

# **Intersectionality and Press Coverage of Political Campaigns**

## **Representations of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Female Candidates at the UK**

### **2010 General Election**

#### **Introduction and Political Context**

Prior to 2010, only three Black women had been elected to the British House of Commons; all from the Labour Party. The 2010 general election saw a breakthrough, as seven new Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women joined their ranks, including two Conservatives as well as the first Asian and Muslim women elected to parliament. Both the new Conservative MPs, Helen Grant and Priti Patel, had been members of David Cameron's 'A-List' or 'Priority List'. Despite causing considerable tensions within the party, candidate diversification was a key part of the Conservatives' 2010 election strategy (Hill 2013). However press responses were mixed at best. In accordance with the hopes of political parties, BAME female candidates were often celebrated as signs of modernisation and political progress. Yet references to 'Cameron's Cuties' and 'Dave's Dolls' also formed new iterations of the 1997 moniker, 'Blair's Babes', arguably undermining the perceived legitimacy of the new intake. BAME Labour women were meanwhile subject to particularly intense scrutiny from right-leaning newspapers, frequently framed as exemplary of the party's worst 'left wing' excesses.

A substantial body of international findings shows that gendered patterns of press scrutiny are disadvantageous to women in politics (for a review, see Campus 2013). The UK is no exception: female MPs have long expressed concern regarding gendered media bias against them (Childs 2004; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996), and national newspaper coverage of the 2010 election persisted in treating women unfavourably (Campbell and Childs 2010; Harmer and Wring 2013; Mavin et al. 2010; Ross et al. 2013). Since then, the All Party

Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament has put forward recommendations for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and Independent Press Standards Organisation to review sexism in coverage of parliamentarians.<sup>i</sup> Yet while the APPG and studies cited above focused gendered aspects of election coverage, no British scholarship and very few scholars internationally have investigated the intersectional effects of ‘race’<sup>ii</sup> and gender on the mediation of political campaigns.

The metaphor of intersection, as formulated by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Hill Collins (1990), and King (1988) among others, is used to describe the ways in which identity categories such as race and gender are both mutually constituted and mutually constitutive. This is evidenced by the emergent intersectional turn in gender and politics scholarship, which has begun to document the multiplicity of ways in which patterns of political recruitment, descriptive representation and leadership vary *among* women as well as between women and men (inter alia, Bratton et al. 2006; Brown 2014; Celis et al. 2014; Darcy et al. 1993; Durose et al. 2012; Evans 2015; Nugent and Krook 2015; Philpot and Walton 2007; Showunmi et al. 2015; Smooth 2008).

This article employs an intersectional framework to analyse the combined effects of race and gender on the quantity, quality and content of coverage received by political candidates of varying identities. Taking the UK 2010 general election as a case study, I find that ‘racial’ or ‘gendered’ patterns previously identified in coverage of predominantly white women and minority men do not provide a fully accurate description of press treatment of BAME female candidates. Indeed by subsuming minority women within the categories of ‘minorities’ or ‘women’, single axis studies risk obscuring the experiences of the most marginalized and underrepresented within these groups.

This has implications for considerations of the effects of candidate identity on press coverage more widely. Historically, the absence of intersectional analyses has partially resulted from a small-*n* problem. However, recent elections have resulted in notable improvements in the descriptive representation of minority ethnic women across many national legislatures.<sup>iii</sup> Although BAME women remain underrepresented in the UK and elsewhere (Evans, 2015; Hughes 2013b)<sup>iv</sup> - comprising 3.2 percent of Commons Members despite making up 6.6 percent of the population (2011 Census) - they went on to more than double their numbers the 2015 election (see Table 1, below). Furthermore, rising numbers of British BAME female parliamentary candidates and their deployment to publicly embody the modernisation of political parties appears to be reflective of wider cross-national trends. In the US for example, the first Black female Republican was elected in 2014 (Mia Love, Utah 4<sup>th</sup> District) and garnered international media attention following her invitation to address the Republican National Convention in 2012. Thus, as political parties on the left and right seek both to ‘diversify’ the race and gender of their candidates, and to be seen to do so, it is imperative that scholars address the simultaneous and combined effects of these multiple axes of identity on news media responses.

[Table 1 about here.]

