Incumbency, votes and electoral outcomes:

Examining the effects of candidate ethnic origins on

party performance in local elections

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Introduction

In an analysis of voting at the 2010 UK general election Stegmaier et al. (2013) find an effect on incumbent party vote share associated with the race or ethnic identity of candidates standing as challengers. Specifically, they maintain that in the case of the three major parties, the incumbent party might expect a boost (relative to its overall performance) of approximately two percentage points in vote share when challenged by a candidate whose ethnic origin is Black, Asian or from another minority ethnic group (BAME).

Coincidentally, a separate paper examining local election performance (Borisyuk et al. 2013) found that candidates possessing names suggesting a non-white ethnic origin fared less well than did other candidate types. The estimate of the electoral disadvantage to BAME candidates at local elections – about two percentage points – is similar to the Stegmaier finding. Neither paper argued that minority ethnic candidates cannot be elected but their conclusions clearly suggested that *ceteris paribus* such candidates face obstacles to election.

The evidence from the 2010 parliamentary election was sufficiently intriguing that we set about investigating whether the same or a similar pattern of incumbent party advantage extends to local voting. Of course, it does not follow that the two types of contest are necessarily equivalent – for example, the level of media coverage, campaign literature and other forms of publicity enjoyed by parliamentary candidates is much greater than that received by counterparts standing for local election. Voters' information about the strategic situation – the party holding the seat, the relative strength of challengers etc. is different for the two types of contest. Furthermore, while general election voting is a national event the local electoral cycle is more fragmented, geographically speaking. Nevertheless, this was a valuable opportunity to extend the analysis of incumbent party advantage contingent on BAME challengers using local election rather than parliamentary election aggregate data. Replication studies should form a significant proportion of work published in the political science literature. These exercises provide important ways of testing theories, verifying empirical and ultimately advancing the scientific process. Unfortunately, they do not appear to any great extent in the published political science literature.

The paper introduces the nature of replication in political science before describing the approach taken by Stegmaier and her colleagues. In the following three sections we report on the process of replication, the results of that process and finally an interpretation of our (non)findings.

Replication/reanalysis in political science

Introducing a special symposium published in PS-Political Science and Politics, Gary King remarked that unless and until social scientists adhered to a strict replication standard then, "if the empirical basis for an article or book cannot be reproduced, of what use to the discipline are the conclusions?" (King, 1995, p.445). A replication standard in the case of quantitative data analysis, for example, would require authors to provide a guide to how the empirical data were collected, coded, manipulated and finally analysed. Ideally, this guide would accompany the actual dataset that had been used to obtain the reported results. The current editor of the American Journal of Political Science (AJPS), Kenneth Meier, then applauded King's proposal believing it to be, "the single most significant contribution in turning political science into a rigorous discipline in my professional lifetime" (Meier, 1995, p.456). Indeed, a growing list of political science journals duly adopted some version of King's vision, requiring authors to make data available in some form or another to the wider academic community.

King's prescriptions did not meet with universal approval, however. Paul Herrnson (1995) maintained that King misunderstood the term 'replication' as it was generally used within the physical and life sciences – "replication repeats an empirical study in its entirety, including independent data collection" (Herrnson, 1995, p.452). Instead, the term *reanalysis* might be a more accurate description since this involves studying the phenomenon investigated by the initial investigators. Meier himself revisited this problem of what did or did not constitute replication/reanalysis when announcing that as an experiment the AJPS would for a two-year period introduce a replication section. Three types of study eligible for inclusion in this section were identified – replication only, an extension and a cross-validation. The first of these types is closest to what King was originally proposing while the third type met Herrnson's complaint and referred to papers concerned with reanalysis.

The problem of terminology is addressed directly by Tsang and Kwan (1999) who identify six different types of replication. In terms of focus, the critical variables are whether the replication uses the same data set, studies the same population, or studies a different population. In terms of method, the crucial distinction is whether the replication uses the same measurement and/or analysis or a different measurement and/or analysis. Their category of 'empirical generalization' applies to replication that uses the same process of measurement and analysis but applies it to a different population. This term, and the term reanalysis favoured by Herrnson, broadly describes the approach taken in this paper.

