferences we drew from it corresponded well to two other widely-known pieces of synoptic research. First, the register of senatorial membership, constructed by Lambrechts, for the period A.D. 117–192 suggested that only one fifth of senators A.D. 117–138 had descendants who were senators in the period A.D. 180–192.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the famous analysis by Hammond of the geographic origin of senators between A.D. 68 and 235 implied a considerable turnover across generations of senatorial membership.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup>At the outset, for reasons of clarity, it is worth stressing that the claim that membership of the senate and/or the holding of the consulate was hereditary does not imply that *only* sons of senators/consuls became senators/consuls; rather it implies that sons of senators and sons of consuls, provided they survived to the requisite age, normally automatically in turn acquired the status of their fathers (senator/consul).

<sup>3</sup>See Hopkins and Burton, "Ambition and Withdrawal," esp. 134–135 and Table 3.3, col. f.

<sup>4</sup>In detail see Hopkins and Burton, "Ambition and Withdrawal" 138–144. The known rates of succession of ordinary consuls gave us a *minimum* estimate of the fertility of Roman senatorial families in general.

<sup>5</sup>See Hopkins and Burton, "Political Succession" 104–106, and, briefly, *id.*, "Ambition and Withdrawal" 140–141.

<sup>6</sup>P. Lambrechts, *La Composition du Sénat romain (117–192)* (Antwerp 1936).

<sup>7</sup>M. Hammond, "The Composition of the Early Roman Senate, A.D. 65–235," *JRS* 47 (1957) 73–81; cf. the comments in Hopkins and Burton, "Ambition and Withdrawal" 144–145 with Table 3.15 (200).

In sum, we inferred from our data a model of the Roman aristocracy which was characterized by high rates of inter-generational mobility. Within the context of this model senators of high status (ordinary consuls) were more successful at political reproduction than lower-status senators (suffect consuls and senators-never-consul). Although the cultural practices which informed and determined the social composition and career structure of the imperial senate were markedly different from those of the middle and late republic, our model of the social composition of the imperial senate bears striking resemblance to our model of the social structure of the republican senate, in which again, although the consulate was *not* hereditary, senators of high status (consuls) were more successful at political reproduction than senators of lower status (senators-never-consul).<sup>8</sup>

Already in 1977 Alföldy had published a comprehensive prosopographical study of the senate during the Antonine period. He estimated that in this period ca 400 consuls were appointed altogether (excluding emperors and *consules II*). Of the known consuls (279) 76 (ca 27%) can be shown to be sons of consuls.<sup>9</sup> Although this percentage figure is very close to our figure of 26% for the period 131–160, Alföldy made a contrasting inference from his data. Both in this book and in a contemporaneous summary article he claimed that under the Antonines the consulate was a hereditary post.<sup>10</sup> With admirable clarity and lack of ambiguity he claimed: “the consulate was—as in the Republic—hereditary; that means the son of a consular, in the event that he reached the requisite age, could in principle automatically count on a consulship.”<sup>11</sup> He explained the comparatively low rate of attested succession as the result of low fertility and high mortality.<sup>12</sup>

#### A CRITIQUE OF A CRITIQUE

In *Death and Renewal* we had hoped to refute Alföldy’s hypothesis. However Hahn and Leunissen in their recent article have tried to substantiate his hypothesis through a reworking of the data on Antonine consuls which is designed to undermine some of our key arguments. In what follows I will rehearse their arguments and use the same data. This procedure has two advantages. First, the curious reader can easily compare this presentation with that of Hahn and Leunissen. Secondly, the data used is that taken from Alföldy’s book and is the best available for the Antonine period. In

<sup>8</sup>For comparison between the republican and imperial senates see Hopkins and Burton, “Political Succession” 103–107.

<sup>9</sup>See the detailed list in Alföldy, *Konsulat* 323–327. For the figure 279, which excludes fragmentary names, see Hahn and Leunissen 63.

<sup>10</sup>Alföldy, *Konsulat*, esp. 84 ff., and *id.*, “Consuls and Consulars,” esp. 288 ff.