### **Race, gender and British election coverage**

This article investigates effects of British parliamentary candidates’ race and gender four key aspects of the campaign coverage they receive: its quantity, overall tone, and the degree to which it highlights female candidates’ gender and BAME candidates’ race. While existing intersectional analyses provide important methodological precedents, they are extremely scarce

(Gershon 2012; Tolley 2015b). Additionally, the relevant single axis literature is somewhat asymmetric. International scholarship is far more extensive regarding the effects of gender than race. The latter is rarely considered outside the US, and there has been no prior scholarship on the effects of candidate race on British election coverage.<sup>v</sup>

### **Quantity of coverage**

Findings from the UK and elsewhere indicate a consistent gender gap in politicians' visibility both during and between elections (Adcock 2010; Banwart et al. 2003; Braden 1996; Campbell and Childs 2010; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Heldman et al. 2005; Kahn 1994; Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; O'Neill et al. 2015; Ross 2002). Ross et al. (2013) found that only 29 percent of national newspaper articles covering the British 2010 general election mentioned one or more female. However, the authors also note women comprised just 21 percent of all candidates, and therefore their relative invisibility in campaign news is at least partly attributable to their absence in the political arena more widely. This highlights the necessity of accounting for the effects of contextual factors on campaign coverage if we are to assert that gendered and/or racial differences do indeed result from differential treatment by the press.

I address this by building on the work of a groundbreaking intersectional study of local newspaper coverage of US House representatives running for re-election in 2006. Gershon (2012) has found that when the combined effects of race and gender are considered, and campaign, media and candidate factors are controlled for, significant cleavages emerge among minority ethnic and white women. While white women received similar levels of coverage to white males (contrary to the findings of many single axis studies), minority ethnic women appeared less frequently than candidates from all other groups. These results also challenge the findings of US race and politics scholarship which indicate that (predominantly male) African

American candidates tend to receive equal or greater levels of local coverage than their white counterparts (Barber and Gandy 1990; Graber 1984; Sylvie 1995; Terkildsen and Damore 1999; Zilber and Niven 2000).

I anticipate that intersectional differences will also be observed in UK national coverage, but that BAME women will receive *more* coverage than similar candidates from all other intersectional groups. This is because of the differences in the dynamics of garnering US local and UK national coverage. US local coverage represents a contest between (usually two) candidates; but in national coverage the entire pool of candidates compete for attention. Although party leaders obviously dominate this coverage, when we contrast BAME women with *comparable* counterparts, the double novelty and therefore newsworthiness of their intersectional identities is likely to result in a visibility advantage in this context.

**H1: BAME women will receive more coverage than comparable candidates from all other intersectional groups.**

### **Tone of coverage**

Several studies have noted the disproportionately negative tone of media representations of the 1997 intake of New Labour women MPs (Childs 2004; Ward 2000). More recently, Ross et al. (2013:15) note examples of coverage in the run up to the 2010 UK general election in which, even when female candidates were praised for their political aptitude, they were simultaneously undermined by commentary on their appearance. Furthermore, it has been suggested that opponents occasionally make tactical use of gendered media bias as a tool against women (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996). Similarly, in the US, African American candidates are dogged by more negative coverage than their white counterparts (Jeffries 2002; McIlwain and Caliendo 2009).

Theorising the reasons for such differences, Puwar (2004:72-73) argues that women and minorities in the public sphere are ‘hypervisible’ and subject to ‘super surveillance’ due to a ‘reluctance to bestow authority on specific types of racialised and gendered bodies’. Similarly, Niven (2004:642) attributes the disproportionately negative coverage afforded to white female and African American male members of Congress to a distribution effect, in which their conspicuousness means they are evaluated more harshly than white males. Considering the intersectional effects of these dynamics, Gershon’s (2010) study of coverage House Representatives finds that minority women receive more negative coverage not just compared to white men, but also minority ethnic men and white women.

I expect to observe a similar process in which BAME women are subject to particularly intense scrutiny, othered as a result of both their racial and gendered identity, and therefore covered less positively compared to candidates from all other intersectional groups.

**H2: Coverage of BAME women will be less likely to be positive than that of comparable candidates from other groups.**

### **Highlighting candidate identity**

The presence of news frames which highlight female politicians’ gender has been well documented internationally (inter alia, Campbell and Childs 2010; Campus 2013; Falk 2012; Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Heldman et al. 2005; Ross et al. 2013; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996). However, there is some debate around the effects of such frames. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) suggest that the foregrounding of women’s gender is associated with increased frequency of coverage, while Falk (2008:37) argues that despite this association, the frame’s emphasis on the “notion of women as out of place and unnatural in the

political sphere”. This is exemplified by responses to the 1997 intake of female New Labour MPs: the press “demanded within months that they justify Tony Blair’s boast that they would ‘transform the culture of politics’” (Ward 2000:25). At the 2010 general election, the explicit gender frame continued highlight women’s difference, ensuring “that the role of politician continues to be codified as male” (Ross et al. 2013:7). Similarly, in the US, explicit references to the race of minority ethnic candidates pervade their coverage (Caliendo and McIlwain 2006; e.g., Clay 1992; Denis Wu and Lee 2005; Larson 2006; Niven and Zilber 1996; Reeves 1997). Meanwhile, the racial-gendered identities of white men running for office are unquestioned.