Notwithstanding Meier's desire to give substance to his support for replication studies there appear to be few published articles in political science journals that do just that (some notable exceptions are Kuechler 1986; Knack and Keefer 1997; Green et al. 1998; Ansolabehere et al. 1999; Herrick 2001; Altman and McDonald 2003; Smith and Gerber 2003; Neely 2007; Pennings 2011; Gronke and Miller 2012). The reality, it appears, is that journal editors largely solicit articles that contain original

research contributions rather than studies that self-consciously re-trace the path trodden by others in order to confirm/verify previous research findings. This reluctance extends beyond political science, embracing the social and human sciences generally. Add to this the increasing propensity for journals to favour 'positive' over 'negative' findings (Fanelli, 2012) we then have a situation where researchers have a much greater incentive to undertake original research that leans towards support for the stated hypotheses rather than undertake the equally valuable task of replication. In our specific case, to test whether a measurement and analysis undertaken of one population (parliamentary constituencies) results in the same or similar findings when applied to a different population (local wards).

Incumbency advantage: Parliamentary elections

Stegmaier, Lewis-Beck and Smets (hereinafter SBS) examine the performance of incumbents at the 2010 general election. In their terms, 'incumbent' refers to the <u>party</u> controlling the constituency, rather than the individual member of parliament. This definition makes sense since the boundary changes affected a large proportion of seats, with a large number of former MPs standing for different seats. The research question is what is the effect, if any, on the incumbent party's vote share when rival parties field BAME candidates? This type of analysis became more feasible in 2010 when with regard to the three main parties a record number of BAME candidates contested – 136 in 2010 compared to 113 in 2005 but only 66 and 39 in 2001 and 1997 respectively (Rallings and Thrasher 2012). The SBS analysis is restricted to the three main parties since it was only these parties that contested in most constituencies and which received the lion's share of the votes. Vote share, therefore, is defined as three-party vote share with votes for other parties excluded. Of course, with so many boundary changes the research uses the estimated vote figures for the 2005 election provided in the 2010 election dataset assembled by Pippa Norris which differ in some slight respects from the figures compiled for the UK media by Rallings and Thrasher (2007). In addition the team use two variables from the same dataset to describe the main demographic characteristics of each constituency – the proportion of 'wealthy achievers' and 'hard pressed'.   Regional codes and 2001 census information about the proportion of non-white population living within a constituency are also used in the modelling process. Candidates are coded according to whether or not they were an MP in the 2005-2010 parliament and their ethnic classification (white/non-white).

The dependent variable is the incumbent party's share of the three-party vote at the 2010 general election. The main finding is that the number of ethnic challengers affects the incumbent party's vote share. The size of the incumbent's benefit increases with the number of ethnic challengers. The size of the effect is approximately two percentage points for the incumbent party when one BAME challenger is present and a further two-point bonus with two such challengers.

Incumbency advantage: Local elections

We decided that since SBS had focussed exclusively on the 2010 general election we should select a comparable time period. Because of the more complex local electoral cycle our data run across

three years – 2010, 2011 and 2012. These elections have some areas that overlap (wards in metropolitan boroughs would be counted three times, for example) and the electoral contexts are rather different (the 2010 local elections were held on the same day as the general election, for example). Because of these factors we decided to treat the results of each year separately in our analysis.

There are aspects of the SBS approach that require modification before it can be migrated to the local election data. First, general election voting takes place in single-seat constituencies we remove all multi-member local wards from our data. The effect on case selection of using the single-member seat criterion is as follows:

- 2010: 2,966 wards with 4,249 seats is reduced to 2,298 single member wards
- 2011: 6105 wards, 9471 seats reduced to 3,582 seats
- 2012: 3,076 wards, 3636 seats reduced to 2,704 seats

Focussing only on single-member seats effectively means removing all local election data for the London boroughs, which use either two- or three-member wards for council elections. Naturally, because Scottish local councils are now elected by the Single Transferable Vote in multimember seats, these elections are also excluded from consideration.

While it is reasonably easy to obtain information about the ethnic origin for parliamentary candidates this is rather more difficult in the example of local election candidates. Accordingly, our classification of candidate ethnicity is determined using OriginsInfo. This computer software classifies candidates solely from the names that are used on the ballot paper – both forename and surnames. We have demonstrated elsewhere(Borisyuk et al. 2013) the close association between this method of classifying names and self-reported ethnic origin obtained from candidate survey data.