<sup>11</sup>Alföldy, “Consuls and Consulars” 289.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid.* 290: “Many consuls did not have a son, or at least not a son who reached the requisite age to be a consul.”

addition, it does not suffer from any of the putative defects which might be ascribed to the original sample data. At the outset let me say that the arguments adduced by Hahn and Leunissen are ingenious. Indeed their method of analysing the probable succession rates among the unknown *suffect* consuls of the period is more nuanced than that of *Death and Renewal* and probably preferable. But a major logical flaw subsists in their analysis, and this error undermines their attempt to argue away the differential rates of succession between ordinary and *suffect* consuls which Hopkins and I posited.

Two procedures are central to the substantive analysis of Hahn and Leunissen: first, a re-examination of the difficult problem of *suffecti ignoti*, secondly, the impact of the putative difference in age at which sons of *ordinarii* and sons of *suffects* held the consulate. Let me begin with the *ignoti*. The total number of consuls appointed (excluding emperors and *coss. II*) was about 400. They can be distributed into three categories: *ordinarii*, *suffects*, and unknown *suffects*. This distribution can be diagrammatically represented.<sup>13</sup>

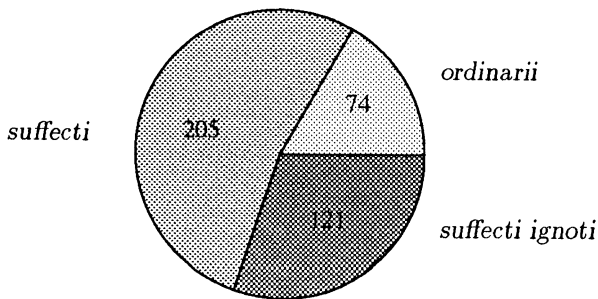


Fig. 1: Total sum of consuls for the years A.D. 138–180: approximately 400 (emperors and *coss. II* not included).

Of the 279 known consuls 76 (27%) are attested as sons of consuls. Of these 76, 31 are sons of *ordinarii* and 45 sons of *suffects*. The attested ratio

<sup>13</sup> All the figures and calculations in what follows are taken from Hahn and Leunissen 63 ff. I should note, however, that, although they claim to follow Alföldy in excluding emperors and *coss. II*, they reach a different figure for the number of *ordinarii* (74). In fact 64 *ordinarii*, excluding emperors and *coss. II* were appointed (see Alföldy, "Consuls and Consulars" 294). Hahn and Leunissen appear to have added to the 64 the 10 *ord. II* who had previously been *suff. I* (see the list in Alföldy, *Konsulat* 108). Since three of these ten were *suffects* before 138, this procedure is confusing and factitious. For the sake of clarity in the text I follow their method of presentation, since my main source of disagreement is logical not arithmetical. The zealous reader can refer to Appendix 1 to this article where the figures and calculations are set out more closely in accord, I think, with Alföldy's presentation.

of socio-political reproduction is thus about 2:3, whereas one would expect sons of *suffecti* to outnumber sons of *ordinarii* by about 4 to 1 (see figure 2). This ratio of 4:1 is important and the reader needs to bear it in mind in what follows.<sup>14</sup>

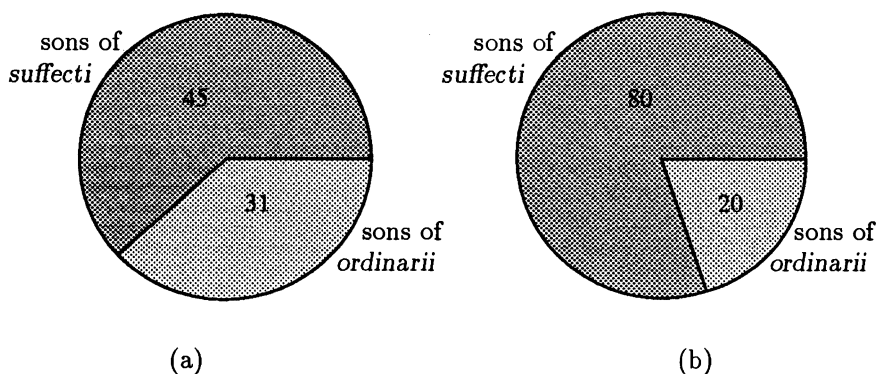


Fig. 2: (a) Attested ratio of socio-political reproduction (approx. 2:3). (b) Theoretically expected ratio of socio-political reproduction (approx. 1:4).

