Understanding Political Party Change: Why More Conservative Female and Ethnic Minority Candidates Were Successful in the 2010 British General Election

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Adrienne Roach

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This thesis examines the impacts of party competition and societal change and modernization on the outcome of the 2010 British General Election. Through the lens of descriptive representation, this thesis focuses on the 2010 general election as a case study. Interviews are conducted with Conservative female and ethnic minority MPs, and a former candidate to determine why the number of Conservative female and ethnic minority MPs increased in 2010. Three reasons for the increase are examined; competition with the Labour Party, internal pressure from party elites, and David Cameron’s leadership. A statistical analysis is also conducted to understand how the party treats women, men and ethnic minorities differently. This section discusses how the inclusion of women and ethnic minorities into the Conservative Party’s political elite differs by group. Although the two groups may have similar goals, parties face tradeoffs when deciding to include more women and more ethnic minorities into the party
structure. These tradeoffs can lead to tension between the two groups. This research contributes to literature on descriptive representation, party competition, political leadership and modernization. It examines how social justice and global migration are affecting the way political parties compete in modern Britain.
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Introduction

The representation of women and ethnic minorities, among other underprivileged groups, has become a critical subject for social science research and political institutions. Social movements in the 1960’s and 1970’s in the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Western Europe promised increased access and equality specifically for women and ethnic minorities in government and society. However, since the 1970’s only marginal progress has been made to increase the political representation of women and ethnic minorities. In some Western European counties “more women were actually elected to national office in the first post-[World War II] elections than for the next five to six decades” (Klausen 2001, 224). As of 2011, women were only 16.8% of the US Congress and Senate, and 21% of the UK Parliament. In spite of equality movements, proportional representation of women in society has yet to be achieved in many Western Democratic countries.

The same is true for the representation of ethnic minority groups. Within the last fifty to sixty years, increasingly fluid populations: immigrants and migrant workers, refugees and ex-pats, have changed the demographics of many Western nations. In the UK, the greatest percent increases to the ethnic minority population between 1991 and 2001 occurred in the Black African, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Chinese communities. The increase from 1991-2001 in just those four groups alone amounted to nearly three
quarters of a million people (Poulsen & Johnston 2001, 162). In 2011, the percentage of non-white people living in the UK increased by more than five percent of the total population (Office of National Statistics UK, 2011). Such rapid demographic changes put pressure on political institutions. As British society has become more diverse, the representation of ethnic minorities has become even more important.

Particularly in the UK, women and ethnic minorities face an additional challenge to increasing their representation. The UK has a single member plurality system, also known as “first past the post”. According to the official definition given by the UK Parliament, “this system of voting is based on each area of the country (constituency) being represented by a single member” (UK Parliament 2013). Which means when it comes time to vote, the candidate who receives the most votes in a constituency becomes the Member of Parliament for that constituency. This system makes the entry of untraditional candidates more difficult, as opposed to the proportional representation system used in some EU countries, which presents fewer obstacles.

In the UK, there is a low incumbency turnover, so a candidate’s electoral chances are slim. The first past the post system exacerbates this problem because although “there is a modest personal vote…the strength of party voting, and the focus of attention on the national campaign, leadership and platform, means that individual candidates, by their own efforts, can rarely improve their party’s share of the vote” (Norris & Lovenduski 1997, 164).

In the UK, political parties are principally responsible for selecting candidates, and thus responsible for the descriptive composition of representatives in government. If a political party does not prioritize the representation of underprivileged groups in
society, there will be fewer representatives from those groups in power. Liberal movements and grassroots pressure from independent organizations are not enough to increase the number of women and ethnic minorities in government alone. Political parties, and more specifically party selectors, are the gate keepers and must be politically motivated to include these groups.

The Conservative Party in the UK is a good example of a party that has historically opposed positive actions to include underprivileged groups among its political elite. The Conservatives have commonly advocated for ethnic minority integration over multiculturalism, stricter border controls to keep immigrants out of Britain, and anti-feminist policies. These approaches to policy have mirrored their approach to candidate selection, generally favoring upper to middle-class, Oxford/Cambridge educated, white men for their safest parliamentary seats.

However, David Cameron’s Conservative Party has shown some signs of change. Since 2005, the Conservatives have begun to reach out to more women and ethnic minorities. They have designated Party Vice Chairmen responsible for strategy and outreach to these communities. A new organization was created to support Conservative female candidates. Changes were made to candidate interview questionnaires and more women were sought to be candidates. Cameron attempted to affect the selection process by recommending to local selectors an “A” list of candidates, that was intended to help women and ethnic minority candidates get selected for winnable seats. And, David Cameron has explicitly expressed a desire to include more women and ethnic minorities among the Conservative Party’s candidates. Thus, the Conservative Party is a good case study to better understand political parties’ role in increasing descriptive representation of
women and ethnic minorities. This paper examines the experiences of ethnic minority and female candidates, and Members of Parliament in the Conservative Party, with a focus on the 2010 General Election.
Chapter 1

The 2010 British General Election

More female and black and minority ethnic (BME) candidates were successful in the 2010 British general election than ever before. The total number of BME MPs from the two major parties has increased steadily from 1983-2010 (Figure 1.1).

Table 1.1: BME MPs over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>BME MPs (Conservative and Labour)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BSources: Pippa Norris, British Constituency Election Data 1997-2010-www.pippanorris.com and Shamit Saggar “Race and British electoral politics” pg. 100.

BME is the official acronym used to refer to individuals with black or ethnic minority heritage or descent in the UK. Any kind of racial and ethnic label can be problematic because such labels often generalize about individuals with unique characteristics, placing them into broad, stereotypical categories. These categories often do not capture the true diversity of the individuals in them. However, BME is the
category most often used in the literature, by the UK government, and among the UK’s political parties.

BME candidates have generally had more success in the Labour party, but disparities between the two parties have always been small and are diminishing, meaning that the Conservatives have less ground to make up. If the Conservative party stays on its current trajectory, BME candidates could be just as successful in the Conservative Party in future elections (Figure 1.2).

*Table 1.2: BME MPs over time (Conservative vs. Labour)*

![Graph showing BME MPs over time](image)

*Sources: Pippa Norris, British Constituency Election Data 1997-2010-www.pippanorris.com and Shamit Saggar “Race and British electoral politics” pg. 100.*

The number of successful female candidates has also increased over time, with levels much higher than ethnic minority candidates. However, the increase in female MPs has been less consistent, with a slight decline in female MPs after the 2001 general election (Figure 1.3). The largest increase was in 1997 when the Labour party made a concerted effort to include more female candidates, through rule changes in their party selection process (All Women Shortlists).

All-Women Shortlists have been used by the Labour Party in three different general elections, first in 1997 and then again in 2005 and 2010. Joni Lovenduski defines
AWS; “a certain percentage of local constituency parties must select their candidate from a list made up only of women aspirant candidates” (Childs 2008, 63). Both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties have publically opposed AWS for different reasons, but can legally use the method if the party leadership decides to do so. 1997 was a landslide year for Labour. Coupled with the first ever use of AWS, women were more successful than ever before. However, Labour women have since struggled to be as successful as they were in 1997.

Table 1.3: Female MPs over time

The increase in overall women MPs in 2010 was largely due to a major jump in Conservative women MPs, 49, up from only 17 in 2005. The number of Labour female MPs actually dropped from 98 in 2005, to 81 in 2010 (Figure 1.4).
Table 1.4: Female MPs over time (Conservative vs. Labour)

![Graph showing the number of Labour Women MPs, Con Women MPs, and Conservative BME MPs over time.]

*Sources: Pippa Norris, British Constituency Election Data 1997-2010-www.pippanorris.com and Sarah Childs “Women and British Party Politics” pg. 60*

The inclusion of women and ethnic minorities in both parties is an area for further research. The Conservative Party is of particular interest in this thesis. Less scholarly research has been conducted around the Conservative party. The Conservatives are also interesting because of the sudden increase in female and minority MPs in 2010 (Figure 1.5).

Table 1.5: Success of Conservative Female and BME Candidates over time

![Graph showing the success of Conservative Female and BME Candidates over time.]

*Sources: Pippa Norris, British Constituency Election Data 1997-2010-www.pippanorris.com, Sarah Childs “Women and British Party Politics” pg. 60 and Shamit Suggar “Race and British electoral politics” pg. 100.*
Why were Conservative women and minority candidates more successful in 2010? Although the number of women in Parliament is nowhere near parity with men, and the number of BME MPs is not proportionate to the larger UK black and ethnic minority population, 2010 was a significant improvement. I will explore three possible reasons for the change in 2010.

One, did the electoral success of Labour party feminization in 1997 force the Conservatives to select more women candidates for safe and marginal seats? Can similar factors be attributed to the rise in black, minority ethnic candidates? In what ways can competition with the Labour party be attributed to the increase in both groups?

Two, has internal pressure from BME and female Conservative party members and activists forced leadership to take a different approach? Have elites within the party taken steps to change the selection process, encourage more female or BME candidates, or publicly shown support for increasing women and BME MPs? What kinds of organizations, if any, have arisen within the party structure to encourage and support potential candidates?

Three, is the change in party leadership the reason for the increase in BME and female MPs? How much did David Cameron’s leadership really affect the increase? What changes did he make to ensure more female and BME Conservative MPs? Would the changes have occurred even if he had not been elected leader?

This thesis examines the impact of party competition and societal change and modernization on the modern Conservative Party. It examines how party competition and modernization have affected the descriptive representation of women and ethnic minorities in the party. Three variables, competition with Labour, pressure from party
elites, and David Cameron’s leadership, are used to understand what caused the increase in female and BME Conservative MPs in 2010. All three variables are often related to one another, but in this thesis, they are examined independently. In chapters two and three I examine how each variable may or may not have affected the increase in Conservative female MPs and BME MPs.

In chapter four, I examine if there are any tradeoffs between including more women versus ethnic minority candidates. Much of the scholarly literature addresses the inclusion of women separately from the inclusion of ethnic minorities. I argue that they are related because sexism and racism are both historically institutionalized forms of discrimination. As society has changed and modernized, sexism and racism have become socially unacceptable. However, scholars have identified instances of racism still prevalent among the electorate and sexism among political party selectors. Political parties face externalities when selecting candidates based on race or gender. Ideally, all sections of society should be equally incorporated into the party ranks. But for political parties, whose main goal is to win elections, the electoral benefits of inclusion must outweigh the risks. Each action requires a degree of risk-taking on the party’s behalf. For the Conservatives, taking positive action to accommodate more women and BME Conservative MPs counters the social mores of some of the Conservative electorate as well as some party elite. The inclusion of one group is often enough to cause a stir, let alone the inclusion of both. This kind of hedging can lead to animosity between groups. Groups may question why a political party chooses to include one group over another. In an effort to capture their own place in the political process, underprivileged groups can often be at odds with one another. Specifically in chapter four, I examine how women
and BME candidates may have been treated differently by the Conservative Party. Part of chapter four also includes an analysis of the types of seats for which white women, BME men and BME were selected in 2010.

**Methodology and Research Design:**

This paper focuses on the descriptive representation of underprivileged groups, specifically women and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom. Descriptive representation refers to the actual number of women, BME, or untraditional candidates that make up a governing body. By their sheer presence, women and BME elected officials can increase the representativeness of Parliament. When Parliament’s descriptive characteristics more closely resemble the population, it will be a truer representation of British Society. Joni Lovenduski defines descriptive representation in its theoretic context; it is “the claim that women should be present in decision-making in proportion to their membership [in] the population” (Lovenduski 2005, 17).

Substantive representation, which is often discussed in kind, refers to how women and/or BME elected officials represent female and BME interests in government. Joni Lovenduski points out that “in many political situations the representations of one’s interests may be more important than the representation of one’s kind” (Lovenduski 2005, 18). Although substantive representation is critical, finding reliable measures of descriptive representation is far less problematic. In order to examine how women and BME elected officials represent their cohorts, one must have a substantial number of observations to pull from. Without significant numbers of women and ethnic minority MPs in Parliament, studies that examine substantive representation may not be generalizable. I argue that descriptive representation must come first to ensure a fair and
equal society, with equal access for all, to all levels of government, including its highest leadership positions.

Face to face interviews with Conservative female and BME members of Parliament and a former candidate from the 2010 election were conducted. These interviews allowed me to ask personalized, open-ended questions, to guarantee the most honest responses. They were also ideal for learning the perspective of party elites, how female and BME MPs are treated within the party, and gave clues about the direction of the party’s electoral strategy. Their responses provided insight into how the party is currently thinking about representation and women and ethnic minority outreach. I also conducted an interview with a former candidate, who is not currently an elected official. This interview provided a counterbalance to the responses of the Conservative MPs, who were more likely to feel obligated to uphold the party’s image.

Detailed district level candidate selection and election data can provide critical evidence. Pippa Norris has compiled constituency level data from the previous four general elections, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2010. She includes a number of useful variables including seat margin and whether the candidate is a woman or black minority ethnic. These data include all of the candidates, both successful and unsuccessful across the three major parties. An inclusion of all the applicants in the 2010 selection process would improve the research substantially. However, compiling a complete list of Conservative party applicants would be a monumental endeavor, requiring both problematic amounts of time and money. Therefore, only the data on successful and unsuccessful Conservative candidates was used. These data are used to help understand why some women and BME candidates were selected for winnable seats while others were not. The data was used to
conduct a statistical difference of means test to determine the difference in seat
winnability between white men, white women, BME men, and BME women.

“Winnable seats” refers to electoral districts in which the opposing party had a 10
point lead or less in the previous election. Seats in which the candidate’s party had a clear
advantage in the past are also winnable seats, but are often referred to as safe seats. Pippa
Norris’ scale is used to measure a seat’s winnability in her 1997-2005 and 2010 datasets.
When an opposing party has a clear historic advantage in a seat of 15 points or more, that
seat is generally referred to as unwinnable.

Lastly, government reports, news articles, and Conservative Party literature were
consulted to understand the changing demographics of British society and how the
Conservative Party is talking about these changes. These sources also helped show how
the party has been reflecting on itself since 1997; sources such as the Conservative
Party’s website and other press releases and information produced by the party.
Information on party affiliated organizations such as the Conservative Women’s
Organization and Women2Win was also incorporated as evidence of the recent changes
to the Conservative Party’s image and practices.

*Concept 1: Party Competition*

Modern political parties are driven by competition. In Britain, three major parties
compete for control in the House of Commons: the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal-
Democrat parties. According to scholar John Roemer, Anthony Downs’ political
equilibrium helps us understand the choices parties make. Downs’ model assumes that
“each party desires to maximize its probability of victory” (Roemer 2001, 16). Downs’
theory also assumes that a party’s goal is to win. Regardless of their motivation for running candidates; parties want to win.

Party competition is a critical consideration for this research. Competition drives all three possible causes for the increase in Conservative women and BME MPs in 2010. I will be examining three potential causes for the increase. The first cause is competition with Labour. Specifically, were the Conservatives influenced by Labour’s successful use of AWS in 1997 and again in 2005 to increase the number of female MPs and appeal to female voters? Labour’s continued electoral success, could have influenced the Conservatives to make similar changes to increase their chances of winning. Competition with Labour may have also influenced the Conservatives to select more black, minority ethnic candidates in winnable seats.

The second possible cause is internal pressure from female and BME Conservative party elites. Pressure from party elites is also related to competition with Labour. Changes in the makeup of the Labour party in the House of Commons inspired Conservative Women MPs to question the actions of their own party.

The third possible cause for the increase in female and BME MPs is the leadership of David Cameron. Several scholars have described David Cameron as a modernizer (Driver, Dorey et. al, and Bale). Cameron made a significant effort to shed the Conservative’s “nasty party” image. Cameron’s actions were partially driven by his own desire to gain and stay in power, by building a more moderate base of party elites. Cameron’s leadership may have led to the increase in female and minority MPs in a number of ways, which I will discuss further in chapters two and three.
**Concept 2: Societal Change and Modernization**

After its 2005 defeat, the Conservative Party was in need of a modernizer to adapt the party to the changing nature of British politics and society. One aspect of globalization has been the increase in migrant flows. Influxes of immigrants from Commonwealth countries have begun to change the demographic landscape of Britain. The impact of global institutions such as the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as other regional cooperation organizations such as the European Union and NATO has also changed the nature of British politics over the years.

Additionally, modernization has contributed to changing the electorate’s policy concerns. Pippa Norris addresses “the impact of modernization on political culture” through the theories developed by scholar Ronald Inglehart. Inglehart theorizes that with the increased economic security post-WWII, the electorate’s policy concerns (in post-industrial societies) have changed. “The public has given increasingly higher priority to quality-of-life issues, individual autonomy and self-expression, and the need for environmental protection (Norris 2004, 21). He also theorizes that partisan identification is eroding and that party support is “based upon particular leaders, issues, and events” (Norris 2004, 21). Additionally, the modern electorate is highly influenced by media sources and elite discourse (Zaller 1992). Access to numerous types of social media and the ability to stream information from around the world has globalized society and changed people’s expectations of their government.

All three possible causes for the increase in Conservative female and BME MPs are related to societal change and modernization. Modernization has changed the nature of party competition. It has forced major power brokers to consider who ought to be
included in political institutions. It has also increased the power of individual personality in British Party politics, making the selection of a dynamic party leader more important for party success.

**Research Question 1: Why were more Conservative female and BME MPs elected in 2010?**

*Competition with Labour*

Scholars have addressed the impacts of oppositional party pressure, and rule changes on the inclusion of female and minority candidates. According to Pippa Norris, after the Labour landslide in 1997, the Conservative party was “reconsidering its selection process”, yet she also notes that the Conservative party leadership generally remained opposed to positive discrimination measures or rule changes.

Rule changes refer to systematic changes made to a party’s selection process. The Labour Party’s implementation of All-Women Shortlists is one example of a rule change. Rule changes can also be legally mandated by the government. The Sex Discrimination Act in 2002, although it was not a mandate, officially legalized the use of AWS and other position discrimination measures. This allows political parties to implement changes to their selection process to include more candidates and MPs from underrepresented groups.

Sarah Childs found that some MPs in 1997 (after Labour’s use of AWS) felt that AWS would force the Conservative Party’s hand. Thus, Labour’s use of AWS in 1997 would force the Conservatives to use similar measures in future elections. According to Childs, “one MP thought that the electoral costs of having so few women MPs would force the Conservative Party to (s)elect more women in the future” (Childs 2004, 42).
Childs concludes that “where parties introduce positive discrimination measures, that is, where demand is artificially created, women are selected in greater, if not proportionate, numbers” (Child 2004, 47). However, she also finds that this was not enough to encourage Conservative party leaders to use AWS in 2001 and notes that “the short listing sex quotas [prior to 2005] may even have made matters worse” (Childs 2004, 48). The success of AWS alone was not enough to significantly change the Conservative Party’s selection procedures prior to 2010.