We know very little of the effects of media framing and/or candidate identity on electoral outcomes in the UK, but there is evidence to that BAME candidates, Muslims in particular, suffer a racial penalty in vote capture, (Curtice et al. 2010; Fisher et al. 2011), and polling suggests that a third of the British electorate remain uncomfortable with the idea of a minority ethnic prime minister.<sup>vi</sup> Therefore, while frames lauding the increasing diversity of the Commons may ostensibly be positive in tone, their effects may be equivocal for BAME and/or female candidates who seek visibility, but may also be incentivised to downplay their identity within their prospective constituencies. Furthermore, Tolley (2015:97) has noted that in Canadian print news coverage of elected officials, simultaneously racialized and gendered news frames depicting visible minority female representatives rely on “mythologies about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ minorities[...], as well as an attendant inclination to focus on mistakes while minimising successes.” Tolley argues that this coverage may have a deeper impact on minority women than other candidates because “it exists in combination with, and may even confirm, stereotypes about both their race and their gender” (2015:97).

Single axis quantitative studies usually posit white males as the baseline to which other groups are compared. To explore intersectional patterns of novelty frames, I compare the likelihood that articles mention gender in coverage of BAME and white female candidates, and the likelihood that articles mention race among female and male BAME candidates. I expect to observe a multiplicative process in which BAME women's race and gender are perceived as exceptionally salient and are therefore most likely to be highlighted in coverage of their campaigns. For example, many of the BAME women elected in 2010 attracted attention due to their status as *intersectional* firsts- not only women, but also Muslim, Asian and/or Conservative. Therefore my final hypotheses state:

**H3: Coverage of BAME women will be more likely to highlight candidate gender than that of comparable white women.**

**H4: Coverage of BAME women will be more likely to highlight candidate race than that of comparable BAME men.**

## Methods and Data

### Candidate and Text Sampling

Building on Gershon's (2012) design, candidates are sampled from four groups: BAME women and men, and white women and men. Because of variation in candidate and campaign characteristics across intersectional groups, a detailed matching strategy is employed. By matching similar candidates and controlling for contextual factors, I aim to infer that the differences in coverage which are observed are the result of intersectional identity rather than characteristics such as partisanship or incumbency.

The sample includes both challengers and incumbents, but challengers with low chances of success are excluded from the frame due to the likelihood that they will receive very little or

no national newspaper coverage. Viable candidates are defined as a) incumbents, b) challengers who were successfully elected, and c) candidates who placed second in ‘ultra marginal’ or ‘very marginal’ seats. <sup>vii</sup> Party leaders, frontbenchers and Select Committee chairs are also excluded given that they receive exceptionally high levels of coverage, and there were few women and/or minorities among their ranks in 2010.

Of the remaining 696 viable Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour candidates, 475 were white men, 178 were white women, 28 were BAME men and just 15 were BAME women. In addition to substantial differences in the numbers of candidates from each group, they also varied in terms of several politically relevant characteristics likely to affect the quantity, quality and content of campaign coverage they would receive. Firstly, due to the historical lack of BAME female MPs, BAME women were far less likely to be incumbents: just 13 percent of viable BAME women compared to 35 percent of BAME men, 39 percent of white women and 56 percent of white men. Secondly, BAME women were more likely to represent Labour: 80 percent of BAME women compared to 46 percent of BAME men, 63 percent of white women and just 40 percent of white men. Viable BAME women also tended to be selected in either ultra safe or ultra marginal constituencies, and were more likely to stand in London or the North West than candidates from other groups.

[Table 2 about here.]

To control for these differences, each of the population of 15 BAME women was paired with two white men, two white women and one BAME man (the overall number of BAME men was too low to provide multiple matches). Therefore coverage of a total of 90 candidates was analysed. BAME male and white female and male individuals were exactly matched on party, incumbency and race competitiveness in 52 of 75 cases, and competitiveness was either relaxed

to within one degree or party was not matched for those remaining. The majority of cases were also matched on region, and seniority (year elected) was closely matched among incumbents.