We can now approach the problem of the *ignoti*. As Hahn and Leunissen point out, it would be rash to assume that the succession rate among the *ignoti* was the same as for all known consuls (ca 27%). The *ignoti* are all *suffecti*. So we need to disaggregate the attested succession rate in order to discover the separate succession rates of *ordinarii* and known *suffecti*. On this basis we find that 44 out of 74 ordinary consuls were sons of known consuls (59.5%), whereas only 32 out of 205 (15.6%) of known *suffecti* were sons of known consuls. Among the 32 *suffecti* attested as sons of consuls only 4 (2%) were sons of *ordinarii* and 28 (13.7%) were sons of *suffecti*. This disaggregation of the data is presented in Figure 3.<sup>15</sup>

If we now apply the rates of succession of known *suffecti* to the *ignoti*, we can assume that 2 (2%) of the *ignoti* were sons of *ordinarii* and 17 (13.7%) were sons of known *suffecti*. The corrected total for the number of consuls who were sons of known consuls is 95 (76 + 2 + 17). Thirty-three (31 + 2) were sons of *ordinarii* and sixty-two (45 + 17) sons of known *suffecti*. The attested ratio of sons of known *suffecti* to sons of *ordinarii* (ca 3:2) should be corrected, therefore, to just under 2:1 (62:33), in comparison to the expected ratio of about four to one.

<sup>14</sup>This theoretically expected ratio of 4:1 is the ratio of all *suffect* consuls to ordinary consuls. For further discussion of this ratio see below, 224 and Appendix 1.

<sup>15</sup>My figure 3 is figure 4 in Hahn and Leunissen, where a full elaboration of their procedure can be found (64–66).

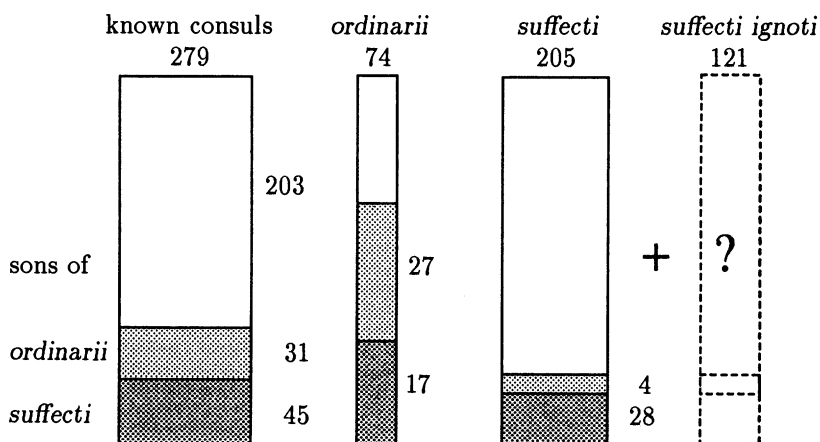


Fig. 3: Proportion of consuls' sons among consuls.

We are now in a position to introduce the second adjustment made by Hahn and Leunissen. They claim that there was a clear difference in the age at which sons of *ordinarii* and sons of *suffecti* achieved the consulate. On this view sons of *ordinarii* normally achieved the ordinary rather than a *suffect* consulate. Furthermore Hahn and Leunissen argue (following Alföldy) that such men held the ordinary consulate at the minimum age of 32/3, whereas sons of *suffecti* had normally to wait to age 40/3 to achieve the consulate.<sup>16</sup> Solid and reliable information on the age at which senators held either the ordinary or a *suffect* consulate, is, to put it mildly, exiguous, as Hahn and Leunissen admit.<sup>17</sup> I suspect that the view that sons of ordinary consuls normally became consuls at 32/3 years of age is a speculative inference from career inscriptions which show that such men did not normally hold any office (in Italy or the provinces) between the praetorship and consulate. For the present such doubts can be set aside. The age difference hypothesis has a double advantage in the present context. For Hahn and Leunissen it provides another argument for diminishing the differences in the attested rates of succession of *suffect* and ordinary consuls. From my point of view it provides a severe test of the arguments of Hopkins and myself.

Assuming, then, that sons of *suffecti* normally held their consulates ten years later than sons of *ordinarii*, it is necessary to estimate the additional rate of mortality suffered by sons of *suffecti*. Hahn and Leunissen estimate on the basis of the hypothetical table of life expectancy proposed in *Death*

<sup>16</sup>For their full argument see Hahn and Leunissen 66–69.

