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Party Politics 2008 14: 575
DOI: 10.1177/1354068808093391

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‘THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON’T LISTEN’

All-Women Shortlists at the 2005 General Election

David Cutts, Sarah Childs and Edward Fieldhouse

ABSTRACT

Labour’s All-Women Shortlists (AWS), an example of an equality guarantee, have proved they can deliver. Labour’s 98 women constitute 77 percent of all the women MPs in the House of Commons and 27.5 percent of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Moreover, half of all Labour’s women MPs currently sitting in the House of Commons were selected on AWS, either in 1997 or 2005. Yet, rather than the success of AWS being a key story of the 2005 general election, it was the defeat of the AWS candidate, Maggie Jones, in the ultra-safe Labour seat of Blaenau Gwent that dominated media coverage. ‘This is what happens when you don’t listen’ said the successful, ex-Labour candidate, the late Peter Law: AWS lose votes. This article shows, however, that, Blaenau Gwent aside, there was no significant anti-AWS effect at the 2005 general election. AWS candidates largely suffered from being new candidates. Also, even though we cannot differentiate between an AWS effect and a differential sex effect for new and incumbent candidates, we find that neither is significant.

KEY WORDS ■ All-women shortlists ■ 2005 general election

Introduction

A record 128 women were elected to the House of Commons at the 2005 general election; a rise of 10 from 2001. Women now constitute an unprecedented 20 percent of all MPs. This headline figure hides the distribution of women between the parties, however: 98 are Labour, 17 are Conservative and 10 are Liberal Democrats, while two main Unionist parties and Sinn Fein have one each. Fully 27.5 percent of the Parliamentary Labour Party

1354-0688[DOI: 10.1177/1354068808093391]

(PLP) are women, but women constitute only 16.1 percent of Liberal Democrat MPs and a mere 8.6 percent of Conservative MPs.

The Labour Party's achievement in increasing both the number and percentage of women MPs at the 2005 general election is even more impressive when the retirement of 10 women MPs is added to the equation. But their success did not happen by accident. Chastened by the decline in its numbers at the 2001 general election, and in response to the mobilization of gender equality advocates both inside and outside the party, the government introduced the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act, 2002 (Lovenduski, 2005). This legislation permits political parties to use positive discrimination in the selection of parliamentary candidates (Childs, 2003). Yet, only the Labour Party took up the new legislative opportunities. Twenty-three Labour women selected on All-Women Shortlists (AWS) were elected in 2005. This number of new AWS women means that more than half of all Labour women MPs currently sitting in Parliament were selected on AWS either in 1997 or 2005.

Gender equality advocates demand women's political presence for normative reasons: in terms of justice, for symbolic representation and in terms of substantive arguments (Childs, 2004). Political parties, however, are more likely to be concerned to know about any electoral consequences of adopting quotas (Kittilson, 2006). Labour's women MPs, half of whom, remember, were selected on AWS, has enabled the party to be seen as modern and progressive. Furthermore, with the emergence of modern gender gaps in voting – where women have turned away from their historic support of the Conservative Party – Labour's record women MPs are likely to be part of the explanation for Labour's support among women in the past three elections (Campbell and Lovenduski, 2005; Norris et al., 2004). There is also conclusive, albeit circumstantial, evidence that the presence of greater numbers of women in the PLP has led to the greater integration of women's concerns with the government's agenda (Lovenduski, 2005): for example, childcare, domestic violence and extended maternity and paid parental leave (Campbell and Lovenduski, 2005; Childs, 2004). This, too, is likely to have led to more women, especially younger women, voting Labour, potentially offsetting any small constituency-specific negative effects that may or may not exist.

In the aftermath of the 2005 general election, the successful election of 23 AWS Labour women was largely ignored. Rather, the media focused on the defeat of AWS candidate Maggie Jones in the traditional Labour stronghold of Blaenau Gwent. Running on an explicitly anti-AWS ticket, the independent, but ex-Labour AM, Peter Law, overturned a 19,000 Labour majority. Here was proof, apparently, that voters – and not just party members – were turned off by AWS. Yet, the enormity of Law's swing suggests that there was probably something more than a simple anti-AWS factor at work. While it is possible that local party members might choose not to vote for Maggie Jones, tens of thousands of Labour voters would

also need to be conscious of, and sufficiently troubled by, AWS to do the same.¹ Equally plausible explanations are the imposition of a New Labour, London-based candidate, internal Welsh Assembly/Labour Party politics and the long-standing popularity of Law throughout the Blaenau constituency. John Prescott's retort to a local reporter that he was 'amateur' and should 'bugger off', arguably, did not help. However, similar, albeit smaller, and less publicized defeats occurred for six other AWS women. So, was Blaenau Gwent with its 49 percent swing to Law exceptional, or did this result highlight a wider dissatisfaction among the electorate with Labour's AWS policy, as the late Peter Law suggested?