Each of the candidates' campaign coverage was captured from the Nexis database, using the terms 'first name' AND 'last name', searching articles from all twenty-one national newspapers (including daily and weekend editions), therefore spanning the broadest possible range of editorial lines. Newspapers were selected due to their continued ability to reach immense audiences in digital form despite the long term decline print circulation, as well as their more opinionated and partisan election coverage compared to highly regulated television news broadcasts. In addition, newspapers devote attention to a comparatively broad range of candidates, while time constraints confine television news closely to the activities of party leaders (Scammell and Semetko 2008:83). The timeline for the sample is between the dissolution of parliament and official start of the campaign on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and one week following the date of election, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010. This allows for consideration of the full campaign as well as post-election responses to intersectional firsts and coverage of the coalition negotiations that followed the 2010 result. A total of 488 articles was analysed and includes news reports, and opinion columns. Published letters to the editor were also included given that, although they may not be representative of the publication's editorial line, the analysis focuses on the content of outputs rather than editorial intent.

### **Coding Scheme and Explanatory Models**

A quantitative content analysis was performed to capture the quantity, tone and content of coverage of each of the sampled candidates. These coverage outcomes are then the dependent variables in a series of explanatory models estimating the intersectional effects of candidate identity, controlling for additional factors. For all models, BAME women are the baseline

category, placing them at the centre of the analysis and allowing for comparisons with all other intersectional groups.

The *quantity* of coverage is measured as the as the number of times a candidate's name is mentioned within the time-frame. The number of articles mentioning each candidate is an alternative measure, but name mentions capture a greater degree of variation because articles may include only fleeting mention or discuss a candidate in detail. The dependent variable is a count, and therefore a negative binominal regression is used. The unit of analysis is the candidate.

The overall *tone* of each article is measured on a three-point negative to positive scale. For example, a profile of Rushanara Ali describing her as “politically rated, beautiful, [and] eloquent”<sup>viii</sup> is coded as ‘positive’, while an a article entitled “MPs are in no position to sneer at anyone, Diane”,<sup>ix</sup> describing Diane Abbott as “sneering, sighing, rolling her eyes, interrupting, and exhibiting condescending boorishness” is coded as negative.<sup>x</sup> Where an article is read as neutral, or where positive and negative references within it are read as equal, the article is coded as ‘neutral/balanced’. As the variable for tone is measured on an ordinal scale, the model is estimated using an ordered probit regression. In this and subsequent models, the article is the unit of analysis and standard errors are clustered by candidate, given correlation in aspects of coverage candidates receive at the individual level.

References which *explicitly highlight candidate gender or race* are coded as two binary variables. Indicators include mentions of the gender, ethnicity, skin colour, parentage or heritage of the candidate, their supporters or constituents. I do not attempt to capture the capture latent references such as mentions of spouses, or references maleness or whiteness. Therefore,

comparisons are made between coverage of BAME and white women, and between BAME women and men. The models are estimated using probit regressions.

## **Controls**

Control variables relate to the candidate and campaign factors, drawing on Gershon's (2012) design. While variation in candidate attributes and therefore sample bias are addressed by the matching strategy, the following independent variables address variation within as well as between groups.

Challengers tend to receive less coverage than incumbents (Schaffner 2006), and research into the visibility of MEP's suggests that longstanding incumbents receive more coverage than less established peers (Gattermann and Vasilopoulou 2015). Therefore *seniority* is measured as the number of previous terms served: 0 for challengers, +1 for each previous term.

Given the continued partisan nature of the British press (Brandenburg 2006), *party affiliation* is also likely to affect the quality, quantity and content of coverage. In addition, the foregrounding of race and gender may be more likely for non-Labour BAME women due to their scarcity. Conservatives are the baseline category to which Liberal Democrat and Labour candidates are compared.

US findings indicate that the greater the competitiveness of a campaign, the greater the expected frequency of coverage, and the more negative the expected tone of coverage (Kahn and Kenney 1999; Vinson 2003, both cited in Gershon, 2012). *Marginal seats* are measured as a binary variable, with ultra safe, very safe and fairly safe constituencies as the baseline category to which fairly marginal and ultra marginal seats are compared.

## Results

### Quantity of coverage

The first hypothesis states that BAME women will receive more coverage than all other groups. With BAME women as the baseline category, only the coefficient for white women is significant. Therefore, although the results do not fully support the hypothesis, they do point to an important intersectional difference among women. Coefficients are reported in addition to marginal change in the dependent variable given a fixed change in the independent variable from its minimum to its maximum value, holding all other variables constant at their means. This provides a comparison of the average difference in the number of name mentions for each group. The marginal effects indicate that white female candidates received only four name mentions on average, less than half the coverage BAME women received, whose names were mentioned 9 times on average, holding all other variables constant. Thus the double novelty of race and gender in the context of the 2010 general election appears to have resulted in something of a visibility advantage for BAME women over comparable white female counterparts.

[Table 3 about here.]