Candidate selection processes differ by party in the UK. Generally though, a small group of party elite, known as the selectorate, chooses from a list of potential candidates by reviewing their CVs and interviewing qualified candidates. The process for getting selected to for a seat can be long and arduous, especially for an individual who has never stood for election before. Candidates are often required to give speeches and participate in a number of meetings and events before being selected. The Labour Party, for example, also requires that all candidates be continuous members of the Party for at least 12 months prior to application (Mansell 2010, 29). For the Conservative Party, candidates are required to be members for at least 3 months in order to attend the Parliamentary Assessment Board (Wasley 2010, 34). In many ways the British candidate selection process is far more complicated than in the US, where candidates self select into parties and often fight for the party’s official nomination in a primary election.

The Conservative Party did not use All Women Shortlists in 2005, even after legal approval was given through the Sex Discrimination Act of 2002. Prior to the 2010 election, for a short period, new party leader David Cameron expressed an interest in the use of All-Women Shortlists. According to the Guardian newspaper in 2009, “Cameron
said there were "many very, very good women" on the Tories' priority list of candidates who had not yet been selected and he wanted to give them a chance at the next election, saying the under-representation of women and ethnic minorities was a particular problem for the Conservative party” (the Guardian 2009).

Although the Conservatives did not use AWS, the number of Conservative female and minority MPs in Parliament still increased after the 2010 election. Was pressure from Labour’s use of AWS one reason for the increase? If so, it seems to have little to do with the rule itself. Other similar measures were taken to boost the number of female Conservative candidates in winnable seats. Pippa Norris provides some possible explanations for the increase. She identifies three strategies for achieving gender equality, rhetorical, affirmative action, and positive discrimination. In the case of the Conservative Party, equality rhetoric was employed frequently by David Cameron and the “A” list could be seen as a type of positive action, although it did not go as far as AWS.

Norris provides an explanation for the Conservative’s historic opposition to AWS. Norris finds that positive discrimination measures are usually used in left-wing parties (Norris 2001, 93). There is also some evidence to show that AWS was an appropriate solution for the Labour party in particular. Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski found that, after the 1992 general election (prior to the use of AWS), female candidates experienced “some discrimination against them by Labour, but not Conservative, party selectors” (Norris & Lovenduski 1993, 406). They explain that while not as many female candidates came forward in the Conservative party process, once there, they experienced less discrimination from selectors than from Labour party selectors.
At the time, Norris and Lovenduski had fewer ethnic minority cases to draw from to make any similar conclusions. However, from the cases they did have, they found similar results, the Conservative party had fewer ethnic minority female candidates coming forward, “while in the Labour party supply and demand factors [both played] a role” (Norris & Lovenduski 1993, 406).

Candidate supply and demand are often used to explain why political parties select fewer women to stand for election. If there is a lack of candidate supply, then fewer women are coming forward to stand for election, either because they do not feel welcome and believe they will not be successful, or the party has not effectively recruited them. If there is a lack of candidate demand, then even if selectors have a number of candidates to choose from they are still not selecting very many for winnable seats. There are a number of reasons for demand problems, among them are selector bias and discrimination, or perceived electorate bias against certain types of candidates.

Therefore, rule changes in the party selection process, like AWS, may have had a stronger impact on the left of center Labour Party. Additionally, AWS may be a more effective measure when a party is experiencing only demand-side problems. Positive discrimination ensures that female applicants are actually selected for the shortlist. If there are only a few female applicants to begin with, AWS does not necessarily offer an adequate solution to the problem.

In the case of ethnic minority candidates, positive discrimination measures are not a factor. Neither party has made an institutionalized effort to include more BME candidates. However, ethnic minority communities have generally, and often overwhelmingly, supported Labour.
Politicians and scholars often refer to ethnic minority communities when referring to ethnic minority groups. In this case community is yet another way to refer to an ethnic or racial group. In this context Ben Pitcher says “At a more general level, community describes race as a common essence or shared experience that transcends geographical specificity” (Pitcher 2009, 75). In this paper, the term community is also used to refer to geographic spaces such as particular wards, cities, or constituencies.

With increases in minority populations and political strongholds, the Conservative party may have included more BME candidates to take ethnic minority votes from Labour. Like the Labour party’s strategy in 1997 to court more female voters, the Conservatives may have wanted to court more minority voters. However, more minority candidates alone would not likely have increased minority turnout in support of Conservative candidates. Edward Fieldhouse and David Cutts test the impact of an Asian candidate on Asian minority turnout in 2001. They found that the presence of an Asian candidate is not a significant driver of Asian voter turnout, compared to other motivating factors such as the ethnic density of the district or other social and economic factors (Fieldhouse & Cutts 2008, 542).

There are two possible explanations for the increased inclusion of minorities by the Conservative Party. First, even though Fieldhouse and Cutts have found that Asian candidates are not the most significant drivers of Asian turnout that may not be the case for all groups. For many groups, whether they are senior citizens, ethnic minorities, or young people, the best candidates to communicate a political message to them is someone from their own community, someone like them, someone with whom they’ve had a shared experience. A BME candidate may not have driven up turnout in BME
communities, but they may have been able to sway a few BME voters, who had already considered voting Conservative in 2010. The Conservatives may have feared that without any ethnic minority candidates to deliver their message, their outreach would appear disingenuous.

Second, the inclusion of minority candidates was part of a larger effort to demonstrate to the general electorate that the Conservative Party was modernizing and Conservative ideology was moving closer to the average voter. Thus, the Conservative Party was moving away from its “nasty party” tag of the Thatcher years and becoming a more inclusive party, regardless of any perceived or actual racist tendencies among the Conservative electorate.

Shamit Saggar and Andrew Geddes (2000) address negative and positive racialisation related to ethnic minority representation. However, the 2010 election undercuts their assumptions. They claimed that party members would be more supportive of minority candidates that did not draw any “undue attention to their ethnic origin, ethnic identity or public policy questions over racial inequality.” This may have been the case in 2000, but it does not appear applicable in 2010. For the Conservatives, if the strategy was to present itself as a more inclusive party, they would want to highlight the diversity of the Conservative candidates, which was generally the case. Saggar and Geddes also conclude that because the majority of “successful minority candidates were returned by constituencies containing sizable minority electorates,” race seems to count in the electoral process, “but for ethnic minorities alone” (Saggar & Geddes 2000, 42). The results of the 2010 election show that although the parties are coming around to the idea of selecting more BME candidates, ethnic minority communities are still
underrepresented. However, the Conservative Party’s motivation to include more BME candidates is possibly driven by more than just race. It reflects a desire to change the appearance of the Conservative Party. This would counter Saggar and Geddes assertion that race counts for ethnic minorities alone.

In 2010, the Conservatives ran several BME candidates in winnable districts where the minority population was quite small; all but one BME candidate ran in a seat with a 10% or less non-white population based roughly on 2001 Census data. The Conservatives selected 8 of the 11 successful BME candidates for safe Conservative seats, (meaning the Conservatives lead by 15 percentage points or more in the last election). Only 2 of the 8 were incumbents, meaning that the majority of new BME MPs in 2010 were placed in safe Conservative seats with relatively small non-white populations. The other three successful BME candidates were Paul Uppal, Rehman Chishti, and Alok Sharma. Sharma and Chishti were also selected for seats with relatively small non-white populations. Chishti’s seat was an ultra marginal Labour seat in 2005 (Labour won by just 15 votes). Sharma’s seat was a fairly safe Labour seat in 2005 (Labour won by 11.4%). Uppal was the only successful BME candidate that was selected for a seat with a sizeable non-white population, approximately 26% non-white. His seat was also a fairly marginal Labour seat in 2005 (Labour won by 5.3%). (Appendix: Chart 1.1)

Religion can also be an obstacle for some BME candidates among party selectors. Abdulkader Sinno and Eren Tatari look at the inclusion of Muslims in British institutions. They found that “in the case of the Conservatives and, oddly at first blush, the Liberal Democrats, bias is greatest at the level of the constituency, with little effort by the party
leadership to counterbalance it” (Sinno & Tatari 2009, 120). Sinno and Tatari conducted interviews to understand Muslim experiences running for Parliament. In 2005, Conservative Muslim candidates were not selected in winnable seats. Sinno and Tatari found several explanations for this among Muslim candidates, Parliamentarians and activists. Some claimed that “they still had to “pay their dues” to the party as political activists and candidates in unsafe districts before being given the chance to compete for safe ones” (Sinno and Tatari 2009, 121).

They also examine the parties’ responses to Muslim candidates that may not conform to the party platform, specifically on issues of the war in Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict. They find that the parties tend to put Muslim candidates who may not conform in unwinnable seats in order to “[shore] up party support in those districts with large minority populations” (Sinno & Tatari 2009, 122). This has implications for the success of Muslim candidates in future elections. If the party platform changes or leadership becomes more flexible by allowing party candidates to diverge from the party platform, a more diverse set of candidates may be included on the party list. Sinno and Tatari conclude, based on the 2005 election results, that “the only way to gauge the sincerity of Liberal Democrat and Conservative Party leaders [on the inclusion of more Muslim candidates] on the local and national levels is to see whether a good number of the Muslim candidates who ran in marginal seats to gain experience and serve the party will be accepted as candidates in winnable or safe seats in coming elections” (Sinno & Tatari 2009, 121). Interestingly, of the three Muslim Conservative candidates who were successful in 2010, Rehman Chishti was selected for an ultra marginal Labour seat; Sajid Javid was selected for a safe Conservative seat, but had not been selected for a marginal
seat previously; and Nadhim Zahawi was also selected for a safe Conservative seat and had not been previously selected for a marginal seat (Hasan 2010).

*Pressure from Party Elites*

According to Sarah Childs, female members of the Conservative party have recently started mobilizing. Childs’ book was written in 2008, prior to the 2010 election. Childs states that by 2005, female party activists had “denounced the failure to integrate women’s concerns and perspectives into Conservative party policy…and challenged the meritocratic basis of Conservative party selection procedures” (Childs 2008, 24). The concerns of Conservative party women led to the establishment of the “Women2Win” organization which focuses on increasing Conservative female representation in parliament. According to Childs, “its founders recognized the opportunity for feminization which was opened up by the party leadership election in 2005” (Childs 2008, 34).

Less has been written about ethnic minority activism within the Conservative party ranks. This is likely because Conservative BME MPs were virtually non-existent prior to 2010. The Conservative Party now has eleven BME MPs, and Alok Sharma MP is a Party Vice Chairmen specializing in BME communities. My interviews will shed light on recent pressure from BME party elites.

*David Cameron*

In the UK, Party leaders are chosen by party members. When a Party wins a majority in an election, the Party leader at the time becomes the Prime Minister and forms a government at the request of the Queen. David Cameron was chosen as the leader of the Conservative Party in 2005. In 2010, he became Prime Minister and formed his
cabinet. Official and shadow Cabinet Ministers or Secretaries are usually senior Members of Parliament or from the House of Lords (UK Parliament, Government & Opposition 2013).

After yet another Conservative Party loss in 2005, the Conservative Party was in crisis and needed a new, dynamic leader. If the Conservatives were to take advantage of declining Labour support among the electorate, they needed to improve the party’s image, and appeal to a broader base of voters. The election of David Cameron as party leader was the first step in that process. Peter Dorey, Mark Garnett and Andrew Denham discuss David Cameron’s “modernizing” approach in their book “From Crisis to Coalition: The Conservative Party 1997-2010.” After 2005, the Conservatives were in crisis. The Conservative Party had to change its image to be successful. According to Dorey, Garnett and Denham, “Cameron went further than his three predecessors in instigating a sharp break with Thatcherism, and, instead [fostered] an ostensibly more socially tolerant and inclusive Conservatism” (Dorey, Garnett & Denham 2011, 57). Although the Conservatives did not secure a clear majority in Parliament, Cameron’s attempts to appeal to a broader base of voters by modernizing the party were at least partially effective.

Stephen Driver also writes about David Cameron’s rise to power. Driver says that Cameron “got the Conservatives talking about ideas and values, including social justice…and fought to lose the “nasty party” tag by being for things [like] (the NHS, gay relationships, and the rights of minorities) (Driver 2011, 75).

Driver also discusses Cameron’s attempts to gain more control over the local parties’ candidate selection processes. Cameron “[established] a ‘priority list’ – better
known as the “A” list. Essentially, this sought to find the top 100 new candidates, and included a balance of men and women, as well as people from black and minority ethnic communities” (Driver 2011, 82). However, the priority list “was replaced by a simple 50/50 rule requiring an equal number of men and women at all stages of the selection process.” (Driver 2011, 82). According to Driver, the 50/50 rule decreased the number of female candidates on the list and thus hurt the prospects for even more substantial increases in female MPs.

**Research Question 2: Are their tensions and/or tradeoffs between including more women candidates and more BME candidates?**

Ethnic minority candidates face different obstacles than female candidates. Both may experience some amount of discrimination from selectors and electors, but how do those experiences compare? What are the tradeoffs for parties selecting women versus ethnic minority candidates?

M.J. Le Lohé’s article on ethnic minority candidates in general elections discusses the experiences of ethnic minority candidates prior to the 1997 general election. The Conservatives ran 4 minority candidates in 1983, 6 in 1987 and 8 in 1992. Of the 8 candidates in 1992, only one was chosen for a safe seat, three were chosen for marginal seats and four were chosen for what Le Lohé calls “hopeless” seats.

Le Lohé also highlights the results of a 1990 opinion poll which “found that 39 percent of Conservative supporters and 29 percent of Labour supporters admitted they were racially prejudiced” (Le Lohé 1993, 110). With significant levels of prejudice among both the Labour and Conservative electorates, one would expect fewer minority candidates to be fielded by the parties and only in constituencies where the ethnic
minority vote is substantial. The Conservative Party’s selection of ethnic minority candidates for winnable non-ethnic minority-majority seats is evidence that the party and electorate are changing.

Expanding on Le Lohé’s research, Muhammad Anwar looks at the emergence of ethnic minority candidates and voter preferences in the “1983-1997” general elections. He finds some variation in the level of support for political parties by minority group. Historically, ethnic minority groups have voted overwhelmingly for the Labour party. However, in a 1997 General Election survey, support for Labour was not consistent across ethnic groups. Black Caribbean, Black African and Black "other" groups voted for Labour at 88% or more. However, Asian groups showed less support for Labour, with the lowest amount of support coming from Pakistanis at 55%. Anwar believes that support for Labour among ethnic minority communities will begin to shift to the Conservative party, with some evidence for shifting support specifically in the Asian community. He also discusses the efforts taken by all three major parties to include more ethnic minorities since the 1970s.

Rafaela Dancygier examines how the Labour Party approaches candidate selection on local councils and its relationship with Muslims and the white working class in those communities. Although Dancygier’s analysis focuses on the Labour party, the political trade-offs she highlights should be also considered when examining the Conservative party’s selection of minority candidates. Dancygier shows that “as areas with large concentrations of Muslims become economically deprived, economic and cultural threats lower the chances of Muslim candidate selection” (Dancygier 2012, 3-4).
Dancygier discusses the economic needs of Muslim communities and how more Muslim representation often leads to more funding for religious projects, mosques and the care of the Muslim population generally. She expects to find that non-Muslim voters in more economically deprived districts will be less likely to vote for Muslim candidates due to economic competition for scarce resources. She also expects that in these economically deprived districts, Labour will be less likely to select a Muslim candidate, due to the Labour Party’s historic relationship with the white working class (Dancygier 2012, 12).

Dancygier finds that in districts with sizable Muslim populations and economic deprivation, Muslim candidates are less likely to be selected by the Labour party. As the Muslim population increases and Muslims gain more political clout and capital, economic deprivation becomes less important and Muslim candidates are more likely to be selected. The critical threshold is between 10 and 30%, where Muslims make up large portions of the population but are not yet dominant enough to negate the affects of economic deprivation on Labour Party candidate selection. She found that education and median household income were significant in determining cultural biases against funding for mosques. Education and income may be significant in determining the level of support for Muslim or ethnic minority candidates in a given district. Although Dancygier’s research focuses on the Labour Party, her conclusions highlight the tradeoffs that exist for party’s between appealing to their traditional base and reaching out to a new set of voters. For the Conservative Party this is especially pertinent in 2010. Cameron shifted the party to the left potentially offending the Conservative far-right base.
Reaching out to ethnic minority candidates through positive action or policy changes, could trigger a backlash among some Conservative Party faithful.

The historic discriminatory tendencies of both Conservative and Labour party electorates have made supporting minority candidates a greater risk for the parties. That is reflected in the number of BME candidates and MPs, compared to female candidates and MPs (Figures 1.6 & 1.7).

**Table 1.6: Conservative Party BME MPs vs. Female MPs over time**

![Conservative BME MPs vs. Con Women MPs over time graph]


**Table 1.7: Labour Party BME MPs vs. Female MPs over time**

![Labour BME MPs vs. Labour Women MPs over time graph]

Breaking into party politics has been difficult for both ethnic minorities and women. A report published by the Fawcett Society and written by Laura Shepherd-Robinson and Joni Lovenduski on women and candidate selection in the 2001 general election, gives accounts of female applicants from both parties. They found a number of obstacles for both Labour and Conservative women. For Labour, “the women who took part in [the] research identified numerous examples of overt discrimination during the selection process” (Shepherd-Robinson & Lovenduski 2001). Some women in the study also dealt with patronizing comments and sexual harassment (Shepherd-Robinson & Lovenduski 2001, 11-15). The study found similar results among women in the Conservative selection process, with a couple of significant differences. Some women also faced “traditional assumptions about women as home-makers” within the Conservative party and experienced heightened levels of discrimination from older party members. Some were also asked different questions than their male counterparts. (Shepherd-Robinson & Lovenduski 2001, 23-26).

Michelle Ryan, S. Alexander Haslam and Clara Kulich address the Conservative Party’s inclusion of female candidates prior to 2010. They use quantitative research to explore the relationships between party selection choices and the inclusion of women in party politics. They did not “expect to find gender differences in electoral success or seat winnability for the Labour Party. [However,] in the Conservative Party, [they expected that] women would be selected to contest seats that were significantly less winnable than those in which their male counterparts ran…and that such biases would have an impact on women’s electoral success” (Ryan, Haslam & Kulich 2010, 58). They found that “gender differences in electoral success occurred only for the Conservative Party”
suggesting that when it comes to determining the probability of electoral success, party makes a difference for women. Conservative women contested harder to win seats in 2005, and based on a superficial analysis of the 2005 election, the same is true for Conservative ethnic minority candidates.