In this article, we question the established wisdom of an AWS backlash against Labour in 2005. We provide evidence that AWS candidates suffered largely from being new candidates rather than from any anti-AWS effect. Initially, our goal is largely descriptive – to outline in greater detail Labour's AWS policy and, in particular, the reasoning that determined the classification of AWS and open seats. After discussing the criteria used to select AWS seats, we hypothesize that the selection of seats may not have been random, and stress the need to take this into account in our modelling approach. We briefly discuss our preferred modelling options (two-stage least squares models using instrumental variables and propensity score-matching) to eliminate selection bias. We note the difficulties encountered which made the former approach infeasible, and point to preliminary results from the latter method suggesting that the effect of 'treatment' (being an AWS seat) was not biased by the existence of confounding factors. Using an OLS approach, we then examine the effect of candidate sex by comparing AWS candidates with female incumbent candidates who are non-AWS. Here, there is no sex effect and subsequently we hypothesize that the AWS effect could be in fact a new candidate effect, given that AWS candidates were new replacements for retiring MPs. Further models are undertaken to ascertain whether this was the case. We also attempt to differentiate between a new candidate sex effect and an AWS effect. Given that two women candidates were not selected by AWS, we claim that it is impossible to infer an AWS effect from any new candidate sex effect. Notwithstanding this, we find that neither is significant.

Our evidence suggests that at the 2005 general election there was no significant anti-AWS effect that proved detrimental to Labour; being a new candidate was far more important and one masked by AWS. We conclude, moreover, by making the substantive point that Labour's AWS policy may have benefits, not least in constituencies where Labour is seen as being far more progressive than the other main parties. David Cameron's avowed commitment to increasing the numbers of Conservative women candidates and women MPs, together with Labour's handling of the aftermath of the 2005 general election debacle in Blaenau Gwent, suggests that Labour is currently running the risk of losing an issue that they 'own'.

The Return of AWS

As a means of working towards its long-term objective of parity of representation between women and men at Westminster, the Labour Party set a goal of 35 percent women MPs for the 2005 Parliament. Recognizing that it was likely to see a swing against it at the polls, the party realized early in the selection cycle that to achieve anywhere near this percentage it had to replace retiring MPs with women candidates.² To ensure this happened, it also recognized that it would have to return to AWS. To encourage sitting MPs to announce their retirements early in the selection process – and thereby enable the party to monitor the selection of women candidates – sitting MPs were asked to inform the party of their intention to stand down at the 2005 general election before December 2002. If there were insufficient numbers of voluntary AWS in these seats, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) would impose AWS to ensure at least 50 percent of vacant seats had women candidates.³

Post-December 2002 retirements would be classified as 'late retirements' and automatically declared an AWS, although the NEC retained the power to authorize exceptions in special circumstances (*The Guardian*, 10 and 29 January 2003). Yet, these rules did not mean that all late retirement seats would, in practice, be classified as AWS. In addition to the NEC 'exceptional circumstances' caveat, the Late Retirement Panel⁴ (LRP) also sought to manage three separate and, arguably, competing goals. While the primary goal was to increase the number of women elected, they wanted to avoid the perception that 'no men need apply' and to increase the number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) candidates and MPs. Hence, there were always going to be some open contests. Furthermore, seats deemed by the party to be winnable by a BME (specifically where the constituency had a significant BME) were less likely to be classified as an AWS.⁵ And other vacant seats were likely to be open to parachute in favoured sons, just as happened in previous elections.

Blaenau Gwent was among the constituencies to announce that its MP was standing down in advance of December 2002. Given this, both the local Labour Party and Peter Law 'thought they had an assurance that an AWS would not be imposed' (*Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 2005). However, they were mistaken. Party rules made it clear that, in the absence of sufficient voluntary AWS, 50 percent of early retirements would be classified as AWS. In any case, Labour decided to delay the selection process in Wales, which led to Blaenau Gwent being included as one of the late retirement constituencies.