<sup>17</sup>Compare the cautionary comments in Hopkins and Burton, "Ambition and Withdrawal" 146–147.

and *Renewal* (see 148 and Table 3.12), that only 80% of any cohort of sons of suffectus who survived to age 32/3 would survive to age 40/3. Therefore, the attested group of 62 sons of suffectus needs to be seen as the residue of an original group of 78 who reached age 32/3 and then suffered an additional 20% mortality rate (78 minus 20% equals 62). It is this original group of 78 at age 32/3 who need to be compared with the group of 33 sons of *ordinarii*.

Let me resume the arguments so far. Hahn and Leunissen begin with an attested ratio of political reproduction of sons of *ordinarii* to sons of suffectus of 31:45 in contrast with an expected ratio of approximately 1:4. The first correction of these figures was designed to encompass the problem of the *ignoti*. This adjustment gave them a ratio of 33:62. The second adjustment was designed to encompass the problem of age-differentials. This adjustment gave them a final corrected ratio of 33 sons of *ordinarii* to 78 sons of known suffectus (or 1:ca 2.35). Even so the new corrected ratio gives us a much higher proportion of sons of *ordinarii* (33 to 78) than we would theoretically expect (33:132 on a one to four ratio).<sup>18</sup> The contention that there was a differential rate of political reproduction between ordinary and suffect consuls, a differential which cannot be reconciled with the hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary, still appears to stand. Oddly, Hahn and Leunissen (69) believe that they have refuted this contention. For reasons that are completely obscure to me, they do not compare their corrected ratio of 33:78 to the expected ratio of 1:4, a ratio which, having been introduced at the beginning of their analysis (63 and figure 1), is never referred to again. Instead they compare the corrected ratio to a freshly introduced ratio, namely that of their number of ordinary consuls to their number of known suffectus (74:205) during the Antonine period. This comparison is not logical. Rather, the attested ratio of sons of *ordinarii* to sons of known suffectus among Antonine consuls should be compared to the ratio of ordinary consuls (excluding emperors and *coss. ord.* II) to known suffect consuls in the antecedent generation (roughly A.D. 108–150).

What was that ratio? So far I have used an expected ratio of approximately 1:4. That is the ratio of ordinary consuls in the antecedent generation to *all* suffectus. Since we know 85% of all consuls (including all the *ordinarii*) in this generation, we can envisage that 20% were *ordinarii*, 65% known suffectus and 15% unknown suffectus. The ratio of *ordinarii* to known suffectus is, therefore, 1:3.25. In short, on the figures of Hahn and Leunissen there are ca 2.35 sons of known suffectus for every son of an *ordinarius*, whereas we would expect a ratio of 3.25 to 1.

If we turn away from the question of the differential rates of succession of ordinary and suffect consuls, we can now examine two other aspects (the low

<sup>18</sup> Compare Appendix 1, where I calculate a corrected ratio of 1:2.16 and an expected ratio of 1:ca 4.2.

rate of succession and the absence of brothers) of the Antonine data which, I believe, support the hypothesis that the consulate was not hereditary.

#### SONS AND FATHERS OR THE LOW RATES OF SUCCESSION

Among Antonine consuls, even when the surviving data has been adjusted to take account of the *ignoti*, only 95 consuls (76 known and 19 hypothetical *ignoti*) were sons of known consuls, less than 25% of all consuls appointed. Since we know the names of ca 85% of all consuls in the period A.D. 100–161, this low percentage of consuls who were the sons of known consuls is very hard to reconcile with the hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary.<sup>19</sup> Logically, it is hard to believe that the missing 15% of suffect consuls in the antecedent generation will ‘explain’ many more of our Antonine consuls. This logical intuition may be given a more concrete form by a relatively simple arithmetic calculation based on the assumption that unknown consuls on average had proportionately the same numbers of consular children as known consuls.<sup>20</sup> For this purpose I will call the antecedent generation the fathers’ generation and our Antonine consuls, the sons’ generation. The fathers’ generation is composed of (a) ordinary consuls, (b) known suffects and (c) unknown suffects. Their respective ratio is 20% (a), 65% (b) and 15% (c). The sons’ generation is composed of (d<sub>1</sub>) known consuls who are sons of *ordinarii*, (d<sub>2</sub>) known consuls who are sons of known suffects, (d<sub>3</sub>) known consuls who are sons of unknown suffects, (e<sub>1</sub>) unknown consuls who are sons of *ordinarii*, (e<sub>2</sub>) unknown consuls who are sons of known suffects, (e<sub>3</sub>) unknown consuls who are sons of unknown suffects and (f) known and unknown consuls who are new men. This can be expressed diagrammatically:

Fathers' generation	Sons' generation		
(a) <i>ordinarii</i>	(d <sub>1</sub> ) sons of <i>ordinarii</i>	}	known consuls
(b) known suffects	(d <sub>2</sub> ) sons of known suffects		
(c) unknown suffects	(d <sub>3</sub> ) sons of unknown suffects		
	(e <sub>1</sub> ) sons of <i>ordinarii</i>	}	unknown consuls
	(e <sub>2</sub> ) sons of known suffects		
	(e <sub>3</sub> ) sons of unknown suffects		
	(f) new men		known or unknown

<sup>19</sup>For the figure of 85% see Alföldy, *Konsulat* 20 and n. 36.

<sup>20</sup>The calculations in the text follow the procedure adumbrated in the Appendix to chap. 3 of *Death and Renewal* (198–200), but take into account the important consideration of Hahn and Leunissen that unknown consuls are always suffects.



In order to calculate the total number of consuls in the sons' generation who were sons of consuls we need merely to add  $d_1 + d_2 + d_3 + e_1 + e_2 + e_3$ . The values of  $d_1$  and  $d_2$  are 31 and 45 (= 76). Following Hahn and Leunissen, the values of  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  are 2 and 17 (= 19).<sup>21</sup> If we assume that unknown suffectus in the fathers' generation (c) had proportionately the same number of consular children as known suffectus (b), the value of  $d_3 + e_3$  can be calculated as follows:

$$d_3 + e_3 = \frac{d_2 + e_2}{65(b)} \times 15(c)$$

The value of  $d_3 + e_3$  is therefore just over 14 ( $45 + 17/65 \times 15$ ). Our original figure of 95 sons of known consuls is finally raised to 109 (95 + 14) known and unknown consuls who were sons of known and unknown consuls. This figure is still only ca 27% of the ca 400 ever appointed.

One problem with this calculation is the margin of error introduced by the relatively high proportion of unknown suffectus in the sons' generation. As Hahn and Leunissen point out, the proportion of unknown suffectus rises considerably during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.<sup>22</sup> For this reason I present in Appendix 2 a calculation solely for the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161), a period where we still know ca 85% of all consuls appointed. On this calculation almost exactly 30% (64 out of 210/215) of all consuls appointed were sons of consuls (known and unknown).

#### BROTHERS

Keith Hopkins and I were forcibly struck in our analysis of our original sample data by the relative paucity of cases of consular brothers. Some doubts about the historicity of this phenomenon have been expressed by F. Jacques.<sup>23</sup> Jacques, I should emphasize, was primarily interested in examining the hypothesis that senatorial membership was not hereditary and that many sons of senators did not follow their fathers' footsteps into the senate.<sup>24</sup> For the period 193–217 he found 15 examples of suffect consuls

<sup>21</sup>See Hahn and Leunissen 64–66.

<sup>22</sup>Hahn and Leunissen 70.

<sup>23</sup>F. Jacques, "L'Éthique et la statistique: À propos du renouvellement du Sénat romain," *AnnEconSocCiv* 42 (1987) 1287–1303, at 1292 and Annexe 2 (pp. 1297–99). Our survey data gave no example of suffect consuls who had two or more known consular sons. However, *pace* Jacques, we never claimed that "en principe" suffect consuls did not have more than one consular son.