It is important however, not to understate the substantial variation observed *within* groups. For example, four unsuccessful BAME female challengers received no coverage at all, as well as Lisa Nandy who won Wigan and became one of the first female MPs of mixed Asian heritage. At the other end of the spectrum, Diane Abbott received the most coverage among BAME women with 38 name mentions. Abbott's position as an outlier is to be expected given her incumbent position as the first Black woman elected to the Commons, as well as her media work.<sup>xi</sup> However, two somewhat less predictable factors also contributed to her visibility.

Firstly, a twitter scandal in which Labour hopeful Stuart MacLennan was de-selected after tweeting a series of insults about Abbott and other colleagues; and secondly, an independent challenge in her constituency from well known newspaper columnist Suzanne Moore. Similarly to Abbott, the most prominent members of other intersectional groups also received coverage as a result of external factors. Sadiq Khan, Kate Hoey and Tristram Hunt all received far more name mentions than other BAME men, white women and white men (58, 30 and 127 respectively). This was primarily due to Kahn's position as a junior transport minister, backbencher Hoey's comments on coalition-building and Hunt's minor celebrity status as a broadcast journalist. Therefore, while the results show a significant intersectional difference in coverage of BAME and white women, they also highlight the importance of contextual factors determining candidate visibility.

Coverage of other BAME women, particularly challengers, tended to be far less varied. Abbott was followed by Rushanara Ali and Shabana Mahmood, framed exclusively as 'first Muslim women'; and fellow Labour incumbent Dawn Butler, who featured in stories about women and minorities in general, the state of the Labour party and her competitive race with Sarah Teather. Also prominent were Conservative firsts, Helen Grant and Priti Patel, who featured almost exclusively in articles primarily concerned with women, minorities and the diversification of the Conservative Party. So, although there was wide variation in the visibility of individual BAME women, their intersectional novelty does appear to have been the driving force for the increased coverage that they received.

### **Tone of coverage**

The second hypothesis states that coverage of BAME women will be less likely to be positive than that of all other groups. The positive and significant coefficients for white women and

men show that coverage of both groups was more positive on average than that of BAME female candidates, holding all other variables constant. However, the non-significant coefficient for BAME men indicates that contrary to the hypothesis, there were no significant differences in the tone of coverage of BAME women and men. It could be suggested therefore, than no intersectional effect is observed here, but instead a single axis racial bias resulting in more negative coverage for BAME than white candidates, regardless of gender. However, it is important to note that although differences were not statistically significant, BAME men were also less likely to receive negative coverage and more likely to receive positive coverage than BAME women.

[Table 4 about here.]

Predicted probabilities for each point on the tone scale indicate that, controlling for other factors, coverage of BAME women was twice as likely to be negative as that of white women: 10 of every hundred articles are predicted to be explicitly negative compared to just 5. Similarly, coverage of BAME women is almost half as likely to be positive as that of white women at just 8 of every hundred articles compared to 14. This is especially troubling in the context of BAME women's visibility: more coverage may not be an advantage if that coverage is also more likely to be critical.

[Table 5 about here.]

While these findings suggest that BAME women may face systemic disadvantages in terms of the overall tone of coverage they capture, they must be interpreted with caution. Firstly, the vast majority of articles were coded as neutral/balanced. Secondly, Labour incumbents Dawn Butler and Helen Grant were especially likely to receive negative coverage, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the articles in which they appeared. Both were accused of taking their constituencies for granted,<sup>xii</sup> and criticised in terms of their character: Abbott as a “left wing firebrand”,<sup>xiii</sup> representative of an “unprogressive, tribal and sectarian”<sup>xiv</sup> Labour Party,

and Grant as “patronising”,<sup>xv</sup> compared to her “saintly”<sup>xvi</sup> opponent. If Abbott’s coverage is removed from the model the coefficients for white women and men become non significant; and if Grant’s coverage is removed only the positive coefficient for white men remains significant. It is unsurprising that visibility leads to enhanced scrutiny and therefore some of the most prominent BAME female candidates also received the most negative coverage. However, although Abbott and Grant’s coverage skews the overall tone of coverage down for all BAME women within the model, it is arguable that it also does so in real terms. This is because, as indicated by the results below, in addition to being highly critical, coverage rendered the racial and gendered identities of BAME women highly salient. Therefore individuals are frequently characterised as representatives of BAME female politicians as a group. Furthermore, high circulating and mid market publications were far less likely to portray BAME women positively than broadsheets with smaller readerships. Not a single article from the mid market press (*Mail*, *Express* and Sunday editions) described a BAME female candidate in terms that were more positive than negative, and only two tabloid articles did so (*Star*, *Metro*, *Mirror*, *Sun* and Sunday editions).<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Explicit highlighting of candidate identity**

Stark intersectional differences emerge regarding the likelihood of coverage which explicitly highlights the gender or race of female and/or BAME candidates. The results strongly support the hypothesis that explicit foregrounding of gender would be more likely in coverage BAME than white women: BAME women are explicitly gendered in 44 of every 100 articles on average, compared to just 9 for white women, holding other factors constant. Descriptively, 45 percent of BAME women’s coverage mentioned their gender, compared to 11 percent of white women’s. Similarly, the predicted probability of race being highlighted in articles featuring

BAME men is high at .25, but far greater at .54 for BAME women. Descriptively the comparison was 31 percent to 50 percent respectively.