Thirty Labour women were selected on AWS in 2005, of which 20 were selected post-December 2002 (Table 1). The other 15 vacant seats, including reselections and post-trigger selections, were open shortlists.⁶ All challenger seats were also open shortlists.

Aside from where the local Labour Party voluntarily accepted AWS, the decision to impose an AWS in a seat made vacant by a retiring MP was

Table 1. All-Women Shortlist seats 2005 (England and Wales)

<i>AWS 2005 seat</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Retirement</i>	<i>2001 incumbent</i>	<i>Sex</i>
1. Birmingham Yardley	WM	Late	Estelle Morris	F
2. Bishop Auckland	North	Late	Derek Foster	M
3. Blaenau Gwent	Wales	Late	Llew Smith	M
4. Bristol East	SW	Late	Jean Corston	F
5. Burnley	NW	Early	Peter Pike	M
6. Derbyshire NE	EM	Early	Harry Barnes	M
7. Durham, City of	North	Early	Gerry Steinberg	M
8. Forest of Dean	SW	Late	Diane Organ	F
9. Gateshead E and Washington West	North	Early	Joyce Quin	F
10. Hackney S and Shoreditch	London	Early	Brian Sedgemore	M
11. Halifax	Yorks	Early	Alice Mahon	F
12. Hammersmith and Fulham	London	Late	Iain Coleman	M
13. Hove	SE	Late	Ivor Caplin	M
14. Hull North	Yorks	Early	Kevin Mcnamara	M
15. Islington South and Finsbury	London	Late	Chris Smith	M
16. Lancashire West	NW	Late	Colin Pickthall	M
17. Lancaster and Wyre	NW	Late	Hilton Dawson	M
18. Leeds NW	Yorks	Early	Harold Best	M
19. Llanelli	Wales	Late	Denzil Davies	M
20. Newport East	Wales	Late	Alan Howarth	M
21. Plymouth Devonport	SW	Late	David Jamieson	M
22. Portsmouth North	SE	Early	Syd Rapson	M
23. Preseli Pembrokeshire	Wales	Late	Jacqueline Lawrence	F
24. Sheffield Hillsborough	Yorks	Late	Helen Jackson	F
25. Stourbridge	WM	Late	Debra Shipley	F
26. Swansea East	Wales	Late	Donald Anderson	M
27. Swindon South	SW	Late	Julia Drown	F
28. Wakefield	Yorks	Late	David Hinchcliffe	M
29. West Ham	London	Late	Tony Banks	M
30. Worsley	NW	Early	Terry Lewis	M

Regions: NW = North West; SW = South West; SE = South East; WM = West Midlands; EM = East Midlands; Yorks = Yorkshire.

based on a number of factors. Regions with less than 25 percent women representation were targeted. Both Wales and the North of England had the fewest women MPs after the 2001 general election. Of the six seats that became vacant in Wales, five became AWS, whereas three of the five vacant seats in the North of England were AWS in 2005. In regions that currently exceeded the stated objective of 35 percent women representation, stringent efforts were made not to fall below this threshold. For instance, all four vacant seats in the South West of England were AWS. To ensure greater women representation in each region, the most winnable vacant seats were

initially targeted, particularly during the early stages (pre-December 2002) of the AWS selection process. Of course, not all AWS seats selected were very safe; indeed, a number of much more vulnerable Labour-held seats were selected as AWS seats post-December 2002. Some were chosen for other reasons; for example, of the 10 seats with retired women MPs, 9 selected AWS candidates. Also, some seats which became open shortlists were more winnable than other chosen seats in the region. Here, other issues were taken into account in the selection, such as the proximity of other women seats or previously selected AWS seats.

The 2005 Election: An Anti-AWS Backlash?

Altogether, Labour lost 7 of the 30 AWS seats in 2005 (Table 2). After taking account of the exceptional circumstances in Blaenau Gwent, Labour losses occurred in the more vulnerable AWS seats. However, six of the seven losses were late retirement seats. But it could have been much worse. Labour just held on to another pre-December 2002 seat despite a significant Liberal Democrat surge, while in one late retirement seat in the South West of England it was the Conservatives who narrowly failed to overturn a substantial Labour majority from 2001. This is borne out by an examination of the Labour vote share in 2005 and the change in vote from 2001 in incumbent seats (Table 3).