<sup>24</sup>Although Jacques cites Alföldy extensively in his article, he never, as far as I can tell, commits himself explicitly on the hypothesis that the consulship was hereditary under the Antonines. However, his analysis of competition for the consulship (1293) implies an assumption that there were sons of suffect consuls who reached consular age but did not gain the consulship during the second century.

who had more than one son who was a senator or "destiné à faire carrière d'après ses débuts."<sup>25</sup> I therefore decided to re-analyse the admirable list of Alföldy (*Konsulat* 323–327) of known consuls who were sons of known consuls. The results are striking. In this list 23 *ordinarii* are attested who are, in turn, sons of *ordinarii*. Only three pairs of brothers exist. Put differently, twenty fathers who were *ordinarii* produced twenty-three *ordinarii* sons. None of these 23 *ordinarii* had a known suffect brother. Although it is possible that some of these 23 had brothers who were *suffecti ignoti*, Alföldy believes anyway (as do Hahn and Leunissen) that sons of *ordinarii* were very unlikely to become suffects. On the basis of these figures, and on the assumption that the consulate was hereditary, we would have to infer that for every 6 ordinary consuls who had one son surviving to age 32/3 there was only one ordinary consul who had two sons surviving to consular age. Such a pattern seems to me inherently implausible.<sup>26</sup>

Similar comments can be made if we inspect all 76 examples. Of these 76 only 6 are brothers. Put differently, 73 fathers produced 76 attested sons. This list, that is, showed *no* examples of brothers among the suffect consuls or among the *ordinarii* who were sons of suffects. These figures raise one obvious boundary problem. It is possible that some of the consuls in this list had either elder brothers who had been consuls before 138 or younger brothers who were consuls after 180. No analogous list of consuls who were sons of consuls exists for the reign of Hadrian. However, Leunissen himself has recently published an analogous list for the period 180–235.<sup>27</sup> I checked all the consuls in this list who held their consulate between 180 and 211 ( $n = 41$ ). No certain example exists of a younger brother of any of the Antonine consuls who were sons of consuls. There was one possible example.<sup>28</sup> In short, this paucity of attested consular brothers among consuls who were sons of known consuls supports the hypothesis that many sons of consuls (and, I would argue, many sons of senators) did not follow in their fathers' footsteps. Any hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary needs to confront this problem.

<sup>25</sup> Jacques (above, n. 23) 1292.

<sup>26</sup> What should we expect? In Hopkins and Burton, "Political Succession" 99–107 and Tables 2.11 and 2.12 we tried to set our findings on the Roman aristocracy of the republic and principate in the context of three model populations (having high, intermediate, and low fertility). Even on the low fertility model we estimated that for roughly every two families which had one son only surviving to age 40 there was one family which had two or more sons surviving to age 40; now compare R. P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge 1994) 43–69, esp. Tables 3.2.d–f and 3.3.d–f.

<sup>27</sup> P. M. M. Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander* (Amsterdam 1989) 371–374.

<sup>28</sup> L. Novius Rufus, *cos. suff.* (?186), either the son or the younger brother of Novius Priscus (*suff.* ca 165/8), who was the son of C. Novius Priscus (*suff.* 152).

Finally this discussion allows me to raise an issue which was not directly addressed in *Death and Renewal*. In support of his hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary Alföldy claimed that "we do not know a single case where a senator who reached the minimum age for the consulate between 138 and 180 and who was the son of a consular senator did *not* become consul".<sup>29</sup> This line of reasoning can carry little weight. As Keith Hopkins and I often had cause to note in our book, the surviving evidence on the senatorial aristocracy of the republic and principate is heavily biased in favour of successful sons. One statistic, culled from the analysis of senatorial careers by W. Eck, is illuminating. He estimated that 230 out of 570 consuls attested in the period 70–138 are only names to us. That is to say nothing of their previous or subsequent senatorial careers is known. They have left mark on our sources only because they became consuls.<sup>30</sup>

Let me sum up. The evidence for consular ascent and descent in this period is rather good, especially for the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. The existing gaps in the data, however, are sufficient for me to believe that, unless the recording angel miraculously fills them in, agreement on the question of the inheritability of the consulate will never be reached. That said, the hypothesis that the consulate was hereditary during the Antonine period is fragile and unconvincing. The attested rates of succession are much lower than the model of inheritability would indicate *apriori* and remain so even when adjusted to take account of the problem of unknown suffecti. The differential rates of succession of ordinary and suffect consuls cannot be accommodated within the model. Nor can the relative paucity of consular brothers. The consulate had never been hereditary and did not become so under the Antonines.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER  
MANCHESTER M13 9PL  
U.K.