[Table 6 about here.]

Much of the explicit gendering of BAME women during the campaign resulted from ostensibly positive intersectional first frames: ‘first Muslim women’; ‘first Asian woman’; ‘first minority ethnic Conservative woman’. These frames which posit ‘diversification’ as a proxy for modernisation reflect the interests of political parties keen to generate broad appeal. However, images of the new cohort as signs of progress, bringing with them the promise of substantive representation and increased engagement in politics among underrepresented groups are problematic. The extensive focus on BAME women’s racial and gendered identities was sometimes in direct contrast to candidates’ own self presentations and campaign strategies. For example, while one commentator noted, referring to Rushanara Ali, that it would be “powerfully symbolic to have a female Bangladeshi in parliament”,<sup>xviii</sup> Ali herself argued, “As a Bengali and as an east ender, I take my courage from the confidence that the community gives me - people from different backgrounds, men, women, white, Bangladeshi, Somali - to rise above [...] divisive politics.”<sup>xix</sup> Discussion of BAME female challengers’ collective historic gains which went beyond the ‘first’ moniker was typically positive. However this was usually couched in terms of gender *or* ethnic diversity, and rarely made reference to BAME women as a specific group. Furthermore, individual profiles of BAME women often raised questions regarding their competency and legitimacy as candidates, particularly when their identity was explicitly foregrounded. The excitement surrounding BAME women as intersectional firsts was also countered by the pervasive frame of co-option, particularly for Conservative women whom it was asserted had been ‘parachuted’, ‘ushered front and centre’, ‘promoted’, ‘selected’, ‘handpicked’ and ‘fast-tracked’ into particular seats. In contrast, reference to the historical

underrepresentation of women and minorities, and longstanding work to remedy this by organisations both within and beyond political parties (for example, Women2Win, Labour Women's Network, Emily's List, 50:50 Coalition, Operation Black Vote) was notably absent across publications of all political allegiances. It was instead claimed that diverse Conservative parliamentary candidates had been "chosen for the wrong reason: to carry David Cameron's message that the Tories have changed. Not changed their principles, but their appearance".<sup>xx</sup>

Thus two potential conflicts appear to emerge. Firstly, while there may be incentives for political parties to foreground their candidates' 'diverse' identities to promote the idea that they are no longer 'male, pale, and stale', and for reporters to employ the novelty of such candidates as a journalistic hook (Tolley, 2015:110), this emphasis on identity may be of less utility for candidates themselves on the constituency campaign trail. Secondly, although news frames focusing on the overall increase in numbers of female and/or BAME candidates were, on the whole, positive, references to the identities of BAME female candidates as individuals are often associated with enhanced scrutiny of their credentials. This is particularly important because the likelihood of racial or gender foregrounding is higher for challengers than longstanding MPs who enjoy an incumbency advantage in gaining re-election. For example, in coverage of Diane Abbott, her race was mentioned in 21 percent of articles and her gender in just 7 percent of articles ( $n=28$ ). While these proportions are arguably still high, they are far smaller than for BAME women overall.

## **Conclusion**

These findings have several important implications. Firstly, they demonstrate that intersectional approaches which consider multiple identity categories are necessary to provide nuanced analyses of press coverage of political actors, given the substantial variation in

coverage of women of different racial identities. Furthermore, when considered in the light of similar findings from the US and Canada (Gershon, 2012; Tolley, 2015), they suggest that the exceptional disadvantages faced by minority women on the campaign trail are not country specific. Just as comparative single axis studies have demonstrated that female politicians in the aggregate face gendered bias by the press internationally (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008; Ross 2002), there is growing evidence that systematic variation in coverage *among* women may go beyond national borders. The increasing diversity of national legislators provides important opportunities as well as the imperative for further investigation of this phenomenon. In future, systematic cross-national comparative analyses will be necessary to fully understand the extent to which intersectional variation in media coverage of political actors is consistent internationally. Such analyses will need to consider the effects of different political and media systems, levels of descriptive representation, and societal attitudes to race, gender and other axes of identity.