Until 2010, only two ethnic minority women had served in the House of Commons, both from Labour. In 2010, that number increased to nine; seven Labour, and two Conservatives. According to Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski, minority women faced additional obstacles in the party selection process in 2001. They claim that “most of the time ethnic minority women reported the reason they were given for not being selected was that the electorate would be racist and would not vote for them.” Some of the women “felt that there was some truth in [the] statement, whilst others felt it was a convenient excuse for constituency parties who simply do not want an ethnic minority candidate” (Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski 2001, 18). It even appears that positive actions meant to benefit women, may not equally benefit BME women. Labour MP Diane Abbott said in an op-ed for the Guardian in 2008 that Labour’s use of all women shortlists in 1997 resulted in more women although, “it seemed that “more women in parliament” meant “more white women” (Abbott 2008). There have been similar critiques of Cameron’s “A” list in 2010. Even though a portion of the list was supposed to include ethnic minority candidates, the emphasis was still on supporting women, and primarily white women.
Chapter 2

Women and the Conservative Party

The 2010 general election witnessed a number of political firsts, including the formation of a coalition government between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. The Conservative/Lib Dem coalition was peculiar because of their ideological differences. However, prior to 2010, David Cameron had made visible attempts to modernize and moderate the party. In his speech before the 2005 Conservative Party conference, Cameron said:

“Some say that we should move to the right. I say that will turn us into a fringe party, never able to challenge for government again. I don't want to let that happen to this party…. We've got to recognise that we're in third place amongst under-35s, that we've lost support amongst women [sic]; that public servants no longer think we're on their side… We have to change and modernise our culture and attitudes and identity. When I say change, I'm not talking about some slick rebranding exercise: what I’m talking about is fundamental change, so that when we fight the next election, street by street, house by house, flat by flat, we have a message that is relevant to people's lives today, that shows we're comfortable with modern Britain and that we believe our best days lie ahead.” (Cameron 2005).

Cameron’s effort to modernize the party played an important role in two of the 2010 general election’s political firsts. More Conservative women were elected to Parliament than ever before, 49, up from only 17 in 2005. Additionally, more Conservative ethnic minority candidates were elected than ever before, eleven, up from only two in 2005. No more than two Conservative ethnic minority MPs had ever sat in
the House of Commons at a time in British history. The Conservatives also elected their first ethnic minority women to the House of Commons: Helen Grant and Priti Patel. These political firsts show that 2010 was a unique year for the Conservatives. David Cameron’s efforts to change the party played a significant role, but just how significant a role is worth examining. Additionally, what effects did competition with Labour and pressure from party elites have on the outcome?

Five female MPs were interviewed, all of whom were first elected to Parliament in 2010. These interviews provided deeper insight into their personal experiences and perceptions on the recent changes to the Conservative Party. Each MP has a unique background and experience that primed them for seeking political office.

*Harriett Baldwin (Female, Member of Parliament)*

Harriett Baldwin was a late entrant into politics. Prior to seeking elected office in 2010 she worked at JPMorgan in asset management and currency market exposure. One of the first campaigns she participated in was to keep Britain out of the Euro. She joined the Campaign for Sterling in 2000 and thus began her foré into politics. Ms Baldwin first ran for Parliament in 2005, in a seat which she had little chance of winning. According to Baldwin, the Party told her she had the skills to be an MP but not quite enough political experience. She had to resign from full time work in 2006 to dedicate her time to campaigning for a seat in 2010. She was able to serve as a part time advisor to JPMorgan for two years before she had to dedicate all of her time to running for office. Ms Baldwin was fortunate to have the type of position with JP Morgan that gave her the flexibility to work for a period of time while also pursing elected office.
Rebecca Harris (Female, Member of Parliament)

Contrary to the experience of Harriett Baldwin, Rebecca Harris has been involved in politics since she was 11 years old. She mentioned delivering leaflets for Margaret Thatcher and has been a member of the Conservative Party for as long as she has been active in politics. Prior to becoming an MP she served as a local councillor for four years. Her professional background is in business where she was an employer at Phillimore & Co Publishers. Ms Harris joined their board of directors as marketing director in 1997 (The Conservatives 2013).

Karen Lumley (Female, Member of Parliament)

Like Rebecca Harris, Karen Lumley was a local councillor prior to becoming a Member of Parliament in 2010. She is an accountant by trade but has been involved in politics since University when she was President of the student government. Lumley first ran for office in 1997 but was unsuccessful.

Mary MacLeod (Female, Member of Parliament)

Mary MacLeod’s professional background is also in business. She served as advisor to the Her Majesty the Queen prior to becoming a Member of Parliament. Ms Macleod first became involved in politics in 1992, and helped with the Irish peace process. She previously stood for Parliament in 1997 and 2005 but was not selected to be a candidate. 2010 was the first time she was selected for a seat.

Caroline Nokes (Female, Member of Parliament)

Like several of her colleagues, Caroline Nokes served in local government before becoming a Member of Parliament. She served on the Borough Council from 1999 to 2011. Ms Nokes did not become active in politics until after University. She noted that
she entered into University without a firm party commitment. Ms Nokes studied politics, and by the time she left University she was a Tory. Her exposure to politics at a young age, likely primed her decision to pursue elected office later in life. Her father was a member of the European Parliament and a lecturer in politics. According to scholars Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox, family can play a large role in a woman’s decision to pursue politics in the US (Lawless & Fox 2005). Ms Nokes has been a member of the Conservative party since 1997. She ran for office in 2001 and 2005, but was unsuccessful.

Women and Competition with the Labour Party

Women’s equality has been a significant political issue for over one hundred years. Yet, remarkably, little progress has been made to increase women’s numbers in Parliament since the first woman served in 1919. There is a tremendous amount of pressure on the government and independent institutions to explain why Britain lags behind other Western democracies. There are a number of reasons why women’s descriptive representation has garnered so much attention in recent years. First, the research of a number of influential British scholars has helped shed light on the situation. Joni Lovenduski, Pippa Norris, and Sarah Childs’ research is often included in government reports, contributing to a more sophisticated debate. Second, although not always a popular figure among traditional feminists, Margaret Thatcher’s influence cannot be overlooked. Britain had one of the first female heads of state in the world, despite a lack of overall female representation in Parliament. Thatcher’s rule may have inspired more women to get involved, and her leadership of the House of Commons may
have helped normalize the presence of women in Parliament. And third, Labour’s efforts to increase the number of female MPs since 1997, has also contributed to the debate.

The 1997 general election was critical for women’s representation in Britain. For the first time in history the number of women in the House of Commons reached triple digits; 120, doubling from only 60 in 1992. The Labour Party was solely responsible for the increase. Not only did New Labour win in a historic landslide election, they used All-Women Shortlists (AWS) in their selection process to increase the number of female parliamentary candidates and ultimately female Labour MPs. AWS was used in “50 per cent of all the key seats (defined as winnable on a 6 per cent swing) and in 50 per cent of all vacant Labour-held seats” (Childs, New Labour's Women MPs: Women Representing Women 2004, 34).

Due to potential legal challenges Labour did not use AWS in 2001. However, the 2002 Sex Discrimination Act gave all political parties the ability to “take action to reduce inequality in the number of men and women elected as candidates,” which included setting quotas like All Women Shortlists, to the Party’s discretion (Strickland, Gay, Lourie, and Cracknell 2001).

Labour, by using AWS in it’s selection process, politicized the issue of female representation and tied representation to other women’s right issues. Since 1997, the number of female Conservative candidates has risen significantly from only 55 in 1997 to 85 in 2001 and 118 in 2005, despite the lack of rule changes to the selection process. As the graph below shows, the gap between the number of female Labour and Conservative candidates since the 1997 election is starting to narrow, from a 15.5% difference in 1997
to a 6.6% difference in 2010. This could indicate that the Conservative Party selectorate is starting to choose more female candidates in an effort to keep up with Labour.

*Table 2.1 Candidates-Female by Party and General Election Year*

![Bar chart showing the percentage of female candidates by party from 1997 to 2010.

*Sources: Pippa Norris, British Constituency Election Data 1997-2010-www.pippanorris.com, Sarah Childs “Women and British Party Politics” pg. 60 and Shamit Saggar “Race and British electoral politics” pg. 100.*

The success rate for Conservative female candidates is much lower proportionally than it is for Labour’s female candidates. One explanation for the difference is Labour’s electoral dominance from 1997 to 2010. However, fewer Conservative women have been selected for winnable seats. Prior to 2005, the party was also opposed to any positive action that could have guaranteed that more women be selected for winnable seats. According to Sarah Childs “in 2005 the Conservatives were opposed to equality guarantees on the basis that they offended principles of meritocracy, preferring instead equality rhetoric and promotion” (Childs, Women and British Party Politics, 2008, 67). For the Conservatives, equality rhetoric and promotion was not enough to bring about significant change.

Figure 2.2 shows that there was a fairly even distribution between Conservative female candidates selected in safe, marginal and hopeless seats in 1997. Although there were fewer candidates, more women were selected for winnable (safe or marginal) seats.
Labour’s landslide led to a net loss for Conservative women. In 1992 there were 20 Conservative women elected to the House of Commons. In 1997 that number dropped to 13. Women have continued to struggle in the Conservative Party ever since. The number of female candidates did increase in 2001 and 2005, but of those candidates, significantly fewer were selected for winnable seats.

*Table 2.2 Conservative Women Selected in General Elections by Seat Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Safe/Fairly Safe</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Hopeless/Fairly Hopeless</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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*Safe Seat = 15 percent or more electoral advantage
*Fairly Safe Seat = 10 percent or more electoral advantage
*Marginal Seat = 9.99 percent or less electoral advantage or disadvantage
*Fairly Hopeless Seat = 10-14.99 percent electoral disadvantage
*Hopeless Seat= 15 percent or more electoral disadvantage

Significantly increasing the number of Conservative female MPs was not an essential component of the party’s strategy to compete with Labour after 1997. Ian Duncan Smith, party leader in 2001, and Michael Howard, party leader in 2005, were unwilling to make significant changes to the selection process. Even after the 2002 Sex Discrimination Act gave the Conservatives legal permission to take action, the Conservative leadership remained opposed to such actions. In addition, Michael Howard, at the 2005 general election, lead a Conservative Party with more traditional views on gender roles. According to Sarah Childs, women were conspicuously absent in the 2005
Conservative manifesto forward. When women were included, it was “in terms of the party’s maternity and childcare provision,” and women were also pictured in the manifesto as the “victims of crime” (Childs, Women and British Party Politics 2008, 47). Little else was said about women and no significant effort was made to increase the number of Conservative women MPs.

The Conservative leadership race in 2005 showed the first signs of a change on the horizon. Less than six months after the 2005 general election loss, Michael Howard resigned as party leader. (BBC 2005). Ultimately, David Cameron, the moderate among the candidates, was the victor. Cameron was a unique candidate. He was young, only 39 at the time, and had only just become an MP in 2001. More interesting was his appeal to Conservative MPs and party members. Cameron believed the party needed fundamental change and modernization to appeal to broader set of voters, specifically the young and women. The Party had to adjust its image, if it had any hope of defeating Labour in the next election. (Lee 2009) One way to do this was to reach out to more women by selecting more female candidates for Parliament. Cameron’s rhetoric and later his efforts to change the party selection process resembled similar efforts made by Tony Blair in 1997. Beyond a desire to increase the number of women in the party, and expand his base of support within the party, Blair and Labour party elites were courting traditionally Conservative female voters. Labour’s landslide in 1997 was evidence that their strategy worked.

By using similar strategies to the ones implemented in 1997 by Labour, the Conservatives attempted to make electoral gains through party modernization and the appearance of increased social inclusion. Valerie Bryson, who writes about women and
the feminisation of the Conservative Party also notes the similarity between the changes made by the party post-2005 and the Labour government. She says, “by the time of the 2010 general election, the Conservative Party seemed to have largely accepted the gender agenda that had been established by the Labour government and was increasingly being demanded by women in the party” (Bryson 2012, 157).

Interestingly, of the five female Conservative MPs I interviewed, not one said they favored the use of quotas or AWS to increase the number of Conservative women in Parliament. However, Caroline Nokes MP, compared the spike in Conservative women in 2010, to the spike that occurred among Labour women in 1997. She also said that she had a negative opinion of quotas but did admit that Labour has demonstrated that quotas can work. Generally, the women I interviewed felt that quotas should not be necessary to increase the number of women in Parliament. Karen Lumley MP stated that “in no other profession would you get the job simply because you are a woman; being an MP is no different.” Mary MacLeod MP had a similar opinion, saying “quotas can be derogatory…you’ll get it because you’re a woman.” She would rather women get selected because selectors think they are talented. She said “there should be equal opportunity for every woman.”

*Pressure from Female Party Elites*

Female party members’ impact on the direction of the party is a significant variable to consider. After the explosion of female Labour MPs in 1997, Conservative women were forced to face a dilemma within their party. Prior to Labour’s efforts, women were grossly underrepresented, in both parties, and neither party had implemented any real changes to address the issue. Labour’s actions in 1997 raised the
issue to a level of political importance. After the 1997 election, Conservative women were not only in a position to more openly decry the lack of women in Parliament, but they were presented with new strategies and methods to bring about change.

Sarah Childs gives an example of how the increased presence of women in Parliament had a serious impact on Conservative women. Childs recounts the observations of Labour’s new female MPs and their interactions with other Conservative female MPs after the 1997 election. Some discussions led them to believe that several Conservative female MPs were “conscious of both the lack of women’s numerical representation…and of the need for greater positive action policies…” (Childs, New Labour's Women MPs: Women Representing Women 2004, 42). One Labour MP recounted a specific conversation. She said “one of the Tory women on [the] first day here, when we met, she said she looked across at us and saw all these women, [it] just hit home, it really hit home how out of touch [the] Conservatives [had] been, She actually said, ‘What on earth have we been doing for the last four or five years?’” (Childs, New Labour's Women MPs: Women Representing Women 2004, 42)

The increased female presence in Parliament led Conservative female MPs and party activists to re-evaluate their place in the Party and take action. Evidence for this change is easy to see. First, critical changes were made to modernize the Conservative Women’s Organization, whose members were previously best known for providing food and tea at social events. Second, prominent Conservative female leaders and MPs began to publicly express their concerns about the lack of women in politics. Third, prior to the 2010 election, another women’s organization, Women2Win, whose mission was to support, train, and promote female candidates for Parliament was formed. And fourth, the
party’s position of Vice Chairmen for women was re-established in 2005. Margot James, who is now an MP, was selected by David Cameron to fill the position. Margot James is the Conservative Party’s first openly gay MP (Hoggard 2006). According to James, she also “formed the Women's Policy Group under the chairmanship of Eleanor Laing MP and is contributing to the policy review process underway in the Conservative Party” (Margot James MP 2013).

*The Conservative Women’s Organization*

The Conservative Party is the home of the first dedicated political women’s organization. According to its website, the Conservative Women’s organization “was first founded in 1919 when it was called the Women’s National Advisory Committee, although its roots go back to the Primrose League formed in 1883.” The organization proudly notes that the first female Member of Parliament was a Conservative, as well as the first, and only (thus far) female Prime Minister. According to the website, the organization provides a grassroots network to women in the Party, helps the party to “capture the women’s vote,” and encourages “women to be politically active and to get elected at all levels” of government, among others.

There is much to admire in an organization with such clear goals and historic staying power. However, according to Sarah Childs, prior to 2005 the organization had become ineffectual and was often outright ignored by the party leadership. Since then, the organization has gone through a number of critical changes; changes that conveniently coincide with influx of Labour women in 1997 and the election of David Cameron as party leader. According to Childs, party members, as well as some MPs were “said to be keen, especially under William Hague’s tenure (1997-2001), for the women’s
organization to wither.” However, since around 2005, the organization has come to life. Childs says that the organization “re-launched itself…with popular annual conferences, and new activities, formats and groups: Women’s Forums and Summits and the CWO Muslim group.” (Childs & Webb 2012, 39). Female party members, motivated by multiple electoral losses and no gains in the number of Conservative female Members of Parliament, were more motivated than ever to ramp up their efforts.

Public Statements and Calls to Action

In the Spring of 2010, the Right Honorable Theresa May wrote an article for the Harvard International Review titled “Woman of the House: Standing for Gender Equality in British Politics.” Theresa May is one of the leading female MPs in the Conservative Party. She was first elected to Parliament in 1997 and served in a number of leadership roles in the Shadow Cabinet (from 1999-2010). She is currently Home Secretary and was also the Minister for Women and Equalities from 2010 to 2012 (May, Theresa May MP: Biography 2013).

In the article, May tells a comprehensive story about the rise of women in British Politics and what needs to be done to ensure more women become involved, run for office, and serve in the House of Commons. In many ways the article is a call to action. It also highlights the efforts by her party to increase the number of female MPs. The language used by May in the article is particularly instructive.

First, May noted the relationship between winning over female voters and more female representation. She said, “At the 1992 General Election, for example, the victorious Conservative Party held a 10 percent lead over Labour among women voters. In 1997, the year of Tony Blair’s landslide, Labour led the Conservatives among women voters.”
by 12 points. Politicians are aware of this and realize that to win women over, we must start talking and looking like female voters” (May, Woman of the House: Standing for Gender Equality in British Politics 2010, 40-41).

Although women’s numbers in Parliament have steadily increased, progress is too slow. In 2010, May observed, “Before 2007, at the rate we were going, it would have taken my Conservative Party 400 years to achieve equal representation of women within its ranks” (May 2010, 42). She then goes on to explain how she played a critical role in the development of the ideas that led to changes within the Conservative Party. She said, “In 2001, a colleague and I had proposed that the Conservative Party should introduce an A-list of candidates. The best candidates would become part of a gender-balanced list, the number being determined by the number of winnable seats.” She concluded the paragraph by saying, “The idea was not introduced at the time but was brought in, albeit in a modified form, after David Cameron became the leader of the Conservative Party” (May 2010, 43).

In other cases, May had a more direct impact. “While I was Party Chairman in 2002 and 2003, I introduced US-style primaries for the selection of candidates… this has been another vital part of the process of opening up the party to new thinking about the selection of candidates.” Open primaries were used in some districts in 2010, giving the electorate an opportunity to weigh in on candidate selection. Open primaries “give all voters in a particular electoral area the opportunity to participate even if they are affiliated to a party which they then do not vote for” (Asato 2010, 59).

May is co-founder of the organization Women2Win, responsible for recruiting and supporting Conservative women to run for office. May’s ideas and influence clearly
contributed to the action taken by David Cameron and the party leadership post 2005. Additionally May, like other women in Parliament, noted her willingness to mentor other prospective female politicians. She said, “As an MP, I try to use my position to encourage other women to enter politics at all levels- everything from running for their local council to standing for Parliament” (May 2010, 44).

Mentorship is another way that female party elites can encourage other women to run for office. Female MPs can support and educate women who may be interested in the job in the future. By doing so, they may aleviate potential anxieties and dispell misconceptions about the job. Mentorship is a critical way female MPs and other female elected officials can have a direct impact on the political ambition of other women within the party, if they choose to do so.

More publicly, Female MPs can also use their political positions to draw attention to issues they care about. Theresa May used her position to highlight the changes she believed needed to occur in her Party to include more women. Theresa May was not the only Conservative Woman to publicize her concerns about the underrepresentation of women in Parliament prior to 2010. Caroline Spelman MP (MP for rural West Midlands since 1997) was quoted in an article for the New Stateswoman in April, 2005. She said, “Women are still very much in the minority at Westminster and that does have an impact. The whole tradition of politics is intrinsically male- it is adversarial and depends heavily on oratorical skills. All of these things play to male strengths. Gradually the culture is changing, but it’s quite slow” (Riddell 2005, 36). Like Theresa May, Caroline Spelman mentioned the slow rate of change to include more women in Parliament. Although
May’s efforts are more visible, it is clear that other women in the Party were also concerned about the lack of women in Parliament.