Notwithstanding Labour's general decline in popularity, it is clear that Labour women incumbent candidates fared slightly better than AWS candidates (Table 3). The Labour vote-share in seats with AWS candidates fell by 2 percent more than in seats where there was an incumbent woman candidate. The large swing in Blaenau Gwent certainly masks some of the difference; it is just over 1 percent between candidates in the remaining AWS seats and incumbent women candidates. Given that we account for any candidate sex effect, this provides early circumstantial evidence of a minor anti-AWS

Table 2. All-Women Shortlist seats lost in 2005 (England and Wales)

<i>AWS 2005 seat</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Retirement</i>	<i>AWS candidate</i>	<i>Lab maj 2001</i>
1. Lancaster and Wyre	NW	Late	Anne Sacks	0.9%
2. Hammersmith and Fulham	London	Late	Melanie Smallman	4.5%
3. Forest of Dean	SW	Late	Isabel Owen	4.6%
4. Preseli Pembrokeshire	Wales	Late	Sue Hayman	8.0%
5. Birmingham Yardley	WM	Late	Jayne Innes	8.6%
6. Leeds NW	Yorks	Early	Judith Blake	12.3%
7. Blaenau Gwent	Wales	Late	Maggie Jones	60.9%

Regions: NW = North West; SW = South West; SE = South East; WM = West Midlands; Yorks = Yorkshire.

Table 3. Labour performance in incumbent seats in 2005 (England and Wales only)

<i>Labour incumbent seats</i>	<i>Mean % LABVS 2005</i>	<i>Mean % LABVS ±01–05</i>
Labour incumbent candidates (310)	48.13	-6.76
Women incumbent candidates (77)	45.67	-7.61
Male incumbent candidates (233)	48.94	-6.49
New candidates (45)	45.17	-9.24
<i>New candidates</i>		
All-Women Shortlists (30)	43.98	-9.69
Early retirements (10)	46.70	-8.22
Late retirements (20)	42.63	-10.43
Other vacant seats (open lists) (15)	47.54	-8.34

There were 355 Labour incumbent seats in England and Wales before the 2005 general election. Two by-election defeats in Brent East and Leicester South are excluded.

effect. If we compare the performance of all AWS candidates with all incumbent candidates, the difference is roughly 3 percent. This reflects the fact that male incumbent candidates fared slightly better (just over 1 percent) than women did. A similar pattern emerges for all new candidates (AWS candidates and open-list candidates in incumbent seats).

It also seems that AWS candidates who were late selections did worse than those placed in early retirement seats (Table 3). This is not surprising given that we would expect AWS candidates, selected pre-December 2002, to have benefited from a longer preparation time and higher personal profile in the constituency. In fact, these figures are slightly misleading. If we discount Blaenau Gwent, AWS candidates in late retirement seats saw their vote decline by around 9 percent. There was actually little difference between the two, reflecting the fact that 7 of the 10 early retirement seats were in Labour's northern heartlands, which saw large swings to the Liberal Democrats largely because of their stance on the war in Iraq and the introduction of tuition fees (Fieldhouse et al., 2006).

Understanding the AWS Effect on Labour Support 2005

The results in Table 3 suggest that AWS candidates did slightly worse than incumbent Labour women candidates. By comparing women candidates, we might assume that any additional negative effect on Labour performance could be due to the candidate being selected from an AWS. However, Table 3 also provides circumstantial evidence that new candidates in other vacant seats performed just as badly as AWS candidates. Incumbent candidates often build personal support through local activity in the constituency and largely benefit from a higher local profile than their opponents (Johnston and Pattie, 1996). It could be hypothesized that new candidates even in party incumbent

seats often do not benefit from these inbuilt advantages. Perhaps any additional AWS effect could just be the penalty of being a new candidate in the constituency. Of course, to provide a much stronger indication of any relationships we need to control for other intervening variables through a series of multivariate analyses. Here, we combine demographic and contemporary factors to account for other possible explanations of Labour support.