Third, contrary to the general election dataset, we could not replicate at the ward level certain of the demographic variables used by SBS – 'wealthy achievers' and 'hard pressed'. Instead, we calculated proxy variables using the 2011 census National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) categorisation. Wealthy achievers in our classification refer to categories 1 and 2 NS-SEC, professional occupations, higher and lower managerial occupations. The hard pressed category is constructed from categories 6, 7 and 8 NS-SEC, i.e. long-term unemployed, semi-routine and routine occupations.

Fourth, after restricting the cases to single-member wards we also had to exclude other cases either because one or other of the major parties did not field a candidate at both elections, or the seat was won by a party other than Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat. This situation is quite rare for

the parliamentary situation but is more common for local elections. We comment on the possible effect of applying these selection criteria in a later part of the paper.

The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The number of cases is similar for 2010 and 2011 (1,309 and 1,303 cases respectively) and is slightly smaller (1,187) for 2012. The SBS data examine 606 constituencies. Urban areas outside London are well represented with the metropolitan boroughs (including the cities of Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle and Leeds, for example) providing more than 500 cases in each year (Table 1). Shire districts that elect councillors by thirds are also evident as are the former shire districts now designated as unitary councils. Although the 2011 elections easily comprise the largest set in this three-year window, this is not reflected in the number of cases because many of the English shire district authorities that use whole council elections also employ multi- rather than single-member wards.

Table 1: Distribution of cases by year and by type of authority

	Metropolitan Boroughs	Shire districts (whole)	Shire districts (thirds)	Unitary councils (whole)	Unitary councils (thirds)	Total
2010	569	23	511	0	206	1309
2011	544	62	436	36	225	1303
2012	519	0	474	19	175	1187

Table 2 (corresponding to Table 1 in SBS) shows the distribution of BAME candidates by party and incumbency/challenger status. Similar to the pattern observed at the 2010 general election, most BAME candidates are challengers, the three main parties have comparable percentages of ethnic candidates, while the Labour party has the highest number of incumbent BAME candidates.

Table 2: Pattern of BAME candidates by year and by party

		Con	*Lab*	*LD*	*Total*
2010	BAME from incumbent party	13	49	17	79
	BAME challengers	87	63	67	217
	Total number BAME	100	112	84	296
	BAME (%)	7.6	8.6	6.4	7.5
2011	BAME from incumbent party	21	38	21	80
	BAME challengers	77	58	60	195
	Total BAME	98	96	81	275
	BAME (%)	7.5	7.4	6.2	7.0
2012	BAME from incumbent party	15	31	25	71
	BAME challengers	61	67	47	175
	Total BAME	76	98	72	246
	BAME (%)	6.4	8.3	6.1	6.9

Table 3: Incumbent party vote share OLS models, local elections, 2010-2012

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
2010	(Constant)	7.45***	7.37***	7.36***	7.39***	7.32***	7.39***
	Vote share at previous election	0.67***	0.67***	0.67***	0.67***	0.68***	0.67***
	LAB seat	-3.33**	-3.25**	-3.26**	-3.17**	-3.19**	-3.17**
	Incumbent	3.16***	3.15***	3.15***	3.14***	3.15***	3.13***
	CON seat * % Managers/Professionals	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***
	LAB seat * % Semi-routine & Routine Occupations & Unemployed	0.24***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***
	NORTH	0.29	0.30	0.30	0.29	0.30	0.29
	BAME, incumbent party		-0.41	-0.27	-1.04		-0.83
	number of BAME from two rival parties		**0.70**	**0.72**	**0.62**	**0.60**	**0.70**
	BAME incumbent * BAME from rivals (dummy)			-0.23			-1.23
	BAME incumbent * % non-white in ward				0.02		0.03
	N	1,309	1,309	1,309	1,309	1,309	1,309
	SSE	6.46	6.46	6.47	6.46	6.46	6.47
	R2 adjusted	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
2011	(Constant)	-1.97	-1.90	-1.96	-1.84	-2.00	-1.89
	Vote share at previous election	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***
	LAB seat	15.18***	15.02***	14.97***	15.25***	15.21***	15.38***
	Incumbent	3.08***	3.05***	3.09***	3.00***	3.08***	3.02***
	CON seat * % Managers/Professionals	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***
	LAB seat * % Semi-routine & Routine Occupations & Unemployed	0.30***	0.30***	0.30***	0.29***	0.30***	0.29***
	NORTH	-2.76***	-2.75***	-2.72***	-2.75***	-2.76***	-2.71***
	BAME, incumbent party		-1.20	-0.22	-2.83*		-2.46
	number of BAME from two rival parties		**0.38**	**0.66**	**0.18**	**0.12**	**0.61**
	BAME incumbent * BAME from rivals (dummy)			-2.03			-4.64**
	BAME incumbent * % non-white in ward				0.04		0.08**
	N	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303
	SSE	7.73	7.73	7.73	7.73	7.73	7.72
	R2 adjusted	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76