#### APPENDIX 1

In my text for the purpose of adjusting the attested succession rates to take account of the *ignoti* I used the illustrative data set out by Hahn and Leunissen. But their breakdown of Antonine consuls into the three categories of *ordinarii*, suffecti, and *ignoti* is not without problems. Their figure of 74 *ordinarii* differs from Alföldy's figure of 64. I can only reach a figure of 74 if all *ordinarii* II previously *suffecti* I are counted as *ordinarii*. In

<sup>29</sup> Alföldy, "Consuls and Consulars" 289.

<sup>30</sup> W. Eck, "Beförderungskriterien innerhalb den senatorischen Laufbahn," *ANRW* (1974) II.1.158–228, at 170–171.

principle this approach is not necessarily unreasonable, though Hahn and Leunissen should have explicitly noted it. In practice problems arise. For example three of the *ordinarii* II had been suffect consuls before 138 and cannot be included in the register of Antonine consuls when Alföldy was so careful to exclude such people (*Konsulat* 20). I think it preferable to follow exactly Alföldy's method of presentation which is set out so lucidly (*Konsulat* 19–20 and the synoptic table at 32). On this basis I count 274 known consuls (64 *ordinarii* and 210 suffects) excluding emperors and *consules* II. There remain about 126 *ignoti*. I also rechecked Alföldy's list of 76 consuls who were sons of consuls (*Konsulat* 323–327). 23 of the ordinary consuls had an ordinary father, 16 a suffect father. 8 of the suffect consuls had an ordinary father and 29 a suffect father.<sup>31</sup>

If I make these amendments, I can reproduce figure 4 of Hahn and Leunissen (our figure 3) as follows:

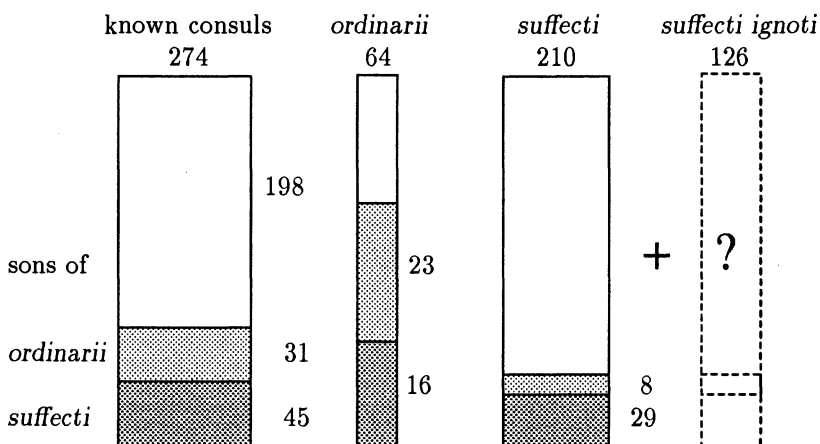


Fig. 4: Proportion of consuls' sons among consuls.

We can now adjust the figures for known sons of consuls to take into account the *ignoti*. 4% of the *ignoti* should be sons of *ordinarii*. This gives us 5 extra sons of *ordinarii*. 14% of the *ignoti* should be sons of suffects. This gives 17 extra sons of suffects. Our adjusted ratio of sons of *ordinarii* to sons of suffects will be 36 to 62 (31 + 5 to 45 + 17). The second adjustment to take account of age differentials raises 62 to 78. Our corrected ratio is 36:78 (or 1:2.16) compared to that of Hahn and Leunissen of 33:78 (or 1:2.35).

<sup>31</sup>Hahn and Leunissen counted 23, 17, 8, and 28 respectively. They also moved 4 of the suffects who were sons of *ordinarii* into the category of ordinary sons of *ordinarii* on the grounds that their second consulate was ordinary.