Secondly, while this quantitative analysis demonstrates broad intersectional patterns in coverage, it also highlights the complex narratives and counter-narratives around the presence of women, minorities, and minority women in positions of political power. As Tolley (2015:99) argues, “racialized and gendered narratives are often subtle and implicit. A purely quantitative approach could conceal some of the more pernicious ways in which assumptions about visible minority women’s backgrounds, political viability, and issue interests are communicated”. Thus further qualitative analysis is necessary to grapple with the content and implications of these debates, and should also consider the framing of privileged identity categories such as whiteness and maleness.

Thirdly, building on Gershon's (2012) design, the candidate matching strategy employed here demonstrates the importance of controlling for additional politically relevant factors in order to account for alternative explanations of variation in press coverage of political actors. This is especially important for analyses of representations of minority women, given that their historical underrepresentation results in substantial differences in, for example, rates of incumbency, when compared to candidates from other intersectional groups. In addition, such analyses need to consider representations across a broad range of media platforms, and account for the effects of candidates' own self presentations.

Finally, intersectional approaches are not limited to consideration of race and gender, and should also attend to the effects of categories such as class, religion and sexuality in these contexts. While asking "where are all the women"<sup>xxi</sup> or "why is the election so white"<sup>xxii</sup> remains vital, it is crucial that future research on the press and political actors addresses difference *among* women, minorities and other underrepresented groups in order not to obscure the experiences of all but the most privileged.

## Tables

**Table 1: Descriptive representation in House of Commons by intersectional identity**

Year	2005		2010		2015	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White male	509	78.3	489	75.2	438	67.4
White female	126	19.4	134	20.6	171	26.3
BAME male	13	2	18	2.8	21	3.2
BAME female	2	0.3	9	1.4	20	3.1

(Sources: Cracknell 2012; Keen 2015, own calculations.)

**Table 2: Candidate characteristics by intersectional identity**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>White male</b>		<b>White female</b>		<b>BAME male</b>		<b>BAME female</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Conservative (N/%)	233	49.1	51	28.7	12	42.9	2	13.3	298	42.8
Liberal Democrat (N/%)	52	11.0	16	9.0	3	10.7	1	6.7	72	10.3
Labour (N/%)	190	40.0	111	62.4	13	46.4	12	80.0	326	46.8
Incumbent (N/%)	265	55.8	69	38.8	10	35.7	2	13.3	346	49.7
Incumbent competitiveness: (mean/SD)	2.4	1.5	2.6	1.6	2.3	1.4	1.5	0.7	2.4	1.5
Challenger competitiveness: (mean/SD)	3.5	1.4	3.7	1.5	3.1	1.7	2.8	1.9	3.5	1.5

**Table 3: Negative binomial regression: total name mentions**

Characteristics	Coefficient (SE)	Min- Max
White male	-0.67 -0.51	-4.32
White female	-0.86** -0.43	-5.09
BAME male	-0.01 -0.43	-0.07
Liberal Democrat	-0.38 -0.83	-0.91
Labour	0.86** -0.34	3.94
Status/Seniority	0.22 -0.18	1.18
Marginal Seat	-1.04*** -0.34	-5.50
Constant	1.89*** -0.34	
Observations	90	
chi-square test	37.47	
p	0.000	

Robust standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4: Ordered probit regression: overall tone of coverage**

Characteristic	Coefficient (SE)
White male	0.29* (0.16)
White female	0.34* (0.19)
BAME male	0.21 (0.18)
Liberal Democrat	-0.76** (0.36)
Labour	0.09 (0.29)
Status/Seniority	0.01 (0.05)
Marginal Seat	0.72*** (0.22)
Constant cut 1	-1.09*** (0.24)
Constant cut2	1.62*** (0.27)
Observations	488
chi-square test	21.55
p	.003

Robust standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 5: Predicted probabilities for tone of coverage by intersectional identity:**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral/Mixed</b>	<b>Positive</b>
White male	0.06	0.81	0.13
White female	0.05	0.81	0.14
BAME male	0.06	0.82	0.11
BAME female	0.10	0.82	0.08

**Table 6: Probit regressions: Likelihood of explicit references to candidate identity**

Characteristics	<b>Gender</b>		<b>Race</b>
	Coefficient (SE)		Coefficient (SE)
White female	-1.19*** (0.25)	BAME male	-0.76** (0.37)
Labour <sup>xxiii</sup>	-0.36 (0.26)		-0.77* (0.41)
Status / Seniority	-0.26*** (0.08)		-0.23*** (0.09)
Marginal Seat	-0.41 (0.25)		0.26 (0.36)
Constant	0.56*** (0.20)		0.88*** (0.30)
Observations	228		217
chi-square test	39.59		25.83
p	0.000		0.000

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> To the best of my knowledge, based on searches of IPSO's news and rulings, and the Select Committee's 2010 and 2015 parliament inquiries, neither organisation has yet acted on these recommendations.