2012		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	(Constant)	-7.66***	-7.52***	-7.60***	-7.50***	-7.63***	-7.56***
	Vote share at previous election	0.85***	0.85***	0.85***	0.85***	0.85***	0.85***
	LAB seat	28.04***	27.89***	27.85***	27.90***	28.03***	27.90***
	Incumbent	5.63***	5.59***	5.60***	5.58***	5.63***	5.58***
	CON seat * % Managers/Professionals	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***
	LAB seat * % Semi-routine & Routine Occupations & Unemployed	0.16***	0.17***	0.17***	0.17***	0.16***	0.17***
	NORTH	-3.61***	-3.61***	-3.62***	-3.61***	-3.62***	-3.62***
	WALES	6.28***	6.23***	6.24***	6.22***	6.26***	6.23***
	BAME, incumbent party		-1.29	-0.56	-1.55		-1.40
	number of BAME from two rival parties		**0.09**	**0.30**	**0.07**	**-0.13**	**0.30**
	BAME incumbent * BAME from rivals (dummy)			-1.66			-2.48
	BAME incumbent * % non-white in ward				0.01		0.03
	N	1,187	1,187	1,187	1,187	1,187	1,187
	SSE	9.40	9.40	9.40	9.41	9.40	9.41
	R2 adjusted	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75

*** - $P < 0.01$; ** - $P < 0.05$; * - $P < 0.1$.

The dependent variable is the incumbent party's share of the three-party vote.

Independent variables:

Vote share at previous election - incumbent party's share of the three party vote at previous election;

LAB seat - dummy variable, equals 1 if Labour party won seat at previous election, equals 0 otherwise;

Incumbent – dummy variable, equals 1 if a councillor stands for re-election;

Interaction *CON seat * % Managers/Professionals* – equals percentage of ward population in classes 1 and 2 of the NS-SeC classification if Tory won seat at previous election, equals 0 otherwise;

Interaction *LAB seat * % Semi-routine & Routine Occupations & Unemployed* - equals percentage of ward population in classes 6, 7 and 8 of the NS-SeC classification if Labour party won seat at previous election, equals 0 otherwise;

Wales and *North* - dummy variables, equal 1 for wards from Wales/ North respectively, equal 0 otherwise (North includes the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and The Humber regions);

BAME, incumbent party – dummy variable, equals 1 if incumbent party fields a non-white candidate, equals 0 otherwise;

number of BAME from two rival parties – number of BAME challengers from two rival parties standing in a ward, takes values 0, 1, and 2;

Interaction *BAME incumbent * BAME from rivals (dummy)* - equals 1 if the incumbent party fields a BAME candidate and there is at least one BAME from two rival parties, equals 0 otherwise;

Interaction *BAME incumbent * % non-white in ward* – equals percentage of ward non-white population according to the 2011 census if the incumbent party fields a BAME candidate, equals 0 otherwise.

Findings

Following SBS, we consider a series of linear regression models (Table 3). Single member local election wards are the units of analysis and the dependent variable is the incumbent party's vote share measured as a percentage of three-party (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat) vote. For reasons stated earlier the 2010, 2011 and 2012 elections are analysed separately.

Models 1-5 replicate the approach taken by SBS.   In the original research, Models 1-4 were developed in order to test separate hypotheses about the possible impact of ethnic challengers on incumbent party's vote share. Model 1 is the basic model and excludes any information about candidates' ethnicity while Models 2-5 introduce different combinations of candidate ethnicity, either ethnic candidates belonging to the incumbent party or amongst challengers. Model 3 includes an interaction effect between the ethnic identity of the incumbent party's candidate and ethnic rivals. Model 4 instead uses an interaction term describing how influence of the ethnic identity of the incumbent party's candidate on the outcome can be modified by the ethnic population living within a ward.   Model 5 was constructed using only variables that were significant predictors for the dependent variable.