This difference in outcome of our two calculations is too small perhaps to matter much. Of more importance is the theoretically expected ratio of sons of *ordinarii* to sons of suffecti. Hahn and Leunissen suggested a ratio of 1:4. To calculate this ratio we need to know the ratio of ordinary consuls to suffect consuls in the generation of the fathers of Antonine consuls (a period which will span about the years 108–150). Determination of this ratio is not easy. But for the period 138–161 Alföldy shows that 38 ordinary consuls were appointed (excluding, as ever, *consules II* and emperors) and ca 172/177 suffecti. Thus the ratio of ordinary to suffect consuls for 138–161 is about 1:4.5. No equivalent analysis of Hadrianic consuls is known to us. But Alföldy estimates the average as eight consuls per year.<sup>32</sup> Of 168 appointed ( $21 \times 8$ ), 42 will have been *ordinarii* and 126 suffecti. If we exclude from the *ordinarii* emperors and iterated consulates, we reach a ratio of 31 *ordinarii* to 126 suffecti, approximately a 1:4 ratio (1:4.06).<sup>33</sup> These figures suggest that the expected ratio of consuls who were sons of *ordinarii* to consuls who were sons of suffecti should be at least 1:4, though not much higher than 1:4.2.

Finally, as I note in the main text (above, 224), we need to adjust the expected ratio (either 1:4 or 1:4.2) to take account of the ca 15% of consuls in the antecedent generation who were unknown suffecti. On this basis the ratio of ordinary fathers to known suffect fathers becomes either 1:3.25 (20:65) or 1:3.5 (19:66). On any of these calculations the attested ratios of sons of *ordinarii* to sons of known suffecti (1:2.35, Hahn and Leunissen; 1:2.16, Burton) leave us with only about two-thirds of the sons of suffecti that we would expect.

## APPENDIX 2

In this appendix I set out the numbers and calculations which underpin the estimate that between 138 and 161, ca 30% of all consuls (known and unknown) were sons of consuls (known and unknown). As ever the calculations are based on the lucid presentation of the data in Alföldy (*Konsulat*). According to Alföldy ca 210/215 new consuls (excluding emperors and *ordinarii II*) were appointed from 138–161. 38 were *ordinarii*, 142 known suffecti, and 30 to 35 unknown suffecti.<sup>34</sup> For present purposes I assume 213 new consuls and 33 unknown suffecti. For the fathers' generation I again assume that 85% of consuls are known and that 20% were *ordinarii* (a), 65% known suffecti (b), and 15% unknown suffecti (c).

<sup>32</sup> Alföldy, *Konsulat* 12–13.

<sup>33</sup> A brief check of A. Degraffi, *I fasti consolari dell'imperio romano* (Rome 1952), revealed 11 ordinary consulates held by the emperor or *consules II* and III.

<sup>34</sup> See Alföldy, *Konsulat* 20.

For the sons' generation (138–161) we know the names of 49 consuls who were sons of known consuls. 24 were *ordinarii* (11 sons of *ordinarii*, 13 sons of suffecti) and 25 were suffecti (5 sons of *ordinarii* and 20 sons of suffecti).<sup>35</sup> On this basis we can proceed to give values to the six categories of sons,  $d_1$ ,  $d_2$ ,  $d_3$ ,  $e_1$ ,  $e_2$ , and  $e_3$ . 16 known consuls ( $11 + 5$ ) were sons of *ordinarii* ( $d_1$ ). 33 known consuls ( $13 + 20$ ) were sons of known suffecti ( $d_2$ ). Following Hahn and Leunissen we can calculate the number of unknown suffecti who were sons of known consuls by analogy with the proportion of known suffecti who were sons of known consuls. 25 out of 142 known suffecti were sons of known consuls. 20 were sons of suffecti, 5 sons of *ordinarii*. By analogy, of the 33 *ignoti* 1 was a son of an *ordinarius* ( $e_1$ ) and 5 were sons of suffecti ( $e_2$ ).<sup>36</sup> The final step is to calculate the value of  $d_3$  (known sons of unknown suffecti) plus  $e_3$  (unknown sons of unknown suffecti). The calculation is again based on the assumption that unknown suffecti had proportionately as many consular sons as known suffecti. The value of  $d_3 + e_3$  is 9.<sup>37</sup> The total numbers of consuls (known and unknown) who can be explained by their fathers' status is, therefore 64 ( $16 + 33 + 1 + 5 + 9$ ), almost exactly 30% of the total ever appointed (213).

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 323–325.

<sup>36</sup> The calculations are  $\frac{5}{142} \times 33$  and  $\frac{20}{142} \times 33$  respectively.

<sup>37</sup> The formula is  $\frac{d_2 + e_2}{b} \times c$ . Numerically expressed that is  $\frac{33 + 5}{65} \times 15 = 9$ .