*Women2Win*

Among the five women I interviewed, Mary Macleod MP was the only one who did not explicitly mention Women2Win as contributing to either the increased number of female MPs in 2010 or their own personal success. Harriett Baldwin directly attributed her success as a candidate to the financial assistance, training, and coaching she received from the organization. Organizations like Women2Win can have a significant impact on the prospects of female candidates. Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox have examined the impact of similar organizations (such as Emily’s List and Emerge) on prospective female candidates in the US. Emily’s List and Emerge are Democratic/Progressive organizations that train, raise funds for, and promote female candidates. Lawless and Fox find that “a woman who has contact with one of these organizations is more likely than the average man in the candidate eligibility pool to be recruited…Hence, women’s groups facilitate candidate emergence.” (Lawless and Fox 2010, 105).

Women2Win provided critical support for Conservative women leading up to the 2010 election. Continued support from the organization will only encourage and empower more Conservative women to run for office in the future. It is important to note that Women2Win is a party organization associated with Cameron’s campaign prior to 2010, Change2Win. Language on the organization’s website is explicit about its connection to David Cameron. The “about us” section says “Women2Win has done a tremendous amount since 2005 – supporting David Cameron’s commitment to select
more women to fight winnable seats, and elect more Conservative women to Parliament” (Women2Win 2013).

*Vice Chairman for Women*

In 2005 the party brought back the Vice Chairman position for women, providing yet another example of its commitment to reach out to women (Childs and Webb 2012, 39). Cameron’s choice of Margot James to fill the position was particularly interesting, because James, at the time was the first openly-gay Conservative candidate for Parliament. The current list of Vice Chairmen no longer includes a position responsible for women. The current list includes a position responsible for youth and BME communities. In March of 2013, Rebecca Harris MP was named the new Vice Chairman responsible for youth.

*David Cameron and Female Representation*

Conservative Party leaders Ian Duncan Smith and Michael Howard responded to Labour’s success by shifting the party to the right ideologically (Lee & Beech 2009). Cameron’s appeal to modernize the party was a response to previous party leaders’ failure. In David Cameron’s 2005 Conservative conference speech, he explicitly described where he saw the party heading under his leadership. He said, “There’s one thing Gordon Brown fears more than anything else: a Conservative Party that had the courage to change. So let’s give him the fright of his life” (Cameron 2005). For Cameron, those changes included a number of efforts to modernize the party. Cameron advocated for a Conservative Party that more closely resembled British society. In order to seriously compete with Labour, the Conservatives had to appeal to a broader set of voters.
In Tim Bale’s analysis, Cameron’s initial goal was to moderate the party and take on a new brand; compassionate Conservatism. One way Cameron immediately altered the face of the party was to change the candidate selection process to include more females and ethnic minorities. According to Bale, “the precise nature of this action was announced by Cameron less than a week after he took over.” Cameron chose to use a priority or “A” list of candidates; the method previously suggested by Theresa May and other party elites. Bale describes the process, “The Candidates Committee would recruit and select a Priority List (soon nicknamed the A-List) of 100 (rising to 200) people deemed especially eligible for selection, at least half of whom would be women. The list would also seek to include ‘a significant proportion’ of people from ethnic minority backgrounds and with disabilities. All target seats and seats with sitting MPs planning to retire would have to select from the list, although in ‘exceptional circumstances’ they would be able to consider a local candidate” (Bale, ‘The Politics of and’: David Cameron, 2005 2010, 290). Therefore the list guaranteed the selection of more women for winnable seats, but gave local party selectors who were not keen on the list, an adequate loop-hole.

As Sarah Childs and Paul Webb point out in their analysis of the Conservatives in 2010, efforts to increase the supply of female candidates and the demand for female candidates within the party began long before Cameron took over in 2005. However, “in agreeing to seek a more descriptively representative Parliamentary party, and implementing reforms to that effect, Cameron was cognizant of the possible electoral benefits of selecting more women” (Childs & Webb 2012, 83).

The Priority List was not universally popular within the Party. Many party members favored a meritocratic approach. In 2009, Cameron noted that the current
method to include more women was too slow. He briefly came out in favor of All-Women Shortlists. According to Childs and Webb, many party members did not support the introduction of AWS, especially because Cameron’s announcement came so close to the general election. Childs and Webb account for how those on the A-List ultimately fared in the election. “Priority list women were equally successful as Priority list men at getting selected for winnable seats and getting elected to Parliament.” According to Childs and Webb, 53 of the original 100 person list were women. Of that 53, 27 were not selected. Childs and Webb also say that “the Priority list, in particular, generated intra-party antipathy at best, if not outright hostility. ‘Good men’ were said to have been left off the list in order to make place for ‘less good’ women.” (Childs & Webb 2012, 77-82).

The female candidates selected for the 2010 general election were also scrutinized by the press for not having enough perceived experience or political prowess. In addition to the A-Listers, other Conservative women selected to stand for election in 2010 and promoted by Cameron, were sometimes disrespectfully referred to as “Cameron’s Cuties.” In April 2010, writer for the Daily Mail, Amanda Platell, asked “Have Cameron’s Cuties really got what it takes to transform politics?” Platell’s conclusions are harsh, if not a little shocking. She says the women selected, “share a desire to make the world a better place- and for that they are to be applauded. The question is whether the good intentions of the political amateur will be enough in the rough and tumble of Westminster- especially in these dire economic times.” She continues by saying, “It’s not their fault, but many of them have been chosen for the wrong reason; to carry David Cameron’s message that the Tories have changed. Not changed their principles, but their appearance” (Platell 2010). Curiously, the author calls these women “political amateurs”
yet two of them hold law degrees, one has worked for both Goldman Sachs and the BBC, another became the youngest local councillor in Britain in 2004, another is a Royal Navy Reservist, and a number of others served in leadership roles for companies, marketing firms, and PR agencies.

These women were often referred to as Cameron’s Cuties or Dave’s Dolls because of Cameron’s intensified effort to promote female candidates. See the picture posted in the Daily Mail below. Cameron is pictured campaigning with Chloe Smith MP for a by-election in 2009.

Table 2.3: Picture- Cameron Supports Chloe Smith

![Cameron Supports Chloe Smith](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1222796/Camerons-cuties-The-80-women-likely-MPs-Tories-new-female-friendly-party.html)

It is clear that the increase in female MPs in 2010 can be attributed to the changes Cameron made to the selection process and his promotion of female candidates. Several of the women I interviewed attributed the increase in Conservative female MPs to some of the changes made within the Conservative Party, many of which Cameron facilitated. Karen Lumley MP noted the change in the types of questions asked by selectors of potential candidates. She said in 1997 she was asked questions like, “how would you look after your children?” For 2010, they no longer asked those kinds of questions. She also
noted that it is easier for women to become MPs now. The adjustment in the sitting hour of Parliament is one reason she noted. She said the change likely had something to do with Cameron wanting to get home to put his kids to bed. I asked her specifically if she thought Cameron’s leadership had affected the increase in Conservative women in Parliament. She instead focused on the work of women within the party to bring about the change.

Mary Macleod MP explicitly attributed the increase in women MPs to Cameron’s actions. She said that when Cameron became leader, he stood up and said ‘enough is enough’. He did not want the party to look out of touch. Cameron sought out more women and championed them. Cameron set the goal to have 30% female ministers by 2015. She said she personally wouldn’t have put a number on it, but this was Cameron’s goal.

Rebecca Harris MP mentioned the 50/50 priority list and partially attributed it to the success for more female candidates in 2010. She believed Cameron was essential; “he wanted to do it in a fair way.” She also noted his insistence on 50/50 men and women. She said, “prior to the change, men and women were coming up with equally glowing CVs [for Parliamentary office], but women weren’t being interviewed.”

Harriett Baldwin MP said it was clear that the leadership wanted to see more women MPs. She noted that women were given extra support by the Conservative Party in 2010. She mentioned the priority list and how she was selected for the West Worcestshire seat. Though, she cautioned that Cameron’s support for the priority list (50/50) list and similar measures “could trigger a backlash”.

51
Caroline Nokes MP said, “After David Cameron became leader he attempted to widen the appeal; whether it has been successful… remains to be seen”. She mentioned Louise Mensch’s downfall as a setback (Mensch had recently resigned from her seat to move with her children to New York to be with her husband when I conducted the interviews) (Pierce 2012). She said “Cameron was prepared to go out on a limb”.

Although Cameron was not the only factor that contributed to the increase, he played a significant role and the comments of the female MPs I interviewed confirm that fact. Cameron continues to publicly support efforts to increase the number of Conservative women in Parliament. For example, on the Women2Win website Cameron can be seen in a promotional video touting the success and efforts of the organization and offering his continued support (Conservatives, Women2Win 2013).

Caroline Spelman and Conservative Female Cabinet Ministers:

I was also given the opportunity to interview Caroline Spelman, who was (until recently) one of David Cameron’s cabinet ministers. Due to scheduling conflicts I was unable to speak with Ms Spelman, but it is important to briefly discuss the inclusion of women in David Cameron’s cabinet. Caroline Spelman was the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from May 2010 to September 2012. In 2008, Cameron made a pledge to “give a third of "ministerial jobs in a Conservative government to women” (Annesley & Gains 2012, p. 720). Prior to his cabinet reshuffle in September 2012, five of Cameron’s cabinet ministers were women, only one-fifth of his cabinet. After the cabinet reshuffle, there are still only five women in David Cameron’s cabinet, Theresa May MP, Maria Miller MP, Justine Greening MP, Theresa Villiers MP, and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi. Caroline Spelman and Cheryl Gillan were
shuffled out of Cameron’s cabinet, while Maria Miller and Theresa Villiers joined the cabinet (Burn-Murdoch 2012).

According to authors Annesley and Gains, Cameron’s “capacity to meet his 33 percent [sic] target [may have been] constrained by two significant [sic] factors: the small size of his ministerial supply pool and his need to form a coalition government…” (Annesley & Gains 2012, p. 720). Regardless, Cameron’s inclusion of women in his cabinet is significant and is yet another example of attempts to change the face of the party, even if the project has yet to be entirely successful.

Conclusion and Findings

At the end of all five of my interviews with female MPs, I asked what kind of advice they would give other women who may be interested in pursuing careers in politics. Most of the women I interviewed said they would advise a woman interested in one day becoming an MP to go out and get experience doing something else first and develop a broad range of skills. Many of them would instruct other women to be persistent and believe in themselves. Mary Macleod MP said, “Women sometimes lack confidence and do not ask for help…be clever about it, use the people around you and ask for help.” She said women often shy away from doing media spots, but publicity is incredibly important for candidates and MPs to get their message to the public. Therefore women need to agree to do more media spots. She also emphasized the need to be persistent; she said when she was running for Parliament she often reminded herself that “Margaret Thatcher had to apply for 50 seats before she got accepted.”

Persistence and support were general themes from all of my conversations. From this, it is easy to conclude that in order to for Conservative women to have continued
success; they must receive adequate support and encouragement from party elites and party leadership. Since the mid-1970’s women have voted at higher rates than men, and although one woman cannot be expected to represent the wishes of all women, they at least deserve an equal chance at being decision-makers (Childs, Women and British Party Politics 2008, 5).
Chapter 3

Ethnic Minorities and the Conservative Party

Since 1974, the Labour party has selected more ethnic minority candidates to stand for Parliament than the Conservatives, doing more to improve its image among ethnic minority voters. Not only has Labour selected more ethnic minority candidates, more of them have been successful. Although the Conservatives selected almost as many minority candidates as Labour in 1997, 0 out of 13 were successful, compared to 9 out of 14 that stood for Labour (Rich 1998, 100). More recently, the Conservatives actually selected more BME candidates to stand in 2005, but again were not as successful as Labour candidates. The Conservatives were able to improve on their success rate significantly in 2010, but Conservative BME candidates have still yet to be as successful at Labour BME candidates.

Not always noticed by scholars and perhaps even by voters, the Conservative Party does put minority candidates up for election. In this chapter, the experiences of two successful Conservative BME MPs are examined. The number of successful BME Conservative candidates in 2010 is interesting because such an increase has never been observed before in the Conservative Party. Additionally, the party seems motivated to continue its outreach to BME communities. Therefore the increase witnessed in 2010,
may be the start of an upward trend. Interviews with BME MPs shed light on what caused the increase in 2010, and what could happen in the future.

Alok Sharma (BME, Male, Member of Parliament and Party Vice Chairman)

Mr. Sharma has been delivering leaflets for the Conservative Party since he was ten years old. He is an accountant by trade, but has served in a number of different roles in the private sector, from running a business to working on a factory production line (Sharma MP 2008-2013). Sharma once stood for election in a local race in an unwinnable Labour seat, but prior to 2010, Sharma had never sought a seat in Parliament. He said, “In a sense my journey to this place on one level has been much smoother than it has [sic] for many other colleagues…” (Sharma MP, 2012). Sharma was selected for and currently represents Reading West. Sharma believes his ethnic background had nothing to do with his selection for the seat. He said, “You know if you were to say to me, did the fact that I’m not white have any impact at all on my selection process, I can tell you absolutely, hand on heart, no. My local party is absolutely color blind” (Sharma MP, 2012). Sharma has also been given a leadership position within the party. He is the new Vice Chairman responsible for BME communities. According to Sharma, the position “is about making sure that we, [the Conservative Party], are more connected with people from ethnic minority communities” (Sharma MP, 2012).

Paul Uppal (BME, Male, Member of Parliament)

Mr. Uppal has been active in the Conservative party for just over a decade. He is from an East-African Sikh family. He said that politics was part of his early life (Uppal MP, 2012). According to his biography, “politics mattered to his family as they lost a substantial electrical business in Kenya and were grateful to the UK for the refuge,
security and opportunities that were provided [to them]” (Uppal MP, 2011). Uppal’s professional background is in business. He fought for a seat in 2005 but had no chance of winning. He is now particularly proud to represent Wolverhampton South West (Uppal, 2012). The seat is also home to a substantial ethnic minority population (Wells, 2013).

*Ethnic Minorities and Competition with Labour*

Unlike the clear move made by Labour to appeal to more women in 1997 with AWS, outreach to ethnic minority communities has been more gradual and controversial. Mr. Uppal’s seat, Wolverhampton South West, is an interesting case study. The Wolverhampton South West seat is an urban seat. The Conservatives held the seat from 1950 until 1997, when they lost to the Labour candidate by 10 points. Mr. Uppal is the first Conservative to hold the seat since 1997. More interesting, perhaps, is one of seat’s former MPs. Enoch Powell, a controversial political figure and former Conservative MP, held the seat from 1950 to 1974 (The National Archives 2013). Enoch Powell is infamous for his “Rivers of Blood” speech, delivered in the spring of 1968. The speech elicited racialist fervor in Britain at the time. He said “In this country in 15 or 20 years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man” (Powell 1968). Powell said there could be no comparison between the situation of African Americans in the US and the “Commonwealth immigrant” in Britain, but later concludes his speech with its most famous line “As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see “the River Tiber foaming with much blood…That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by
our own volition and our own neglect. Indeed, it has all but come. In numerical terms, it will be of American proportions long before the end of the century” (Powell 1968).

Powell’s speech was highly controversial and lead to a great deal of debate, outrage and also support within some working class communities. According to scholar Amy Whipple, “London dockers began to strike in his honor, and “Don’t Knock Enoch” signs appeared as a public statement of approval” (Whipple 2009, 717). Conversely Whipple says, “The Labour Party attacked him for legitimizing racist sentiment, and the leader of his own party Edward Heath, dismissed him from the Shadow Cabinet for making such an incendiary statement without prior party approval” (Whipple 2009, 717). Labour’s opposition to Powell’s speech was an early example of the clearly developing differences in approach to ethnic minority communities among the political parties. This lead to some tension between the labour unions and the Labour Party. According to Whipple, “Labour MPs of high-immigrant constituencies had long been aware of the tensions between representing the working class and maintaining open immigration politics…these trends sparked anxiety within the Labour Party about its hold on traditional party supporters” (Whipple 2009, 726-727).

The Labour Party continues to grapple with its outreach to traditional white working class supporters and ethnic minority communities. Political Scientist Rafaela Dancygier illuminates the still present conflict in her analysis of Labour’s selection of Muslim candidates for local councils. Because local councillors have significant say over the allocation of local resources, white working class voters could see a Muslim council candidate as a potential threat (Dancygier 2012).
Labour’s appeal to ethnic minority communities may be complicated, but recently Labour has electorally dominated over the Conservatives in all non-white communities. 2001 survey data shows the average percentage of non-whites voting for Labour was 20 points higher than whites, with non-white support for Labour averaging at 70.7% (Anwar 2009, 96). Labour’s outreach to ethnic minority communities has been most successful on local councils and in cities with high proportions of ethnic minority populations, such as Birmingham, London, and Manchester.

Romain Garbaye examines the relationship between the Labour and Conservative Parties and ethnic minority groups in Birmingham, looking specifically at the Birmingham council. The Conservative and Labour Parties did little to reach out to ethnic minority groups in Birmingham pre-1981, and Garbaye notes that the Conservatives were known to use xenophobic rhetoric at the time. Garbaye says that after 1981, “a new Labour majority managed to seize long term control of the council, permanently marginalizing the Conservatives, implementing a fully fledged race relations policy and co-opting ethnic minority councillors into a governing coalition” (Garbaye 2005, 103). Garbaye notes another, more obvious reason for Labour’s stronghold on ethnic minority community support. Garbaye says that “the ethnic minorities of Birmingham present the outward characteristics of the working class population of Birmingham” (Garbaye 2005, 102). The working class population has largely aligned ideologically with Labour. Additionally, minority populations are usually concentrated in urban, inner-city wards, which have generally been Labour strongholds (Garbaye 2005).
Table 3.1: BME Candidates and MPs by Party and General Election Year

The recent changes to Conservative Party strategy toward ethnic minority communities is evidence of the Party’s renewed effort to compete with Labour for ethnic minority votes. Previsouly, the Conservative Party did make a marginal effort to reach out to ethnic minority groups from the mid-1970’s through the mid-1980’s. The party identified a number of marginal Labour seats that could potentially swing Conservative if they could pursuade some minority voters in those constituencies to vote Conservative (Rich 1998, 97-98). According to scholar Paul Rich, “In January of 1976 a Department of Community Affairs was established in Conservative Central Office with the objective of establishing better relationships with certain targeted groups including ethnic minorities…An Ethnic Minorities Unit was established…which led to the establishment of [sic.] Anglo-Asian and Anglo-West Indian Conservative Societies” (Rich 1998, 98). This led to a broader more popular organization within the Conservative Party, the One Nation Forum. Rich concludes that the attempts made by the party to court minority groups in the 70s and 80s yielded little success. The One Nation Forum helped a small number of BME candidates get selected to run for Parliament, but not one of those
candidates was successful. And during John Major’s leadership, “the whole question of ethnic and race issues were put on hold in the Conservative Party” (Rich 1998, 99-103).