Contrary to the pattern for parliamentary elections the analysis of the local election data do not reveal any significant associations between incumbent party vote share and ethnicity of candidates. Accordingly, we developed a final model, Model 6, that incorporated all of the variables relating to ethnicity. In both 2010 and 2012 none of the ethnic variables are significant for any of the models. For 2011 the only one that reaches significance is in Model 4 when it appears that when the incumbent party fields a non-white candidate the effect is to reduce its expected vote share by almost three percentage points. In Model 6, however, this variable becomes insignificant but instead two interaction terms reach significance. The first interaction suggests that when an ethnic candidate from the incumbent party is joined on the ballot by at least one ethnic challenger the expected vote share for the incumbent party is almost five percentage points lower.   The second interaction suggests that the larger the fraction of non-white population resident within a ward the higher the increase in vote share for ethnic incumbents.

Interpretation

Thus, local election data do not reveal an association between incumbent party performance and the presence of BAME challengers in a ward. Clearly, we should try to understand why we obtain non-significant findings for the local elections data despite replicating, as far as we are able, the SBS approach.

The first point to consider is the regression modelling itself. Specifically, are there characteristics in the local election data that are problematic for regression analysis.

Figure 1 (corresponding to Figure 1 in SBS) describes the incumbent party vote share data for the period 2010-2012. As with the parliamentary data it appears that the incumbent party's vote shares are normally distributed across all three election years.

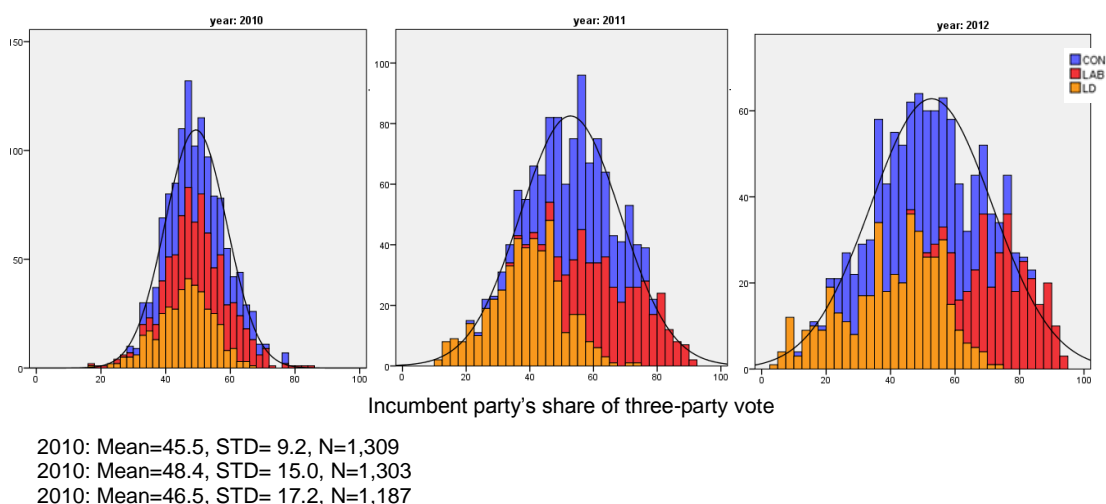**Figure 1: Distribution of incumbent party's share of three-party vote**

2010: Mean=45.5, STD= 9.2, N=1,309
2010: Mean=48.4, STD= 15.0, N=1,303
2010: Mean=46.5, STD= 17.2, N=1,187

Figure 2 (corresponding with Figure 2 in SBS) describes the distribution of vote share for ethnic candidates. Again, as with the original paper there is in the local data no obvious departure from what are normal distributions. Although our method of identifying candidates requires computer software rather than specific information about each candidate we are sufficiently confident of its operation that we can rule out any serious errors in describing the independent variables that relate to this. However, we should note at this point that there are some differences in the allocation of ethnic categories between ourselves and SBS. For example, Bambos Charalambous, a Labour candidate of Greek Cypriot origin who stood in Enfield Southgate is coded as BAME by SBS but as 'white' by us after reducing the OriginsInfo classifications to a simple binary white/BAME when he appears in our local elections database.

Similarly, Figure 3 (corresponding to Figure 3 in SBS) contains plots of incumbent party vote share at the recent election against the shares won at previous election, e.g. 2010 is compared with 2006 etc. Once again, as with the parliamentary analysis the data reveal broadly linear relationships, although we should note that in both 2011 and 2012 the patterns for the three parties are different to one another.