<sup>ii</sup> Throughout this article, I refer to 'race' as a political rather than biological category, drawing on Pei-te Lien et al.,(2008).

<sup>iii</sup> While up to date cross national figures on the descriptive representation of women in the aggregate (regardless of ethnicity or other identity markers) are widely available, this is still not the case regarding ethnic minorities, partly due to data collection constraints (Hughes, 2013a:27). However, in addition to the UK data collected for this article, there is also evidence that minority ethnic women have made substantial gains in recent general elections in several other Western democracies with large minority ethnic populations. For example, following the 2014 midterms the US House of Representatives includes 32 minority female members, comprising 39% of women in the House ( $n=84$ ); Canada's House of Commons includes fifteen visible minority female MP's, eleven of whom were newly elected in 2015; and in France, where not a single non-white Deputy had been elected to the National Assembly prior to 2007 (excluding representatives of France's overseas territories), the first who was joined by four more minority ethnic women in 2012 (Sources: CAWP, 2013, 2015; Manning, 2014, 2015; macleans.ca/shape-of-the-house, (own calculations); Murray, R. (2012). Record Number of women elected to French parliament. [Blog] *Colourful Politics*. Available at: <http://rainbowmurray.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/record-number-of-women-elected-to.html> [Accessed 27 Jan. 2016]; see also, Lépinard, 2013).

<sup>iv</sup> While this analysis focuses on race and gender, Evans (2015) points out that disabled women and older women are also particularly underrepresented in British politics.

<sup>v</sup> However, David Lammy MP has recently highlighted the lack of ethnic diversity on the BBC's flagship political debate show, *Question Time*. See, Sweeny, M., "David Lammy says 60% of Question Time panels are all-white", *Guardian*, 15th December, 2015

<sup>vi</sup> <http://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/10/03/35-electorate-uncomfortable-with-ethnic-minority/>

<sup>vii</sup> I employ the classifications used in Pippa Norris's 2010 British General Election Constituency Results dataset).

<sup>viii</sup> Taylor, J., "RESPECT, RELIGION, RACE AND THE BATTLE FOR TOWER HAMLETS", *The Independent*, April 28th, 2010

<sup>ix</sup> No byline, "MPs are in no position to sneer at anyone, Diane", *The Observer*, 28th March, 2010

<sup>x</sup> While there is an undeniably subjective element to evaluating the overall tone of a text, a test of inter-coder reliability was performed by two coders for all variables, with agreement reaching a minimum score of .8 calculated using Krippendorff's Alpha and at least 90 percent using simple percent agreement.

<sup>xi</sup> If Abbott's coverage is removed from the model, the negative coefficient for white women remains significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>xii</sup> Moore, S., "Cleggama and me- witnesses at the birth of this new coalition of hope", *Mail on Sunday*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010; Bates, S., "Diary: First principle of turfing out a celeb-saint with a 15,000 majority? Make friendly with the locals", *The Guardian*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>xiii</sup> O'Flynn, P. "On mother Kelly's new doorstep - an elite state school", *The Express*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>xiv</sup> Toynbee, P., "Election 2010: Lib Dems: Lib-Lab rocket crashes back to earth in a cloud of confusion" *The Guardian*, 12 May 2010

<sup>xv</sup> Bates, S., "Diary: First principle of turfing out a celeb-saint with a 15,000 majority? Make friendly with the locals", *The Guardian*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>xvi</sup> Price, K. & Curle, J., "'Saint' Sarah a top bet", *The Mirror*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010

<sup>xvii</sup> Although the type of article (e.g. news reporting, editorial, or letter to the editor) was not included in the coding instrument, it does appear anecdotally to be the case that the tone of opinion pieces was unsurprisingly more polarized than news reports.

<sup>xviii</sup> Brooks, L., "Campaign 2010: Labour faces tough task to regain seat lost to Respect: Galloway has stepped aside, but contest between four Bangladeshi candidates is as fierce as in 2005", *The Guardian*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>xix</sup> Brooks, L., "Campaign 2010: Labour faces tough task to regain seat lost to Respect: Galloway has stepped aside, but contest between four Bangladeshi candidates is as fierce as in 2005", *The Guardian*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>xx</sup> Plattel, A., "Have Cameron's Cuties Really Got What it Takes to Transform Politics", *Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>xxi</sup> Smith, J., "In the studio, in the House ... where are all the women?" *The Independent on Sunday*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>xxii</sup> Hirsch, A., "If Britain is really post-racial, why is the election so white?", *The Guardian*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Liberal Democrat is excluded as a category in these models because it perfectly predicts outcomes for both dependent variables.