Consecutive Conservative losses since 1997 pushed the party to re-evaluate their electoral strategy. After the election of David Cameron as party leader in 2005, more significant efforts were made to reach out to minority communities. Cameron’s “A” list of candidates was not only intended to ensure more female candidates, but more ethnic minority candidates as well. Open (American style) primaries were used in some districts allowing some candidates a fairer shot at being selected. Alok Sharma MP’s new position of Vice Chairman responsible for BME communities is also evidence of the Conservative Party’s changing strategy.

I asked Mr. Sharma about the party’s intentions to reach out more to ethnic minority communities in the future. He said:

“…as part of the recent changes we’ve had, I’ve now been given a role within the party to basically connect with the minority community. And I know, I’ve heard this first hand from the Prime Minister, this is a very important thing for us. It’s an important thing on two levels…First you connect with people and [sic] demonstrate to them that their values and your values are absolutely aligned, and their voice is important to you. You do all of that, and then of course what flows from that as a political party is whether people are willing to give you a chance at the ballot box. Now, if they don’t think that you understand them and if they don’t think that you listen to them, and if they don’t think that they matter to you, they’re not going to even think about voting for you. And I think…for every political party, [sic] it is really important that you are able to connect with every community” (Sharma MP, 2012).

Sharma drew a comparison between his party’s efforts to reach out to minority communities and the minimal effort made by the Republican Party in the US. To paraphrase, he was critical of the Republican strategy to simply hope that certain parts of the voting population wouldn’t turn out to vote. He said, “Long term that’s not a winning strategy” (Sharma MP, 2012).
A compounding factor for the Conservatives is the growing number of ethnic minorities now living in the UK. It will become increasingly difficult for the Conservatives to win Parliamentary majorities if they cannot win a more significant portion of the ethnic minority population, short of implementing undemocratic voter suppression strategies. For example, Asian voter turnout in some areas has been higher than non-Asian turnout in the past. In 1997, in the some of the largest ethnic minority-majority constituencies, such as Birmingham, Bradford and Walthamstow, the Asian turnout averaged 62.5%, compared to 56.2% of the non-Asian population. Turnout declined slightly in 2001, but still remained large in the Asian community. In 1997, Indian and Pakistanis turned out at higher levels than whites. However, other groups such as Bangladeshis, Black Caribbeans, and Black Africans have not turned out as much as whites (Anwar 2009, 78-79). In 2005, turnout percentages changed slightly by group. Bangladeshi turnout actually increased to the highest at 76%, however, Pakistani and Indian turnout remained high, at 70% of Pakistanis and 67% of Indians (Anwar 2009, 87). High voter turnout in these ethnic minority communities means that political parties cannot ignore them as a voting bloc. And, as the ethnic minority population continues to grow, they will become harder and harder to ignore. According to preliminary 2011 national census results, the number of residents of England and Wales born outside of the UK increased by 4.6 million over the last decade. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were among the top ten countries for non-UK born residents in England and Wales in 2011. Almost half a million people from just those three countries alone moved to the England or Wales in the last ten years.
Table 3.2: Top 10 Countries for non-UK born residents in England and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>2001 Census</th>
<th>2011 Census</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>456,000</td>
<td>694,000</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>579,000</td>
<td>898%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>308,000</td>
<td>482,000</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>473,000</td>
<td>407,000</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>244,000</td>
<td>274,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>153,000</td>
<td>212,000</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>191,000</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>191,000</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>144,000</td>
<td>177,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>146,000</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Those born in Germany include the children of HM forces who were previously stationed in that country.

Mr. Sharma was well aware of the changing demographics of the country, how those changes might affect the Conservative party, and what the party must do to adapt. He said:

“So what you will see over the next 15-25 years is a change…You’re seeing a change and this will be an issue that faces countries across Western Europe, and how Politicians and governments react to that and particularly political parties positively embrace that change… I mean the change is happening whether you like it or not. You cannot turn [back], you may want to go back to living the way things were 50-70 years ago, maybe there are people around who do, but that’s not going to happen. So you have to embrace change…And, as a political party you have to understand that if you are going to be meaningful to the population over the coming years you need to look and sound like the population you’re hoping [will] vote for you. That applies to every political party…” (Sharma MP, 2012).

Pressure from BME Party Elites

Evidence of pressure from BME party elites to increase the number of ethnic minority MPs is easier to identify in the Labour Party. More Labour local councillors, and ultimately more Labour MPs, has translated to a greater push to increase the number of BME Labour candidates and MPs. Current Labour Party MP Rushanara Ali and Colm
O’Cinneide discuss the efforts made by party members to increase the number of BME MPs. “Frustrated by the lack of a single ethnic minority MP in Parliament, [black and Asian Labour supporters], around the country established what were known as ‘Black Sections’ in constituency Labour parties” (Ali & O’Cinneide 2002, 18). With such strong support for Labour among ethnic minorities, pressure intensified to get more ethnic minority candidates selected to fight for more local council and Parliamentary seats. Ali and O’Cinneide analyze the general party efforts to reach out to potential minority candidates.

Surprisingly Ali and O’Cinneide said in 2002 that the Conservative Party was “more advanced than either Labour or the Liberal Democrats in actively supporting minority candidates.” They also note the appointments of a number of Conservative ethnic minority elites to critical roles under Iain Duncan Smith. Shailesh Vara served as a Vice Chairman responsible for youth affairs. Additionally, the party had another Vice Chairman at the time responsible for ethnic minority issues. “Furthermore, Iain Duncan Smith…also appointed former PPC’s Judith Edwards, Mohammed Riaz and Nirj Deva MEP as advisors to the Party” (Ali & O’Cinneide 2002, 22).

The influence of party members like Vara, Edwards, Riaz and Deva may have led to the decision within the party to do more outreach to ethnic minority communities. Their influence may have influenced the “A” list and the inclusion of not just more qualified female candidates, but ethnic minority candidates as well. Mr. Vara has been a Member of Parliament since 2005, representing North West Cambridgeshire. He is also currently the Assistant Government Whip (The Conservative Party 2013). As more ethnic

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1 In 2002, when Ali and O’Cinneide’s book was published, Ali was not yet an MP. She recently won the Bethnal Green and Bow seat in 2010.
minority candidates move up through the ranks of the Conservative Party, one should expect to see more ethnic minority candidates coming forward. And with the influence that Shailesh Vara, the additional 10 BME MPs, and other party elites have, the party will likely continue its effort to reach out to ethnic minority communities.

One strategy proposed to help increase the number of BME MPs in Parliament is similar to AWS, All-BME shortlists. I asked both Uppal and Sharma if they would consider implementing something like All-BME shortlists to guarantee more BME Conservative MPs in the future. Mr. Sharma said:

“No, I’m totally against quotas. At the end of the day if you’re selected for a seat or elected as a member of Parliament, what you want is for people to say ‘this was the best candidate on offer irrespective whether they were black, white, brown, what they’re religion was, anything like that, this was the best candidate on offer of all the candidates we had and we could have picked anyone’. I think that’s what gives you credibility… You know, I don’t believe in quotas, but that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t be doing stuff to encourage more people from groups which are underrepresented [sic] [to get] involved in politics. And I think that’s what all politicians ought to be doing” (Sharma MP, 2012).

Mr. Uppal said that he is not a fan of using quotas. However, he also noted later in our interview that “the political process is poorer for not having the perspective of BME candidates” (Uppal MP, 2012). Unfortunately time constraints limited me and I was unable to ask a critical follow up question, “If not quotas or All-BME shortlists, what action would you propose to increase the number of BME Conservative MPs?” Although I was not able to ask the follow up question, neither of them gave me a specific policy or proposal to supplant the use of a quota on their own. Sharma did note that other things should be done to encourage more ethnic minorities to run for office, but again, provided no specific plan on how to make it happen.
Interestingly, while I was interviewing Mary Macleod she said that “the party has not done as much proactively on the ethnic minority side, but will do more in the future.” She said they are meeting regularly to discuss how to engage in ethnically diverse districts (Macleod MP, 2012).

David Cameron and BME Representation

David Cameron’s leadership similarly led to the increase in the ethnic minority MPs and female MPs in 2010. I asked both Mr. Sharma and Mr. Uppal if they believed David Cameron’s leadership affected the increase in Conservative BME MPs. Mr. Uppal said he believed the change was coming, “but David Cameron sped up the process” (Uppal MP, 2010). His comments echoed the reactions of the some of the female MPs, when I asked about Cameron’s influence. Based on their comments, I was able to determine that other factors also contributed to the increase, but without Cameron as leader, the change would have been slower and the efforts of others within and outside the party may have been stymied.

Mr. Sharma even went beyond attributing the increase in BME MPs to Cameron, and attributed him to his own success as a candidate. He said, “I attribute, primarily, David Cameron and the rise of the Conservative vote” (Sharma MP, 2012). Although it is difficult to measure just how successful Cameron’s efforts were in reaching out to new communities and encouraging more ethnic minorities to run for Parliament, the increase in BME MPs provides some evidence of success. In addition to making alterations to the selection process to ensure more female representation, he also highlighted the low numbers of ethnic minorities in Parliament as well. According to scholar Simon Lee, “to create ‘a balanced party’ Cameron announced ‘a positive action plan’, composed of five
‘decisive steps’ to dramatically increase the number of women, [and] black and minority ethnic Conservative MPs” (Lee 2009, 8). Among the strategies Cameron used to ensure more BME MPs was the “Priority List” which included a “significant proportion of ethnic minority candidates” (Lee 2009, 8). Another strategy, which also benefited female candidates, was to intensively headhunt for new women and BME candidates. The programme was headed by Theresa May and Bernard Jenkin, the Deputy Chairman for candidates. The programme also provided mentoring to candidates (Lee 2009, 8-9).

Another change implemented by Cameron was the use of more open (American-style) primaries for certain seats. When I asked Mr. Uppal why he thought more Conservative ethnic minority candidates were successful in 2010 compared to previous years, he said there were more open primaries. He also said that there was an active push to change the face of the party (Uppal MP, 2012). Because the use of open primaries is a relatively new phenomenon in Britain, their overall impact on the fortunes of BME candidates remains to be seen. More research is needed to determine how open primaries in Britain affect untraditional candidates, like women and ethnic minorities.

**Conclusion: Findings, Future and Advice**

Although there was a significant increase in Conservative ethnic minority MPs in 2010, attributing the increase to the efforts made by Cameron and the Conservative Party between 2005 and 2010 is problematic. Although the number of successful BME candidates jumped from 2 in 2005 to 11 in 2010, the number of actual candidates only increased from 41 in 2005 to 43 in 2010. Conservative fortunes may have been the real cause for the increase. Of course, Conservative fortunes in 2010 are easily attributed to Cameron, but unless more significant steps are taken to ensure more BME candidates and
the selection of those candidates to winnable seats, there may not be another increase in 2015. This will especially be the case if the Conservatives do not perform well in 2015. I asked Mr. Uppal and Mr. Sharma if they believed the number of BME candidates and MPs would increase in 2015. Uppal said “Yes, absolutely by 2020, it’s not just about 2015” (Uppal MP, 2012). Mr. Sharma said:

“What’s going to happen in 2015? I don’t know. If I had that crystal ball I wouldn’t be sitting here, I can tell you. I have no idea what’s going to happen, but I don’t think it’s just about 2015 because, what I want to see happening within the Conservative Party isn’t just about 2015. Actually what you need to be seeing…if we put in place the structures that make sure that we are able to encourage [and] empower a lot more people from all diverse communities to get involved in politics, then it’s not just about what happens in 2.5 years from now. It’s what happens in 7.5 years or 10 years, or 20 years. That’s what it should really be about” (Sharma MP, 2012).

Uppal and Sharma’s comments were fairly optimistic, in spite of the Conservative Party’s floundering national support. However, they both focused more on the distant rather than the near future. Change takes time. It has been 35 years since Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” speech and the Conservative Party has only just recently selected a more significant number of BME MPs into its ranks. In 2010, the Conservative Party made a very limited effort to increase the number of Conservative BME MPs. Unlike what has been done to increase female representation, positive actions to significantly increase BME representation have been extremely limited, among all three major parties. In this case, societal change and modernization is driving the inclusion of more BME MPs more than party competition.
Chapter 4

Women and Ethnic Minorities in the Conservative Party

The Conservative Party’s political relationship with women goes back to the foundation of the Primrose League in the late Victorian era in 1883 (Vickery 2001, 33). After gaining suffrage in 1918, women were immediately accepted as full members into the party’s ranks (Cowman 2010, 134-135). Prior to 1979 women favored the Conservative Party more than men. However, the gender gap between male and female support for the Conservatives has diminished since 1979. In fact, more recent surveys show a change in feminine voting preferences. By 2005, men actually favored the Conservative Party more than women. 35 percent of men voted Conservative compared to 32 percent of women. Women voted slightly more than men for Labour and the Liberal Democrats (Childs 2008, 10-11). After 2005, the Conservative Party was forced to reflect on its changing relationship with women.

The Conservative Party’s relationship with ethnic minorities has been even more complicated. In a national opinion poll conducted by the Telegraph in 1990, 39 percent of Conservative supporters were racially prejudiced, compared to 29 percent of Labour supporters (Le Lohe 1993, 110). In 1992, (a fairly strong Conservative year) the percentages of ethnic minorities willing to vote for the Conservatives over Labour were
extremely small. Only 12% of the South Asian population intended to vote Conservative, compared to 55% for Labour. And, only 8% of the Afro-Caribbean community expected to vote Conservative, compared to 58% for Labour (Anwar 2009, 92). In 2001, minority support for the Conservative party hadn’t improved. Muhammad Anwar’s research provides information on voting patterns by specific ethnic group and party. He finds higher levels of support in the Indian and Chinese communities for the Conservatives, but not as high as Labour. 36.8% of the Chinese community supported the Conservatives, yet 57.9% still supported Labour. Conservative support was weakest in the Black African community at 1.7% (Anwar 2009, 96). Thus, as British society becomes more diverse, the Conservative Party is increasingly at an electoral disadvantage among ethnic minority voters.

Candidate Selection in 2010

A significant effort was made by the Conservative Party leadership to recruit and select more women to stand for Parliament in 2010. A less concerted effort was made to recruit and select more BME candidates. Did these efforts significantly affect the kinds of seats for which women and BME candidates were selected? To answer this question I examine the 2005 election results for each constituency where the Conservative selected a woman or a BME candidate in 2010. I use the conservative vote percentage to determine how safe, marginal or hopeless that seat is based on the 2005 election results. For example, if Labour won a seat with 37%, and the Conservative vote percentage was 35%, then the Conservative’s margin was -2. I call this the win margin. I use Pippa Norris’ scale to determine whether a seat is safe, marginal or hopeless. In this case, a seat
with a 2% Conservative deficit against Labour would be referred to as an ultra marginal Labour seat.

I calculated the Conservative 2005 win margin for 632 Conservative candidates selected in 2010. I used Pippa Norris’ data on election results as well as her data on who ran for the seat and their race and gender. I coded race and gender in one variable in order to capture specific results for BME women. I wanted BME women to be a separate category because of their unique challenges and intersectional identities. I coded race and gender as follows, 0 = white male candidate, 1 = white female, 2 = BME female, and 3 = BME male. I used an Anova, one-way, difference of means test to find statistical significance between all four groups. I expected to find statistically significant differences between the traditional white male candidates and all other groups, in spite of the changes made in 2010. Two out of three of my expectations were confirmed. There was a highly significant difference between white men and white women (F=11.77, DF=137, P≤.001). The margin of error was plus or minus five percent. On average, white men were selected for more winnable seats. White male candidates were selected for seats in which the previous Conservative candidate did on average 11.3% better than the seats in which white women were selected. There was also a very significant difference between white male candidates and BME female candidates (F=11.77, DF=12, P≤.01). On average, white male candidates were selected for more winnable seats. White male candidates were selected for seats in which the previous Conservative candidate did on average 19.3% better than the seats in which BME women were selected. The difference between BME women and white men is not as statistically significant; though there is a
more substantial difference. Fewer observations in the BME female category account for less statistical significance with greater overall differences.

Surprisingly, I found no statistically significant difference between white and BME men. This would seem to indicate that gender may affect candidate selection more than race. There are many ways to interpret this information, and there are a number of potential problems that arise when interpreting these results.

First, the data used to determine the 2010 conservative win margin may have reliability problems. First, there were constituency boundary changes between 2005 and 2010, which could have affected the marginality of certain seats. However, upon reviewing a number of notional 2005 election results based on the boundary changes, most win-margins would not have been meaningfully different and only would have affected the marginality of a few key seats. Most notional projections have the Conservatives gaining at least 12 seats, but no more than 16, in 2005. However, the boundary changes did not affect every district and they affected male, female and BME candidates similarly. Therefore, the changes to some win-margins would probably not have been enough to dramatically change the results of the means test.

Second, there may be too few observations in the BME female category to generalize about their circumstances. The individual experiences of BME women must be examined further to draw any concrete conclusions. Third, using the Conservative party 2005 win margin to judge the chances of a BME or female candidate’s chances of success is extremely limiting. A number of factors contribute to who is selected for a seat, and sometimes, race and gender may play no role in candidate selection. In other cases, even if it does, the win margin only tells us how well the previous Conservative
candidate did in the seat. It does not reflect the personal attributes of the candidates, attributes that could have been taken into account when they were selected for the seat. If a candidate is more connected to a seat, they live there, work there, or even serve on the local council, that candidate would naturally have an advantage over a candidate who may not have had those connections. The win margin also does not reflect the real changes made to the Conservative Party image, as well as the Labour Party image, leading up to 2010. Party selectors likely had polling data and other anecdotal evidence, and likely selected candidates for what they believed to be winnable seats, based on 2010 projections.

BME Women

One could assume, based on the statistical results, that the party may view BME women as safer candidates for marginal seats than BME male candidates. Figure 3.1 below refutes that assumption by showing the actual number of BME men versus BME women chosen for safe, marginal or hopeless seats in 2010. A safe seat is where the Conservative candidate had a 15% or more advantage in 2005. A marginal seat is where the Conservative candidate had less than a 15% advantage or less that 15% disadvantage. A hopeless seat is where the Conservative candidate had a 15% or more disadvantage against any other party.
Table 4.1 2010 Seat Margin by BME Gender

There could be a number of reasons why BME men were chosen more frequently and for more winnable seats. First, the Conservatives may have a BME female candidate supply problem. In 2001, Laura Shepherd-Robinson and Joni Lovenduski suggested that the Conservative Party had a problem with the supply of female candidates. “According to Lord Freeman, the Party’s head of Candidate Selection in 2001, despite considerable efforts to encourage women to come forward, only about 22 percent [sic] of the panel were women” (Shepherd-Robinson & Lovenduski 2001, 23).

Women are less likely to come forward, and ethnic minority women are even less likely to come forward for a number of reasons. Scholars in US have found that ethnic minority women are less politically engaged than white women and ethnic minority men. Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba used a citizen participation study which included a sample of 504 non-white women. They asked a number of questions to determine the respondent’s level of political interest, political efficacy and political knowledge/information. They used all three measures to determine a mean level of political engagement across gender and race. They found that Latinas, on average,
were the least politically engaged. Black women on average had the second lowest levels of political engagement. White women on average were more engaged than black and Latino men, but white women were less engaged than white men (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001).

Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox’s research on why women don’t run for office in the US also helps shed light on the female supply problem. Lawless and Fox identify four “pipeline professions.” These are the top four professions from which political candidates usually come, law, business, education, and politics. Of the five female MPs I interviewed in Chapter three, all five came from pipeline professions in either business or politics. Based on data from the US, fewer ethnic minority women are found in these pipeline professions. In the US, different dynamics dictate who self-selects to run for office, however, women face similar obstacles obtaining positions of power in both the US and UK.

Based on Burns, Schlozman, and Verba’s research on the US in 2001, 76% of the Latina women in the study held lower level jobs, or lower skill jobs. 69% of black women in the study held low skill jobs, compared to 63% of Latino men, 55% of black men, 52% of white women, and only 30% of white men. These numbers are from a US based study, and could be dramatically different in the UK. However, a 2011 OECD report on UK migration tells a similar story. As of 2009, only 57.8% of foreign-born women were active in the labor force, compared to 75.8% of foreign-born men and 66.1% of native-born women. In fact, the percentage of foreign-born men was even slightly higher than native-born men by 1.3% (OECD: SOPEMI 2011).
To better understand the experiences of BME female candidates, I had the opportunity to interview a former female BME Conservative candidate. Nusrat Ghani stood for election in the Birmingham Ladywood seat against another BME woman from Labour and a BME male from the Liberal Democrats, all three candidates were also Muslims. The seat was an ultra safe Labour seat. I spoke with Ms Ghani about her experience in 2010. Unlike the MPs who were speaking within the confines of their current position and their party’s expectations, Ms. Ghani, although still active in the party, does not currently hold elected office.

In many ways, Nusrat Ghani is a model political candidate. She is the daughter of Pakistani immigrants and the first woman in her family to go to college and get a Master’s degree. She worked at Goldman Sachs before she decided she wanted to do more to give back and contribute to her community. After leaving Goldman Sachs, she worked at a charity supporting breast cancer awareness. She has also worked for the BBC in Pakistan, Burma and Afghanistan. While working for the BBC, she helped with the first democratic elections in Kabul. She has supported a number of other ethnic minority candidates and encouraged them to run for local council seats. She is not a traditional Conservative politician. She went to regular state schools, not Oxford or Cambridge and had no political connections. All she had was her career. Nusrat Ghani’s experience as a candidate in the Conservative party in 2010 differs from that of the other BME and female MPs I interviewed. Ms. Ghani got involved late in the game, and had never run for Parliament before, putting her at a disadvantage. However, there were other elements involved in Ms Ghani’s selection for the unwinnable seat that were troublesome.
The Birmingham Ladywood seat has a substantial ethnic minority population. The seat is a perfect example of a Labour stronghold. Ms Ghani said that her experience in Kabul partially influenced her decision to run for Parliament in Britain. She expected the experience in Britain to be far better, but she quickly learned that “Birmingham is a minefield” (Ghani 2013). Ghani’s experience with her local association was also troublesome. She noted that some party selectors couldn’t even pronounce her name and were uncomfortable selecting someone like her, because of her ethnic background and her religion. She said in her interview, party selectors asked her about Shariah law and the Middle East, questions which her white counterparts were not being asked. She said “there are so many factors at play, but if you are black and Muslim, it’s a double negative” (Ghani 2013). Ms Ghani said that party selectors often see ethnic minority candidates as riskier than white candidates, even white female candidates.

We first met in Portcullis House at Westminster, after my interview with Mary Macleod. So, I asked about her relationship with other female and ethnic minority MPs and if any of them were mentoring her. She said she is good friends with Mary Macleod and has been friends with her for years. She said many of the junior MPs can’t really mentor her though. Conservative BME MP Helen Grant hasn’t mentored her. She’s met with Conservative BME MP Priti Patel a couple of times, but she has had very little contact with other MPs and party elites. Additionally, she did not receive a lot of support for Women2Win. Ms Ghani concluded, “I guess they have their favorites” (Ghani 2013).

However, David Cameron’s leadership did have an effect on her decision to run in 2010. She said she initially decided to get more involved because of David Cameron. “He made it a lot more welcoming. The trouble we have is with the mid-term coalition and
we’ve adopted bad finances” (Ghani 2013). She said at this time, no one else could or should take over. “We should get through the next election first and then talk about whether or not there should be a leadership change” (Ghani 2013).

On possibly using AWS or All-BME shortlists, Ms Ghani echoed several of the comments made by Mr. Sharma. Although, she was not entirely opposed to actions like AWS or all-BMS shortlists she emphasized “I wouldn’t want to be shortlisted among a bunch of crap candidates.” She would like to be able to apply for the job and get the position because selectors believe she is qualified, not simply because she looks like the kind of candidate they need. She told a story about a photo shoot in which she had participated in 2010. She said she posed for the shoot with several other ethnic minority female candidates, one was Priti Patel, and in her opinion, the other two were awful. One of them was a belly dancer.

Nusrat Ghani was one of eleven BME female candidates selected for unwinnable seats in 2010. I asked if she felt that the party treated BME men and women differently, but she wasn’t sure. Ms Ghani noted that of the four to five successful ethnic minority candidates she supported for local council, none of them were Conservative.

My earlier statistical analysis provides some evidence that the party treats BME men differently by selecting them for more winnable seats. However, if fewer qualified BME female candidates are coming forward, that alone could put them at a disadvantage. That indicates that there may be a bigger problem. The party is not doing enough to reach out to ethnic minority communities, and identify and encourage qualified ethnic minority men and women to stand for elected office, either locally or for Parliament.
The analysis shows that ethnic minority women are at more of a disadvantage than ethnic minority men. Institutionalized discrimination, even when it is unintentional, still exists for both women and ethnic minorities in British society. Thus, ethnic minority women face double discrimination. Interestingly, Ms Ghani noted that she did not experience this kind of bias against her in her professional career. It was only when she decided to seek elected office that her ethnic background and religion figured into her selection for the job. She also added that she is constantly being asked to participate in BME conferences and meetings and the like. But I sensed that she is growing tired of the “BME” designation. She is a British, Muslim woman of Pakistani origin, with a strong and successful professional background and family life. As a political candidate and a human being, she is much more than a “BME” woman.

Labour MP Rushanara Ali, and Colm O’Cinneide conducted a report in 2001 in which they examine the selection processes of the three major political parties. Some of their findings support Nusrat Ghani’s experience in 2010. They conducted a number of interviews with Conservative Party selectors and candidates. A Chairman of one Conservative Association said, “In our Party, you have a high percentage of elderly people who are active and hold the balance of power in local Associations, and their value systems are behind the times” (Ali & O’Cinneide 2002, 49).

One Conservative candidate interviewed for the 2001 report said as a minority candidate, they were asked questions that were not asked of other non-BME candidates. Another Conservatives candidate reported “a [local] agent said to me ‘you are just a token figure, a puppet. This is not a target seat, go and do some work for the neighboring target seat’” (Ali & O’Cinneide 2002, 44).
Although not a candidate for the Conservative party, a Liberal Democrat candidate noted that “a party member asked her whether she was a fundamentalist Muslim.” And another Liberal Democrat candidate, similarly to Nusrat Ghani’s account said, “Britain still hasn’t matured. There is inherent fear and prejudice toward Muslims and the constant assumption is that if you are a Muslim, you must be a fundamentalist” (Ali & O’Cinneide 2002, 44). These interviews were conducted before the publishing of the report in 2002. Therefore, all of the candidates interviewed stood for election before the terrorist attacks in New York on 9/11, the Madrid train bombing, and the 7/7 bombings in London, events which exacerbated the fear and prejudice felt towards Muslims in Britain. It is not surprising then that Nusrat Ghani’s experience as a Muslim candidate was very similar to the experience of the Liberal Democrat candidates in 2001.

Differential equality

Two of the principles behind increasing the proportion of women and ethnic minorities in Parliament are equality and justice. One would expect to find women and ethnic minority groups aligned on issues of political equality and justice for one another in society. Theoretically the alliance makes sense, but in practice, women and ethnic minorities are sometimes at odds.

One of the greatest examples of this tension was exhibited in the United States just after the Civil War between suffragettes and recently emancipated African Americans. Race has been highly politicized in America since its founding. Shortly after the end of the American Civil War, women and African Americans dealt with similar constraints: both were prohibited from voting. Women, although oppressed in many ways, had not endured the kind of institutionalized violence African Americans had
through slavery. Some suffragists and women’s rights advocates allied themselves with racist political groups and representatives in order to advance their own cause. Some women were critical of the advancements of African Americans, which they believed would cost them women’s suffrage and equal rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a woman’s rights advocate, wrote a letter to the editor, in 1865, that highlights the tension between arguments for women’s rights and African American rights. She says, “‘This is the negro’s hour.’ Are we sure that he, once entrenched in all his inalienable rights, may not be an added power to hold us at bay? Have not “black male citizens” been heard to say they doubted the wisdom of extending the right of Suffrage to women? Why should the African prove more just and generous than his Saxon compeers?” (Stanton 1865).

Today, in the UK, the conflict arises when one particular group gains a tremendous amount of political attention, while the other remains politically invisible. The comments made by Labour BME female MP, Diane Abbott after the 1997 general election are a good example of this modern tension. She praised the increase in female representatives after Labour’s victory in 1997 and its use of All-Women Shortlists, but also pointed out how little AWS did for ethnic minority women. She claimed that AWS could basically be renamed All-White Women Shortlists. Nusrat Ghani had a similar perspective on the Party’s priority list. I asked Ms Ghani if she had benefited from any of the changes the Party made prior to 2010. She said, “What changes were made; the priority list?! How many Pakistani women were on the priority list? The priority list helped white women and white men” (Ghani 2013). She said she thought Helen Grant MP had been on the priority list, but that was the only ethnic minority candidate she
could think of who may have benefited from the priority list. In some ways the priority list made it more difficult for candidates who were not on the list (Ghani 2013).

Additionally, political parties in the UK face positive and negative externalities when reaching out to women or ethnic minorities. In the case of the Conservative Party, far-right Conservative voters and party members may be less likely to support an ethnic minority candidate, or a Conservative Party that goes out of its way to promote its ethnic minority candidates. For instance, in January of 2013, Conservative MP Mark Pritchard publicly urged David Cameron not to use the “A” list again in 2015. He said, “The Conservative Party must not embark on an ethnic beauty parade but instead showcase trans-community principles and policies that unite the nation, appeal across every ethnic group, irrespective of background, ethnicity, religion, North South geography, gender, or income” (London Evening Standard 2013). Many Conservative party members prefer equality rhetoric over positive action. Not one of the MPs I interviewed said they actually favored the use of quotas or positive discrimination. However, as I have previously noted, scholars like Joni Lovenduski and Sarah Childs have persuasively concluded that in the short term, positive action is necessary. There needs to be a short, sharp shock to the institution to inspire future change.

Based on the interviews I conducted and recent indications from party officials, the Conservatives appear to be focusing more on outreach to BME candidates than women for the 2015 general election. Since 2010, the Vice Chairmen position responsible for women has disappeared and a new emphasis has been placed on reaching out to BME communities with the appointment of Alok Sharma MP as the new Vice Chairmen responsible for BME communities. In this case, promoting one group may be at the
expense of the other. If Conservative women do not get the same level of attention from Conservative Party elites as they did in 2010, they are likely to lose out. If that attention is otherwise diverted to supporting BME candidates, BME candidates stand to gain instead.

**Conclusions and the Future**

Based on my research, the few steps taken by the Conservative Party to become more inclusive prior to 2010 were only the first steps of much longer journey. When I asked the female MPs if they thought the number of Conservative female MPs would increase after the next election, all of them were tentative. They provided four main reasons why the number could stagnate or even decrease. One, if Conservative party fortunes change, it will decrease the number of women in parliament. Two, a proposal to shrink the size of Parliament from 650 seats to 600 seats may go into effect, likely costing several women their seats. Third, more boundary changes could also affect a number of seats held by women. Fourth, a couple of the female MPs noted that some women may quit now that they understand the rigors of the job, and the sometimes unfair and unwarranted media scrutiny.

The male BME MPs were slightly more optimistic. When I asked them about the future they chose to focus on the distant future. It’s not just about 2015, but 2020 and 2025. Will the number of BME MPs increase? Absolutely they said, but it’s less about the next election and more about the distant future. Both BME MPs were clearly aware of how Conservative fortunes could affect the number of BME MPs, but were cautiously optimistic. Former Conservative party candidate, Nusrat Ghani plans to seek a seat in Parliament again at some point, but was very tentative about the future. She noted that
only one BME candidate has been selected to stand for the party in 2015 thus far, which is not very promising.

This chapter has discussed how parties treat women and BME candidates differently and how the two groups can sometimes be at odds with one another. The interviews I conducted with BME MPs provide some evidence that the Conservatives are beginning to focus more on outreach to BME communities in preparation for future elections. My interview with former candidate Nusrat Ghani shows that prior to 2010, even with the expressed intent of a more inclusive selection process, BME candidates were still treated differently than traditional candidates. Through the statistical analysis I have also shown some evidence that Conservative party members approach the inclusion of BME and female candidates differently, selecting white and BME women for less winnable seats than white men and surprising, BME men as well.
Chapter 5

Conclusions, Findings and Future Research

Increasing female and ethnic minority representation is important because law abiding citizens of every country should have an equal chance at participating in government. Gender, race, or sexual orientation, for example, should not restrict citizens from participation. Democracy is founded on principles of justice and equality. These principles guided the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill. Mill’s writings cannot be overlooked when making an argument for increased female and ethnic minority descriptive representation. “Mill argues that more people existing alongside one another on an equal footing means increased competition, with an advantageous effect on human moral and intellectual development, both individual and social” (Day 2009). In modern times, the inclusion of more women and ethnic minorities in the political process adds to the moral and intellectual development of a democratic society. This development occurs regardless of the types of issues women and ethnic minorities take up once elected.

However, critics of women’s descriptive representation claim that increasing the number of female representatives alone will not necessarily ensure greater substantive representation of women’s issues, which they argue is more important. Another criticism is that “descriptive representatives will be less able than others to perform the task of
substantive representation of interests” (Mansbridge 1999, 631). Nusrat Ghani expressed this concern when she said she feared positive actions like All-BME Shortlists could produce unqualified candidates.

Jane Mansbridge effectively disputes these arguments. She notes that “selective forms of descriptive representation”, All Women Shortlists for example, “are necessary…only when some form of adverse selection operates within an existing system to reduce the proportions of certain groups below what they would achieve by chance” (Mansbridge 1999, 632). In other words, if there are not additional barriers for BME or female candidates, the number of BME or female MPs should come close to mirroring their proportion in society without any positive action. Yet, the increases in women and BME MPs have been relatively unimpressive over the years. The impressive or landmark years such as 1997 for Labour, and 2010 for the Conservatives, were years in which some kind of positive action was used to increase the number of candidates from underprivileged groups. Mansbridge says, “It is true that adding any criterion [such as ethnicity or gender] to a mix of criteria for selection will always dilute to some degree the impact of the other criteria for selection” (Manbridge 1999, 633). However, Mansbridge points out that “if the reasons for the lower proportions of the characteristic are not functionally related to the task, [then any] decrement in talent from adding [another object to the list of criteria would be] almost infinitesimally small” (Mansbridge 1999, 633).

Low descriptive representation can also affect the social identity of the underrepresented group. Manbridge notes that this is especially the case for groups that have not always had suffrage or have recently gained suffrage. Low descriptive
representation can therefore communicate to women or ethnic minorities that they do not rule, or are not fit to rule. This is true for any underrepresented group. For example, if the number of white female MPs increases, but the number of BME MPs does not, this could create a feeling among hopeful BME candidates that they not able to rule, or they are the favored candidates of the party or institution (Mansbridge 1999, 649). This could also create tension between such groups, as I have discussed in Chapter 4.

Mansbridge argues that creating positive social meaning among underprivileged groups is a social good. She says “if the costs are not too great, any measure is good that increases the degree to which the society as a whole sees all (or almost all) descriptive groups as equally capable of ruling” (Mansbridge 1999, 650).

Another argument in favor of descriptive representation is “the role model effect”. The role model affect means that when more women and minorities are in power, whether as elected officials or appointed government officials, their presence will have an effect on other women or ethnic minorities because they will be seen as “‘doing politics’ [and] some may even gain direct experience working for women [or minority] representatives” (Childs 2008, 100). This is also a social good, not only for creating positive social meaning but for producing more potential female and BME candidates. It is true that more descriptive representation does not necessarily mean better substantive representation. However, another compelling argument for descriptive representation is that without female and BME perspectives in government, their interests are more likely to be ignored or overlooked.
Thesis Findings and Opportunities for Future Research

This thesis identified three variables that may have contributed to the increase in female and ethnic minority Conservative MPs after the 2010 British General Election. First, competition with the Labour Party; were the Conservative Party’s efforts to recruit and support more women in 2010 an answer to Labour’s winning efforts in 1997? The answer is: not directly. If Labour’s use of AWS had directly influenced the Conservative Party’s action, support for rules like AWS would have been implemented by the Conservatives. The evidence from MP interviews showed that AWS is still largely unpopular. Cameron’s “A” list, although it was a positive action “experiment” it too was fairly unpopular, and is unlikely to be used again in the Conservative selection process. Also, if the Conservatives had been influenced by Labour’s use of AWS in 1997, there should have been more effort within the party to implement something like AWS in 2001 and 2005 as well, and that was not the case. However, competition with Labour was an antecedent force, pressuring from party elites and contributing to David Cameron’s leadership, which did affect the increase in 2010. Labour’s actions, which lead to a visible increase in the number of women in the House of Commons, encouraged Conservative women to start advocating for more women in their own party. Also, Cameron’s use of an “A” list was obviously related to Blair’s use of AWS in 1997. It was a positive action, implemented in the selection process, like AWS. Cameron even came out in favor of AWS at one point. Cameron’s actions were similar to Blair and New Labour’s actions in 1997. Therefore competition with Labour affected female party elites and David Cameron’s leadership which ultimately lead to the increase in female MPs in
2010. Therefore party competition was a significant driver of the increase in Conservative female MPs in 2010.

Other factors affected the increase in BME MPs. First, competition with Labour in the ethnic minority context refers to the increasing threat of Labour’s ethnic minority majority urban strong-holds across the country. However, if this was the Conservative’s motivation for increasing the number of BME MPs there should have been more BME MPs selected to contest ethnic-minority majority seats or marginal seats. Instead, the Conservatives ran eight of the eleven successful candidates in very safe or ultra safe majority white constituencies. Only three were selected for marginal seats, but only one of the three was selected for seat with a sizable ethnic minority population. Therefore, the Conservatives were less willing to take risks with BME candidates in marginal seats, instead placing them in safe, traditionally Conservative seats, to guarantee their victory. Improving the party’s image and selecting genuine communicators of a more diverse Conservative message probably motivated the party more than competition with Labour in this case.

Second, pressure from party elites also did not cause the increase in BME MPs. There were too few BME party elites prior to 2010 to be able to initiate that kind of change within the party. Also, BME party elites did not have the catalyst women had after Labour’s use of AWS in 1997.