Figure 2: Distribution of three-party vote shares for BAME candidates from the incumbent party

Incumbent party's share of three-party vote
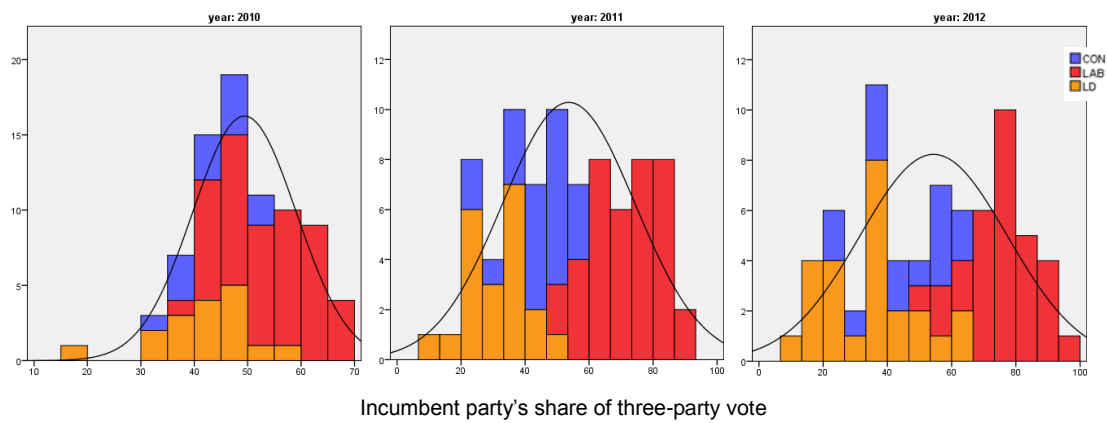
2010: Mean=45.5, STD= 9.6, N=79
2010: Mean=48.9, STD= 20.4, N=80
2010: Mean=46.4, STD= 20.0, N=71

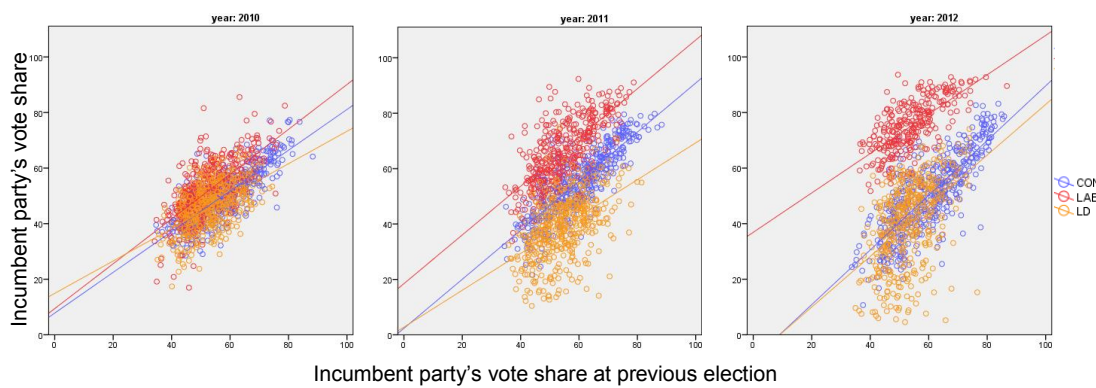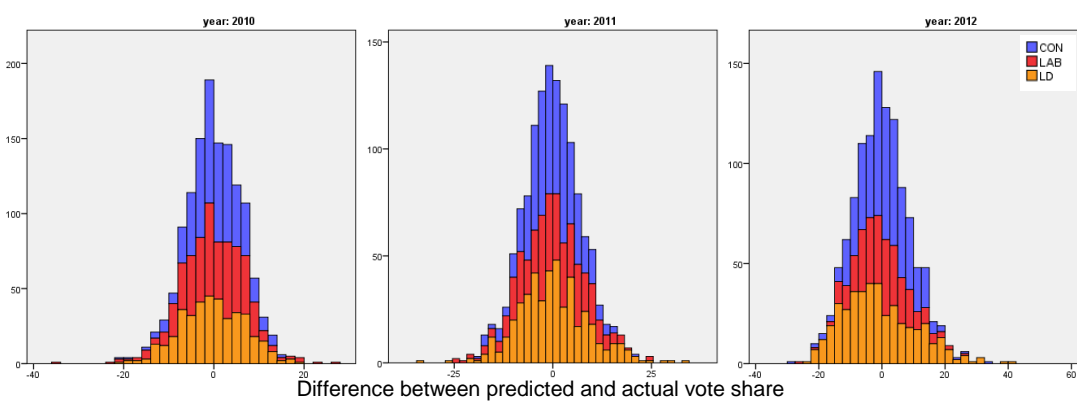**Figure 3: Relationship between incumbent party's vote share and its vote share at previous election**

Incumbent party's vote share at previous election

Figure 4: Distribution of the difference between predicted and actual three-party vote shares

Difference between predicted and actual vote share

2010: Mean=0.0, STD= 6.4, N=1,309
2010: Mean=0.0, STD= 7.7, N=1,303
2010: Mean=0.0, STD= 9.4, N=1,187

Finally, Figure 4 (see Figure 6 in SBS) shows an approximately normal distribution for differences between predicted and actual vote shares for incumbent parties. The cumulative evidence suggests that the regression models employed here are good replications of the SBS models for the 2010 parliamentary election. If the method appears robust, therefore, perhaps the differences lie with the data itself.

An alternative explanation for the failure to encounter the same phenomena might start by asking about differences in the types of places where we might encounter ethnic incumbents and challengers. Table 4 shows that for the local elections it is in Labour-dominated areas where ethnic candidates are most frequent. This spatial distribution was not so pronounced for the 2010 general election. In the 2010 local elections, Labour wards have a BAME incumbent standing in 11.2% of cases and 20.0% of Labour wards see at least one BAME challenger from two rival parties. That results in an average 1/3 BAME per Labour ward. The corresponding figures for Conservative and Lib Dems are much lower: 2.7%, 9.0% and 1/8 for Conservative; 4.3%, 14.3% and 1/5 for Liberal Democrats. However, at the 2010 general election Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats have similar distributions; the average number of BAME candidates per constituency ranges from 2/9 for Labour to 1/9 for Liberal Democrats.

These differences in the incidence of BAME candidates standing in areas of different party strengths also suggests that our inability to provide a full geographic coverage of the local electoral data may be contributing towards our (lack of) findings. As noted earlier, we are forced to exclude London from this analysis. Conversely, London provides 24 of the 88 constituencies featuring ethnic incumbents/challengers included in the SBS modelling. Furthermore, it is four London constituencies that are among those seven seats that feature two BAME challengers.

In order to test these concerns about geography we reduced the original SBS dataset so that it included only those constituencies located within the areas covered by our local election data. This halves the overall number of cases from the original 606 to a new figure of 296. Naturally, it also reduces the number of ethnic incumbents and challengers. The results for Model 4 (which contains the largest number of predictors) show the variable 'North' becomes positive and significant, while the disadvantage of ethnic candidates standing for the incumbent party is also significant and suggests that such candidates should expect a 2.6 percentage point lower share of vote than white candidates. However, for this reduced dataset the variable for ethnic challengers is not significant. It is possible, therefore, that the geographical aspect is very important in terms of whether the effect of ethnic challengers is or is not present. Another possibility is that the reduction in cases is weakening the effect found in the original modelling. One method for testing this would be to select randomly approximately half the parliamentary constituencies in order to consider whether geography or sample size is more important.

Another point is that the much smaller local electoral wards tend to be rather more demographically homogeneous when compared to parliamentary constituencies. In wards with relatively high non-white populations voters may be reacting quite differently to the presence of ethnic challengers, a feature that may be present in parliamentary constituencies but is being obscured by the aggregate picture.