Third, David Cameron’s leadership did affect the increase in 2010. Mr. Sharma contributes his success as a candidate almost primarily to David Cameron. Uppal attributed some of the increase to open primaries, which were implemented by Cameron. Nusrat Ghani said that David Cameron’s inclusiveness contributed to her decision to run
for office. Additionally, Cameron’s “A” list was not only intended to help women get selected, but a share of ethnic minority candidates as well. If there had not been a leadership change, or the party had moved to the right, instead of the center, the number of BME MPs would not have increased. The increasing ethnic minority population seems to be having a more significant impact on Conservative Party electoral strategy that competition with Labour alone. Mr. Sharma’s appointment to the position of Vice Chairman is a sign that the party feels it needs to do more to genuinely communicate with BME communities. At this time, societal change and modernization is driving this change more than party competition. This is largely because Labour has not made the kind of systematic effort to include ethnic minorities as it did to include women in 1997.

In chapter four, I used statistical analysis to understand how the party’s changes to the selection process prior to 2010 actually impacted women and BME candidates, with a specific focus on BME female candidates. The results indicated that the party selected candidates differently by gender. Race does not seem to be as significant a factor. BME men were actually selected for more winnable seats than BME women. In chapter one, I also noted that of the successful Conservative BME men in 2010, only one was selected for a seat with a sizable ethnic minority population. This contradicts Saggar and Geddes’s conclusion that “successful minority candidates were [predominately] returned by constituencies containing sizable minority electorates,” (Saggar and Geddes 2000, 42).

White women and BME women were both significantly more likely to be selected for hard to win seats, compared to white men and BME men. There is some evidence to suggest that BME women are at a greater disadvantage because they were not selected for any marginal seats. Eleven out the thirteen BME female Conservative candidates were
selected for hopeless seats. The lack of female BME candidates could be a problem of both supply and demand, which are mutually reinforcing within the party structure.

Additionally, the difference between white men and white women may highlight the ineffectiveness of some of the strategies used in 2010 to recruit more women. If gender is where the real difference lies, we should expect to see less of an emphasis placed on women and instead significant increases in specifically BME Conservative, male MPs in the future. If this is the case, where will the party run BME male candidates in the future? Will they continue to put BME candidates into safe white-majority districts in order to guarantee success? Are BME women at more of an advantage than white women when it comes to being chosen for winnable seats? Or, does the more meaningful difference between the two actually show that BME women are at a greater disadvantage? Does the fact that BME women are selected for less winnable seats than BME men mean that BME men are favored by the party and the selectorate? Or does it mean that the party is more willing to take a chance with BME women, selecting them for more marginal seats? Party selectors may believe that voters will be more likely to vote for a BME women over a BME male, therefore running fewer BME male candidates in marginal seats, where they have a greater chance of losing.

In the future, the party has a chance to capitalize electorally on a growing ethnic minority population and appears to have shifted its focus from women to BME communities. One reason for the shift could simply be that the size of the female population generally has stayed the same while the ethnic minority population has grown significantly over the last 10-20 years. There are also projections for even more significant increases by the year 2051 (Bingham 2013). A growing population means a
growing base of potential voters, some of which the Conservatives will need to win over in coming elections in order to stay competitive with Labour. When it is in the party’s best interest to reach out to women or ethnic minorities, there is the potential for huge representative gains. However, if that interest does not continue into the next election cycle, the number of women and ethnic minorities in Parliament will either stay the same or decline. One example of this is the influx of female MPs from Labour in 1997. The Labour party did not use positive action in the following election. The emphasis on recruiting female candidates was not as significant and thus the number of female Labour MPs following the 2001 general election actually decreased enough to reduce the total number of women in Parliament.

Even though it appears the party has intensified efforts to reach out to BME communities, my statistical analysis showed that BME women and men may not benefit equally from the party’s efforts. Overall, the number of BME candidates in the Conservative Party has been proportionally smaller than white candidates, regardless of gender. Even though BME men were selected for more winnable seats than BME and white women in 2010, both male and female BME candidates have been selected far less frequently than white women.

These findings lead to a number of additional questions and opportunities for further research. First, why are BME women chosen for less winnable seats than BME men? Do voters favor BME men over BME women, and do party selectors approach female BME candidates differently? Second, how did the Conservative Party motivations to change the party relate to the Labour party changes before the 1997 election? Labour has done more to include women and BME candidates in the party and thus there are
more female and BME MPs. Has the Labour party succeeded and truly become a more feminized, diverse and egalitarian party? Or, is inclusion into the Labour party conditional, as Rafaela Dancygier suggests? Third, do white women and BME women face the same challenges or unique ones? How effective is mentoring and support from women’s organizations? Do women’s organizations equally support BME women? Lastly, how do the Labour and Conservative Parties treat untraditional candidates regarding policy priorities? Do political parties make substantive representation more difficult for female and ethnic minority MPs once they get elected?

These are just a few areas that require further examination. This thesis has merely scratched the surface of the complicated relationship between the Conservative Party and women and ethnic minorities in Britain. As political parties throughout the Western world continue to grapple with the emergence of more pluralist and diverse societies, more research will be necessary to understand how political parties respond to these changes.
Appendix

*Chart 1.1 Non-White Population Percentage by Constituency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Approx. Non-White Population</th>
<th>2010 Con Victory</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashton Under Lyne</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermondsey and Old Southwark</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Percentage taken from 2001 North Southwark Seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethnal Green and Bow</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham Hodge Hill</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham Ladywood</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bootle</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford East</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Average of 3 2001 Bradford Districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford West</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Central</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Average of 3 2001 Brent Districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent North</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol East</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromsgrove</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire North West</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>* From 2001 regional average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulwich and West Norwood</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing Southall</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillingham and Rainham</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>* Percentage from Gillingham Seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow East</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Average of all 2001 Glasgow Districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow South</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney South and Shoreditch</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>*2001 Hammersmith &amp; Fulham Seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazel Grove</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holborn and St Pancras</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Riverside</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidstone and The Weald</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makerfield</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Central</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham East and Saddleworth</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham West and Royton</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading West</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedgefield</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelthorne</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent Central</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratford-on-Avon</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streatham</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey East</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>X *From 2001 Surrey Heath Seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twickenham</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyneside North</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>*From 2001 regional average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warley</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witham</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>X *From 2001 regional average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolverhampton South West</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2001 Census of Population: Statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies

A number of factors affect the reliability of non-white population percentages. First, the numbers listed are from the 2001 UK census. Preliminary data from the 2011 census indicates that the overall percentage of non-white individuals in the UK has increased, especially in and around London. The number of individuals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, South Africa and Jamaica has increased by hundreds of thousands over the last ten years (Office for National Statistics 2012). Therefore many of the 2001 percentages could be marginally higher. Second, I use constituency level data
from a government report written in 2004. The constituencies listed in that report do not reflect the recent boundary changes made to a majority of the constituencies, which could lead to some potential errors. Third, although census data is the most reliable source for population data, there are always some complications measuring the exact number of people living in a given area at any given period of time. Measuring ethnic minority identity can also be problematic. Therefore the numbers in the table above are only rough estimates, and do not necessarily reflect the current, real percentage of ethnic minority individuals living and voting in a constituency.
**MP Interview Notes: Harriett Baldwin MP**
Constituency: West Worcestershire
Prior Occupation: Business
First Elected: 2010
Other Positions: Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mark Hoban MP who is Minister for Employment in the Department of Work and Pensions

**To begin, how long have you been active in politics?**

She was a late entrant into politics. She worked at JPMorgan in asset management and currency market exposure. She first worked to keep Britain out of the Euro, the Campaign for Sterling around 2000. After Labour’s victory with Gordon Brown as PM she grew concerned about the financial policies of Gordon Brown and the direction he would take Britain.

**How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?**

She had never been a member of the Conservative party but she saw that there were very few women in Parliament and thought something should be done about it. She joined the party in 2003, participated in the Parliamentary Assessment board. In 2005 she ran for the Stockton Northeast seat with no risk of actually being elected. In 2005, the party told her she had the skills to be an MP but not quite enough political experience. In 2006 she had to resign from full time work in order to dedicate time to campaign for parliament in 2010, she served as an advisor for JP Morgan for 2 years until she started campaigning full time for her seat.

**What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?**

1. Flood defenses  
2. Ensuring her constituents have broadband access  
3. Making sure decisions about housing and infrastructure are decidedly made at the local level.

**What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?**

She mentioned the help of the Women2Win organization in providing financial assistance, training and coaching.

**How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive discrimination measures? And, do you think positive discrimination measures like All-Women Shortlists are necessary to increase the number of women MPs?**

She emphasized that the Conservative Party does not use quotas, but did mention the Priority list. She said there was a change in the 360 evaluation of the candidates.
**Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of women in Parliament?**

She said it was clear that leadership wanted to see more women MPs. She mentioned the priority list and how she was selected for the West Worcestershire seat. She cautioned though that Cameron’s support for the priority list (50/50) list and similar measures could trigger a backlash. She noted that women were given extra support by the Conservative Party in 2010.

**Do you think the number of women MPs will increase after the next election? And why?**

She was cautious about this. She said if the boundaries are changed and reduce the number of seats from 650-600, it will likely reduce the opportunities for women. She said the candidate’s list is still 70-30 men.

**What advice would you give a young woman who may be interested in running for office?**

Try to become successful in another profession. Participate, be a local councillor, but do something else before getting into politics. Parliament needs people from all walks of life. Parliament needs general practitioners, factory workers, etc. It is important to have a wide range of experience. However, she noted that in a world where people want younger MPs, starting in politics is a faster track to becoming an MP.
To begin, how long have you been active in politics?

Father was a member of the European Parliament and was a lecturer in politics. Her father was a Conservative politician. She didn’t have a firm party commitment until she went to University where she studied Politics. She came out of University a Tory. In 1999 she was asked to stand in a local election and served on the Borough Council from 1999-2011.

How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?

Since 1997

What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?

1. Green issues/environment
2. Housing development and local planning

What (if anything) has changed since you first ran for office (prior to 2010 or since 2010)?

She ran in 2001 for the Seat of Southampton, then ran in Romsey in 2005, then was successful when she ran for the Romsey/Southampton North seat (boundary changes).

What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?

The Conservative Party was more popular. She had been a candidate for while, 5 years. She had been a candidate for 48 months or more. She said “the Tory party had her thirties”. She also noted that it is not a lucrative profession.

Why do you think more Conservative female candidates were successful in 2010, compared to previous years?

The Conservative Party worked hard to put more women in winnable seats. She compared it to the spike in Labour women in 1997. She also attributed the increase in female MPs the face that it was a Conservative year and general party effort to include more women.
How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive discrimination measures? And, do you think positive discrimination measures like All-Women Shortlists are necessary to increase the number of women MPs?

She said she has a negative opinion of quotas, however, Labour has demonstrated that quotas can work. If you’re going to get more women elected, you must do more to attract women to the job.

Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of women in Parliament?

After David Cameron became leader he attempted to widen the appeal; whether it has been successful… remains to be seen. She mentioned Louise Mensch’s downfall as a setback. She said Cameron was prepared to go out of a limb. She also mentioned the Women2win organization and said that she was not part of the “A” list.

Do you think the number of women MPs will increase after the next election? And why? What advice would you give a young woman who may be interested in running for office?

She thinks there will be fewer women, because there are a number of women sitting in marginal seats. So it will depend on Conservative fortunes in the next election. She also believes a number of women will quit. The job has changed enormously with media coverage. She mentioned the Daily Mail in particular. She noted the way the media has attacked fellow female MPs, specifically Claire Perry, she also mentioned Nadine Dorries (who was specifically under fire in the press while I was in England).

Go establish another career first. Job of MP is a job like no other. She said the job of MP is hard for women with children. If someone would have told her what it would be like, she never would have done it. She said women are often patronized by male colleagues.

In light of these comments I asked if she would be running again in 2015.

She said she would try to stay in and fight for her seat. She said the job is like no other. She is driven and will fight to stay. However, Parliament needs to do more to improve its image.
**MP Interview Notes: Mary Macleod MP**
Constituency: Brentford and Isleworth
Prior Occupation: Business, advisor to the Queen
First Elected: 2010
Other Positions: Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to the Rt Hon. Maria Miller MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport and Minister for Women and Equalities.

**To begin, how long have you been active in politics?**

First got involved in 1992, was intrigued by what was happening, managing change. She helped with the Irish Peace Process. She stood for Parliament in 1997 but was not selected so she went back to the City (her previous work). She stood again in 2005 but was not selected.

**How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?**


**What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?**

She said she is a generalist, represents her constituents. She is interested in a number of different issues and serves as PPS to Maria Miller, which makes up most of her day, supporting the secretary of state. She is also interested in aviation, jobs and the economy, education and international aid.

**What (if anything) has changed since you first ran for office (prior to 2010 or since 2010)?**

She said there has been a real cultural change. She was part of the first group to get female candidates together since the mid-90s. She believed Parliament was missing out, lack of women in Parliament. When Cameron became leader and stood up and said, enough is enough, did not want them to look out of touch. The Party head hunted more women. Cameron sought out more women and championed them. They used open primaries, electorate more likely to vote for a woman. Cameron set the goal to have 30% female ministers by 2015, this was Cameron’s goal. She said she personally wouldn’t have put a number on it.

**What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?**

Norm change, changes in the selection process.

**Why do you think more Conservative female candidates were successful in 2010, compared to previous years?**
She noted that it is up to her in the business world to encourage women; it is the same for
Parliament. Encouragement is important.

**How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive
discrimination measures? And, do you think positive discrimination measures like
All-Women Shortlists are necessary to increase the number of women MPs?**

She is against AWS, but they did take positive action. She thinks quotas can be
derogatory “You’ll get it because you’re a woman”. She would rather women get selected
because “we think you’re talented.” 2 wrongs do not make a right. There should be equal
opportunity for every woman. She noted that Conservatives are not premier politicians,
their lives don’t depend on politics; many do something else first.

**Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of women
in Parliament?**

Cameron championed the cause by both changing the rules and raising awareness.

**Do you think the number of women MPs will increase after the next election? And
why?**

There are likely to be boundary changes, number of seats will drop from 650-600. She is
doubtful they will increase if that happens. At least one woman will lose out if this
happens, but they will likely achieve about the same number. If there are no boundary
changes, it is up for grabs, for any number of great women to come through. She said if
Conservatives win, “we’ll gain a few.” She said she will work to get her seat back, but
she loved what she did in the city, it is her dream to be in politics, so she will be content
with whatever happens.

**What advice would you give a young woman who may be interested in running for
office?**

She would advise women to believe in themselves. Women sometimes lack confidence
and do not ask for help. Women are worse than men at singing their praises. Women
don’t think they have the skills. Be clever about it, use the people around you; ask for
support. Before the 2010 election, she sent an email to several prominent cabinet
members who knew her work, they gave her quotes to put on her campaign literature and
it was a huge help. She is running the all party group for women in Parliament. She said
women don’t always agree to do media spots as often as men, agree to do more media
interviews.

“Do go and get some skills and experience”, find opportunities to build experience. It is
important to be persistent, determined, pick yourself up.
When she was first running for Parliament she reminded herself that Margaret Thatcher
had to apply for 50 seats before she got accepted.
She said the party has not done as much proactively on the ethnic minority side, but will do more in the future. They are meeting regularly to discuss how to engage in diverse districts.
She mentioned women like herself serving as role models to other women.
**MP Interview Notes: Rebecca Harris MP**
Constituency: Castle Point
Prior Occupation: Business
First Elected: 2010
Other Positions: Party Vice Chairman responsible for Youth (March 2013)

**To begin, how long have you been active in politics?**

She has been active since she was 11. She delivered leaflets for Margaret Thatcher when she was young.

**How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?**

Forever

**What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?**

1. Business innovation and skills-economy and finance
2. Inquiry about women in business, why are women underrepresented in some careers?
   a. Important that women realize their potential
   b. May be an unconscious bias

**What (if anything) has changed since you first ran for office (prior to 2010 or since 2010)?**

She was a local councillor from 1999-2010. She noted that running for a Parliament is a much more involved process. Selection criteria are stricter for Parliament. She noted being on the priority list of candidates.

**What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?**

She said she couldn’t say for sure, you are never told why the selectors chose you in particular. However she thinks it had something do with her “strong background in the party”. She was special advisor to a shadow cabinet minister. She was also a marketing/company director.

**Why do you think more Conservative female candidates were successful in 2010, compared to previous years?**

They changed the application form, the CV form. Application related to attributes relative to the party with the job of a politician in mind. She noted that the job of MP is about multitasking, so it is actually better suited to women. She noted the 50/50 men and women lists.
How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive discrimination measures? And, do you think positive discrimination measures like All-Women Shortlists are necessary to increase the number of women MPs?

She thinks her CV was most important; she did not want to be a quota.

Is it a Conservative Party priority to increase the number of women in Parliament (Cameron has been explicit about including more women, will that continue?)

Yes, it will continue.

Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of women in Parliament?

Cameron was essential, wanted to do it in a fair way. She noted the impact of the Women2win organization. The organization gave women confidence, the organization trained you on how to present yourself. She noted the insistence on 50/50 men and women. Men and women were coming up with equally glowing CVs but women weren’t being interviewed.

Do you think the number of women MPs will increase after the next election? And why?

She said she thinks the statistics will show less progress, but overall she said once the message gets out other women like her may serve as role models for women who may want to get involved in the future, may lead to an increase in the long run.

What advice would you give a young woman who may be interested in running for office?

Get involved early, get involved in local politics and the nitty gritty mechanics of politics. You simply cannot get enough experience; get involved in other things in order to have views on a wide range of issues. Be engaged. What you need to learn is not in text books.
MP Interview Notes: Karen Lumley MP
Constituency: Redditch
Prior Occupation: Accountant
First Elected: 2010
Other Positions: None

To begin, how long have you been active in politics?
She is an accountant by trade was involved as a student and was President of Student
government. She was a local councillor before running for Parliament in 2010.

How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?
21 years

What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?
Education, health and the economy

What (if anything) has changed since you first ran for office (prior to 2010 or since
2010)?
Far more women involved since 1997; far more women and BME candidates than there
was before 2010. The selection process has completely changed. In 1997 she was asked
questions like “how would you look after your children?” In 2010 they no longer asked
those kinds of questions.

What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?
Hard work and the swing away from the Labour party

How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive
discrimination measures? And, do you think positive discrimination measures like
All-Women Shortlists are necessary to increase the number of women MPs?
She doesn’t personally agree with quotas. In no other profession would you get the job
simply because you are a woman. Being an MP is no different. There are some women
who don’t want women MPs, not just men.

Is it a Conservative Party priority to increase the number of women in Parliament?
It is easier for women to become MPs now. The adjustment in sitting hours has made it
easier for women, ending at 7pm versus 10pm. She mentioned Cameron wanting to get
home to put his kids to bed.
Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of women in Parliament?

She emphasized the pressure from women within the party to make the change. She attributed it more to pressure from women inside the party (Women2win-Not in my notes but this is likely what she was referring to). She did note that Cameron took two weeks off when his children were born.

Do you think the number of women MPs will increase after the next election? And why?

She said Parliament needs to take a long look at itself. To get good people you have to pay properly, many MPS take a significant pay cut to come to Parliament. You are at the beck and call of everyone. She also mentioned the decision made by the Church of England the previous day to not allow female bishops, in relation to women in Parliament. She said that “we’ll likely see a few people stand down.” She said she has a number of colleagues who don’t like it, because it is not what you think it’s going to be.

What advice would you give a young woman who may be interested in running for office?

You must have a very supportive family. Every day is different. She said she has never worked so hard in her life. She loves it, but it is hard work. Many have no idea how hard you have to work. She said “my life wasn’t my own anymore.”

I asked if she would continue to be an MP or if she had other ambitions?

She said “she does not want to be a minister; she just wants to do her job as an MP.” She likes her job as an MP. She got to travel to the Balkans and help train others on campaigns. She loves her job.
To begin, how long have you been active in politics?

He has been active since 2000. He is from an East-African Sikh family. Politics was part of his early life; he lived in a politicized family. He especially wanted to run for the Wolverhampton seat.

How long have you been a member of the Conservative party?

Since 2000, but he has also been active since University. He had a very different political ideology in University; was a Marxist-Socialist. But the Conservative Party was his natural home.

What issues are (and have been) priorities for you as a party member and MP?

1. Immigration
2. The economy, industry and employment

What (if anything) has changed since you first ran for office?

He noted that he did fight for a seat in 2005 but it was a Labour/Lib Dem fight and there was not chance of winning.

What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?

He noted that is the only genuinely urban BME Tory. He cares about regular people. He is just a normal person, someone people can relate with/to. He is someone who broke the stereotype. He is an individual that has full comprehension of what regular people are going through.

Why do you think more Conservative ethnic minority candidates were successful in 2010, compared to previous years?

He said there were more open primaries. He said there was an active push to change the face of the party.

How do you feel about Labour’s use of All-Women Shortlists and other positive discrimination measures? There has been some discussion around All-BME shortlists; do you think positive discrimination measures like these are necessary to increase the number of ethnic minority MPs in Parliament?
Not a fan of using quotas.

Is it a Conservative Party priority to make Parliament more diverse?

Absolutely, by 2020.

Do you think David Cameron’s leadership has affected the representation of ethnic minorities in Parliament?

The change was coming, but he believes David Cameron sped up the process.

Do you think the number of black and ethnic minority MPs will increase after the next election? And why?

Yes, absolutely by 2020, not just about 2015. He was generally optimistic.

What advice would you give a young BME individual who may be interested in running for office?

Be persistent, be passionate. It is also about having good fortune though. Be actively involved. The political process is poorer for not having the perspective of BME candidates.
How long have you been active with the Conservative Party?

I’ve been delivering leaflets for the Conservative party since the age of 10. I’ve had a long interest in politics, and in the 90s I did stand for the local council in a completely unwinnable Labour seat and that was very interesting. But in terms of actively… and obviously in general elections I’ve helped the local candidates. But I think it was only at the end of 2003 when my wife and I and our kids returned from a number of years working and living in Germany that I… you come back home basically and you start to see things a little bit differently. I had been away for a number of years, 3 and a half years, my view was that the country was going in completely the wrong direction. There’s only so long you can shout at the television. After the 2005 general election, my wife said to me, if you think you can make some bit of difference, why don’t you try and stand, and so I applied to get on the Conservative party list at the end of 2005, and I got on in Spring 2006. The first seat I applied for was Reading West and I got selected for that in July. I got elected 3-4 years later. In a sense my journey to this place on one level has been much smoother than for many other colleagues who will have fought a number of seats before and been for a bunch of interviews and the rest of it. So that’s basically how I arrived here in 2010.

What issues are priorities for you as a party member and MP?

All MPs are dealing with similar things, it’s to do with the economy, with people’s cost of living, to do with education, it’s to do with planning issues, and do need more houses? Do they always have to be built or applied for on green fields for instance? If you look at my website you will see the sort of campaigns I’ve been involved in. One of the things I am particularly pleased with is working with a local parent group to set up a free school, one of the first free schools in the country and that was great, you feel that as a politician, whatever happens, here is a school that you helped, in a minor way perhaps, to deliver. We are looking at projects like that. That actually, as a politician, is what gives you the most satisfaction, when you’re delivering something locally. On a national level, generally unless you get to be towards the very top, I guess you know you have influence, and you can talk to people, but you’re not necessarily the person pulling all the levers. But on a local level you can make a difference. Its simple things like, as a Member of Parliament every week we deal with hundreds of queries that come in, you know emails and letters, telephones whatever. Sometimes people write back if they’re particularly happy. We’ve had quite a lot of letters back, but there’s always one that will stick with me and this was a guy who was in prison and he was trying to get on a rehabilitation course and I think there was some issue why he couldn’t get on, so he wrote to me, asked for my help and I did what any MP would do, which was take up the issue, write letters and we found out he managed to get onto the course, and it was great. And then a few
months later, I got a letter from this guy basically saying, “thank you very much, if I hadn’t got on to the course I may well have gone back into prison, it completely changed my life, thanks very much, basically.” I mean that’s really nice, when you get a letter like that, I mean, I’m certainly not suggesting that I did anything out of the ordinary, as a member of parliament I did what was required. But the point is that it made a fundamental difference to somebody else’s life and so I think that’s what gives you, gives me at least, the biggest pleasure in terms of this job.

**What has significantly changed about the party within the last few years? Has anything changed?**

Well I think if you look at some of the questions you’ve sent, about women and minority communities and all this sort of stuff. I think the party…I guess it’s just one of those things that happens over a period of time. You know if you were to say to me, did the fact that I’m not white have any impact at all on my selection process, I can tell you absolutely, hand on heart, no. My local party is absolutely color blind. A lot of them are people in sort of in their 60s and 70s and 80s and sometimes there is this historic image that the Conservative Party may not have always been welcoming and we have an element of that, but in my experience, the party really is color blind. And you see that, we have a lot more members of parliament from the last election from non-white backgrounds, a lot more females, and you know there’s more progress to be done, it’s not job completed. I think the Party has become a lot more, well, a lot more modern quite frankly. It’s starting to reflect both in this place and outside, the country as a whole.

**What do you attribute to your success as a candidate?**

I attribute, primarily David Cameron and the rise of the Conservative vote generally to that. There are some MPs I guess who will feel that when it comes to general election, it’s primarily down to them. I’m a little bit more realistic. In the sense that, as a local candidate, there’s a lot you can do as a local MP. You can absolutely try and make a difference and that will register a certain element in your vote bank, but at the end of the day, in the UK a very large number of people vote on the party leader and the party’s policies. Of course the economy always plays a big part, and that will be the same in 2015. People will have to make a judgment on whether they think we as the leading party in government has put the country on the right path, or if the Labour party has a better plan, that’s what it will come down to, and it will come down to what people think of David Cameron as Prime Minister as opposed to Mr. Miliband as potentially a prime minister. And of course, do they think I have been a half decent MP or not. But, I think there are a number of things that helped. I wasn’t up against an incumbent. There is always an incumbency vote, always. If you’re a half decent MP, you will have people voting for you. By its very nature, over a 5 year period you would have interacted with lots and lots of people and hopefully along the way, some of them have been impressed with the help you’ve given or what you’ve done. So I wasn’t up against an incumbent. I was in place for almost 4 years as a candidate. You do get an opportunity during that time even as a candidate to meet lots of people and get involved in lots of community campaigns. But ultimately, I think it came down to the fact that the Conservative Party
and David Cameron were in the ascendency. And you know, rising tide effectively floats all boats.

There’s been some discussion around All-Women shortlists and quotas, as well as All-BME Shortlists. How do you feel about using quotas?

No, I’m totally against quotas. At the end of the day if you’re selected for a seat or elected as a member of Parliament, what you want is for people to say “this was the best candidate on offer” irrespective of whether they were black, white, brown, what they’re religion was, anything like that. This was the best candidate on offer of all the candidates we had and we could have picked anyone. I think that’s what gives you credibility. I can only speak for my conservative association, but absolutely in that selection process, they were absolutely color blind; it makes no difference at all. You know, I don’t believe in quotas, but that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t be doing stuff to encourage more people from groups which are underrepresented in getting involved in politics. And I think that’s what all politicians actually ought to be doing. Because, demographically, as a country we are changing. We will have the census results soon I think for the 2011 census and what’s going to be very interesting to see is what is the ethnic diversity and makeup of this country. Now, I think in the 2001 census it was around 7-8%. There’s been a more recent survey estimate made by the office for national statistics which came out based on 2009 data showing that if you look at England and Wales, 17%, of the population is from what you’d call an ethnic minority background. And if you look in our schools, I mean I was having a conversation this morning with someone who was saying that now in Reading schools, which is part of the constituency that I represent, over half of the children in primary schools are from an ethnic minority background, now that’s a figure someone else has given me, I don’t know if it’s exactly half but it’s going to be a large proportion. So what you will see over the next 15-20-25 years is a change. I mean you see this in America as well right? It’s the same thing. You’re seeing a change and this will be an issue that faces countries across Western Europe. How politicians and governments react to that and particularly political parties react to that and sort of positively embrace that change… I mean the change is happening whether you like it or not. You cannot turn, you may want to go back to living the way things were 50-60-70 years ago, maybe there are people around who do, but that’s not going to happen. So you have to embrace change and you have to realize that the country’s changing and as a political party you have to understand that if you are going to be meaningful to the population over the coming years, you need to look and sound like the population you’re hoping is going to vote for you. That applies to every political party; it’s not just about one or two parties.

Will increasing the number of BME MPs in Parliament continue to be a Conservative Party priority?

Absolutely, as part of the recent changes we’ve had, I’ve now been given a role within the party to basically connect with the minority community. And I know, I’ve heard this first hand from the Prime Minister, this is a very important thing for us. It’s an important thing on two levels. It’s the right things to do right? Of course you should be connecting
with everyone... First you connect with people and show and demonstrate to them that their values and your values are absolutely aligned and their voice is important to you. You do all of that, and then of course what flows from that as a political party is whether people are willing to give you a chance at the ballot box. Now, if they don’t think that you understand them and if they don’t think that you listen to them, and if they don’t think that they matter to you, they’re not going to even think about voting for you. And I think that is part of, for every political party, it is really important that you are able to connect with every community. You saw this in the states right? With the Republicans if your political strategy is that “we hope all these people will come out and vote for us and all these other people who voted for the guy previously are just going to stay at home and then we’ll win,” you know… long term that’s not a winning strategy.

**Do you think the number of black and ethnic minority candidates and MPs will increase after the next election? And why?**

I think that ethnic minority candidates for MP have been growing; you know we’ve had lots of people who’ve stood for us. What’s going to happen in 2015? I don’t know. If I had that crystal ball I wouldn’t be sitting here, I can tell you. I have no idea what’s going to happen, but I don’t think it’s just about 2015 because, what I want to see happening within the Conservative Party isn’t just about 2015. Actually what you need to be seeing…if we put in place the structures that make sure that we are able to, you know, encourage and empower a lot more people from all diverse communities to get involved in politics, then it’s not just about what happens in 2.5 years from now, it’s what happens in 7.5 years or 10 years, 20 years. That’s what it should really be about. You know, politicians wherever you go, we’re fixated with the next election and you know there’s a very good reason because if you don’t win, you’re not in power. But, at the end of the day, this whole process of connecting with communities has to be looked through a long term strategy and prism rather than just being short term.

**What advice would you give a young BME individual who may be interested in running for office, pursuing a career in politics?**

What I would say to people is, sit down and have a think about what are your core values. Because ultimately that’s what politics at its rawest level boils down to…you know… where is my natural political home? And I think if you sit down and think about your values, you know what do you think about socialist issues? What do you think about economic issues? Where you are [sic] on the debate on tax versus spend, cut debt versus not cutting debt? Where are you in terms of the rights of individuals as opposed to the rights of people who have committed crime? Where are you on the spectrum? I think that’s the fundamental thing you need to decide. Where is your political home? I think once you’ve done that, that’s the point at which you get in contact with local political party, get in touch nationally. Hopefully more people get in touch with the Conservative Party than others. And, you try and get involved. You know, show what you’ve got to offer.

**Can you tell me a little more about your new role as Vice Chairman?**
It is about making sure that we are more connected with people from ethnic minority communities. And, demonstrating this to people on a consistent basis… you know one the things people always say about politicians is that, “you lot always come around when there’s an election, a few weeks or a few months before an election you all come knocking.” But actually what we’re talking about is long term engagement with people in communities, long term engagement with the media, there will be newspapers and TV channels and radio stations that are much more focused on delivering to particular communities. And then thinking about the sort of stuff that matters for particular communities and issues that matter, you know, policy that matters, and then thinking, how does that relate to what we are trying to do and if some of this stuff that people are really concerned about is basically what we as a party should be concerned about, then perhaps we ought to be doing something about it.
Candidate Interview Notes: Nusrat Ghani
Constituency: Birmingham Ladywood
First stood for Parliament in 2010
Occupation: Banking, advocacy

How long have you been active in politics?

She has been active since about 1997. She used to work for Goldman Sachs in emerging markets and fiscal stability but wanted to give back and do more for her community. She gave it up to work at a breast cancer awareness charity. She also worked for the BBC, traveling to Afghanistan, Burma and Pakistan. She helped monitor democratic elections in Kabul.

How long have you been a member of the Conservative Party?

She could not belong to any party when she worked for the BBC, but she has been active with the party off and on for 10-15 years.

What issues concern you the most? What issues motivated you to run for office?

Budget issues and budget policy concerned her. She advocated for breast cancer awareness month. She was motivated to run when after speaking with politicians she realized they didn’t know any more than she did. Her experience getting people out to vote and election monitoring in Afghanistan and Iraq motivated her to seek elected office in the UK. People were losing faith with their politicians in Britain, especially around the time of the pension’s scandal. She would be a different kind of politician, not a typical politician.

What was the selection process like for you? What was it like to run in the Birmingham Ladywood seat, against two other Muslim/ethnic minority candidates?

She got involved quite late in the process. It was very difficult for someone like her. She is an immigrant who went to regular state school. She had no contacts in politics. She found that selectors and party elites/members were not as open to her as she had experienced in professional settings. No one supported her. Some selectors had trouble pronouncing her name and were uncomfortable with her as a candidate. She wasn’t favored by anyone. People were very narrow-minded about her background. She said it was difficult, but noted that it shouldn’t be easy to get selected either. She noted that Labour has done a better job recruiting non-traditional candidates to winnable seats. She noted the use of AWS and said the Conservatives need to do something along those lines. She said some people just had trouble supporting an ethnic minority, Muslim candidate. She noted that it was even difficult for her mother-in-law to support someone who looked like her, rather than someone who looked like her English son. She said that after monitoring elections in Kabul, she expected it to be much easier in England, but she actually found that Birmingham is a mine field. She said it was lovely to have three Muslim candidates running. She said the Birmingham Ladywood seat is a very poor
constituency. She advocated for supporting corporate partnerships to stimulate the economy in the area.

**Did you benefit for any of the changes made by the Conservative Party prior to 2010; for example, the priority or “A” list?**

What changes were made? The priority list?!! How many Pakistani women were on the priority list? The priority list helped white men and white women. She said she thought Helen Grant was on the priority list, but that was the only ethnic minority candidate she could think of who may have benefited from the priority list. In some ways a priority list made it more difficult for candidates who were not on the priority list.

Unlike the white female MPs I interviewed, she said selectors still asked her questions in her interview that they did not ask of other candidates. They asked her about Shariah law and the Middle East. Instead of asking her what she would do to improve the lives local people and how well she might represent local issues. She said some in the Party believe “it’s risky to have someone like myself” as a candidate.

**There has been some discussion around All-BME shortlists. Do you think something like that would help increase the number of Conservative BME candidates selected for winnable seats?**

“I wouldn’t want to be shortlisted among a bunch of crap candidates.” She would like to be able to apply for the job and get the position because selectors believe she is qualified for the position, not simply because she looks like the kind of candidate they need. She would rather people be shortlisted equally, but she wasn’t entirely against the idea of shortlists. She said she was asked to pose for a picture with a couple of other ethnic minority female candidates, one of the others was Priti Patel and the other two were just awful. One of them was a belly-dancer. She said she is constantly being asked to participate in BME conferences and meetings, but I sensed that she was getting tired of the term BME. She is a Pakistani, British, Muslim woman with a strong and successful professional background and family life. She is much more than a “BME” woman.

**Can you tell me a little about your relationship with other women and ethnic minority MPs and party elites?**

She said she is good friends with Mary Macleod and has been friends with her for years. She said many of the junior MPs can’t really mentor her. Helen Grant hasn’t mentored her. She’s met with Priti Patel a couple of times, but she has received virtually no mentorship from other MPs and party elites.

**How do you feel about David Cameron and the other party leadership?**

She decided to get more involved because of David Cameron. He made it a lot more welcoming. She said the trouble we have is with the mid-term coalition and we’ve adopted bad finances. She said at this time, no one else could or should take over. We
should get through the next election first and then talk about whether or not there should be a leadership change.

**Do you think the number of female and BME MPs will increase after the next election?**

There will not be as many women as men. She has heard of only one non-white person so far who has been selected to stand for a seat. He is an ex-soldier who worked in Afghanistan. She said so far, it doesn’t look promising with only one non-white person being selected.

**Did you get any help from Women2Win?**

Not a lot, they had no influence on her race. She said, “I guess they have their favorites.”

**What advice would you give another woman or person with an ethnic minority background who may be interested in seeking elected office?**

Get involved as early as you can. Get connected with local politics and the local party association. You just have to do it. More women have to become councilors. She helped and encouraged a number of other ethnic minority women to run for local office (regardless of party affiliation) and 4 or 5 of them did and have been selected as councilors (of course not for the Conservative party though). She said “don’t let the men make the decision on how you should live your life.”

**Do you think you will stand for Parliament again?**

Yes, I’ll give it one more shot. She said she will try to get selected for a different seat and find a different association that may be more open to candidate like her.

**Is there anything else you’d like to add?**

There is just a real lack of professionalism in candidate recruitment. There are so many factors at play, if you are black and Muslim, it’s a double negative. Since 9:11, the situation for Muslims has been crazy. It’s not deliberate discrimination; it’s just the nature of politics. She recommended I read a report done by Labour MP, Rushanara Ali about the Conservative Party. She said she doesn’t necessary agree with all of it, but it argues that the Conservative Party uses a lot of its ethnic minority candidates simply as fodder. She asked what we can do to change the minds of party selectors. She posed this as a rhetorical question. Right now there are too few BME MPs. She said she has been helping Mary Macleod with outreach to the sizeable ethnic minority population in her constituency. She emphasized the need for more outreach to BME communities. The Party must do more to find good candidates. Voters may agree with the values and positions of the Conservative Party, but if the party doesn’t reach out, they do not believe the Conservatives represent them.
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