Table 4: Distribution of BAME candidates at parliamentary and local elections

		incumbent party			
		CON	LAB	LD	Total
2010 general election	Total constituencies	205	340	61	606
	BAME from incumbent party	8	20	0	28
	% units with BAME incumbent	*3.9*	*5.9*	*0.0*	*4.6*
	units with 1 BAME from two main rivals	28	46	7	81
	units with 2 BAME from two main rivals	2	5	0	7
	BAME challengers (total)	32	56	7	95
	% units with BAME rivals	*14.6*	*15.0*	*11.5*	*14.5*
	Total BAME	40	76	7	123
	Average BAME per unit	*1/5*	*2/9*	*1/9*	*1/5*
2010 local elections	Total wards	478	439	392	1309
	BAME from incumbent party	13	49	17	79
	% units with BAME incumbent	*2.7*	*11.2*	*4.3*	*6.0*
	units with 1 BAME from two main rivals	41	68	48	157
	units with 2 BAME from two main rivals	2	20	8	30
	% units with BAME rivals	*9.0*	*20.0*	*14.3*	*14.3*
	Total BAME	58	157	81	296
	Average BAME per unit	*1/8*	*1/3*	*1/5*	*2/9*
2011 local elections	Total wards	484	367	452	1303
	BAME from incumbent party	21	38	21	80
	% units with BAME incumbent	*4.3*	*10.4*	*4.6*	*6.1*
	units with 1 BAME from two main rivals	32	60	43	135
	units with 2 BAME from two main rivals	5	15	10	30
	% units with BAME rivals	*7.6*	*20.4*	*11.7*	*12.7*
	Total BAME	63	128	84	275
	Average BAME per unit	*1/8*	*1/3*	*1/5*	*1/5*
2012 local elections	Total wards	488	281	418	1187
	BAME from incumbent party	15	31	25	71
	% units with BAME incumbent	*3.1*	*11.0*	*6.0*	*6.0*
	units with 1 BAME from two main rivals	42	37	44	123
	units with 2 BAME from two main rivals	5	10	11	26
	% units with BAME rivals	*9.6*	*16.7*	*13.2*	*12.6*
	Total BAME	67	88	91	246
	Average BAME per unit	*1/7*	*1/3*	*2/9*	*1/5*

Another interpretation of our findings focuses on differences in the nature of party competition at local and general elections. Most parliamentary constituencies in 2010 register high levels of support for the three main parties with smaller parties receiving relatively little support and, moreover, fielding few candidates of non-white ethnic origin. By contrast, the competition for votes at the local government level often encourages more parties to stand, those parties receive a higher relative share of votes than do similar parties contesting the general election, and are more successful at winning and even retaining seats. Those same parties are selecting non-white candidates – (in 2010 this was 288 BAME candidates from 'other' parties that stood for election. In the same wards that are used for our analysis, i.e. single-member wards., there are 148 BAME candidates from smaller parties that stood during the period (62 BAME in 2010, 42 in 2011 and 44 in 2012)).

Party competition may also be a consideration in the types of constituency/wards where ethnic challengers emerge. At the 2010 general election, in the dataset used by SBS, 71% of constituencies with at least one ethnic challenger were within the 'very safe/ultra safe seats' categories. By contrast, for the local elections the corresponding figures are between 52% and 54%.

Finally, following Occam's razor, we should simply assume that because some electors behave in quite different ways when voting in general and local elections that those differences extend to the reaction towards incumbent parties and their challengers. When these elections are held simultaneously we know that as many as one in six of main party voters divide their votes across different parties (Rallings and Thrasher 2001). This suggests that separate criteria for selecting parties/candidates, a 'horses for courses' mentality, operate in these voters' minds. Furthermore, determining which candidate sits in parliament attracts a higher percentage of the electorate to the polls, witnesses a bigger campaign with an improved flow of information about candidates, including their personal background and ethnic origin quite possibly. However, it should be noted that our data for the 2010 local elections reflect the behaviour of the same voters participating in the general election and yet we cannot detect any relationship between incumbent party vote and ethnic challengers.

Conclusions

The initial idea of replicating the study of the 2010 general election undertaken by Mary Stegmaier, Michael Lewis-Beck and Kaat Smets was prompted by the fact that independent research had measured an effect (candidate ethnic origin * vote) that in terms of direction and magnitude were rather similar and pointed to the conclusion that non-white candidates contesting elections in the UK were adversely affected by the actions of some voters. In the case of Stegmaier et al. the effect was an advantage of about two percentage points for the incumbent party when it was challenged by a candidate with a non-white ethnic origin. In our analysis we measured the size of the penalty experienced by non-white candidates versus white candidates that followed from name

discrimination. Therefore, it seemed worthwhile to try and replicate the parliamentary analysis using local election data as a way of confirming tangentially that some voters react in a negative manner to non-white candidates listed on the ballot paper.

However, we have been unable to replicate the findings from the parliamentary analysis. In the final part of our paper we searched for possible explanations for the absence of a parallel effect in local elections. All or some part of these explanations may be true. There is, of course, a further possibility. This is that the 2010 general election provides a special case and that this effect is temporary or conditional upon the exact circumstances that operated in those constituencies where ethnic challengers stood. It will be interesting to discover at the 2015 general election whether an incumbent advantage is identified for those seats featuring BAME challengers.

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