Our working hypothesis is that any additional effect of being an AWS candidate in 2005 is relatively small and unlikely to be significant once being a new candidate is taken into account. To evaluate this, we first model women non-AWS candidates and AWS candidates to ascertain whether there was a sex effect. If there is no sex effect, then we might hypothesize that the AWS effect could in fact be a new candidate effect. To test this, we then model AWS candidates and new candidates selected in other vacant seats. Both categories are New Labour candidates standing in 2005. The difference between the coefficients will indicate whether there was a significant additional AWS effect. Given the findings of other scholars (Curtice et al., 2005), we also examine whether it is possible to differentiate between a new candidate sex effect and an AWS effect.⁷ To test this, we compare our original findings with the results of a new candidate sex effect model. Given that the new candidate women variable includes AWS candidates and two additional women candidates who were non-AWS, it is unlikely that the results will reveal any significant differences from our original findings.

To examine these relationships, we use single equation OLS models. However, we recognize that there are problems with this approach. Given that AWS seats were selected on the basis of a number of criteria, applying a standard OLS model may lead to bias and inconsistent coefficient estimates. It is possible that selection bias arises because the treatment (in this case selection of AWS seats) is correlated with the error term (the problem of 'unobserved heterogeneity') in the outcome equation. Also, there is the possibility of endogeneity bias, where the dependent variable (in this case Labour 2005 vote-share) is determined simultaneously with other covariates (in our case AWS 2005). One method that is often used to overcome such problems is an instrumental variable (IV) approach (Angrist et al., 1996; Gerber and Green, 2000; Green and Gerber, 2003).⁸ The appropriateness of this method hinges on the validity of the instrumental variables used. We derived a series of instrumental variables (region, winnable seat, retired women MPs for the endogenous variable AWS),⁹ but found them to lack explanatory power when they were incrementally added to the model in the first stage equation (Bound et al., 1995).¹⁰ To continue using inappropriate instrumental variables would, in itself, yield biased estimates. The relatively small sample size also means that there is no possibility of rectifying the problem. Put simply, the theoretically derived instrumental variables did not prove to be relevant in accounting for the factors used in the selection of AWS seats and were not reliable to deal with any endogeneity bias. We therefore attempted to use an alternative to the IV approach which involved

statistical matching (Imai, 2005; Imai and van Dyk, 2004; Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983, 1985).¹¹ Again, our efforts were hindered by the small sample size of the treatment group (AWS seats), although our findings did suggest little difference between AWS seats and non-AWS seats, which raises the question of the existence of selection bias. Propensity scores included all variables used in our main models (see Tables 5 and 6). There was no evidence that the propensity to be AWS related to any observable variables. Therefore, there is no evidence of endogeneity bias. Consequently, by necessity, we use single equation OLS models.

Data

In this research we use aggregate data from the 2005 British Parliamentary Constituency database. We focus only on Labour incumbent seats given that AWS candidates in 2005 could only be selected in constituencies held by the party since 2001. In order to test our hypothesis, we need to take account of other factors which might affect the Labour vote-share in 2005.

Social cleavages have long been established as important indicators of voting behaviour in the UK. Political parties tend to do better or worse in areas depending on the people who live there. We employ a number of socio-economic variables generated from the 2001 census to reflect these known cleavages (see Appendix A1 for full details). Owing to collinearity between various indicators, we analysed the data using principle components analysis (PCA) (Table 4). The factor classification axes were rotated and three components were extracted using orthogonal rotation, thus ensuring that the factors remained uncorrelated. Three factors were required to reproduce 82 percent of the variance (all with eigenvalues greater than 1 based on the Kaiser criterion). The three factors produce a fairly clear pattern describing the characteristics of constituencies. Factor 1 appears to capture the class structure; Factor 2 describes the level of deprivation or affluence; and Factor 3 appears to reflect the established or ageing character of areas, mainly rural, with a particular emphasis on older electors (over 60). Factor scores were saved and introduced as independent variables in our regression models.

The inclusion of a further two socio-economic variables separately from the factors reflects the importance of two key issues which were unique to the 2005 general election. Opposition to the war in Iraq was widely believed to have cost Labour support in areas with large Muslim electorates, while dissatisfaction following the introduction of tuition fees may have had similar effects, particularly in areas with large student populations. Two additional variables (percent Muslim; percent full-time students) are therefore included to take account of such effects.

A sex of candidate variable is also included for both opposition parties. This is because sex discrimination has been found to be operating in all of the parties' selection procedures despite overwhelming evidence that there

Table 4. Socio-economic variables: principal components analysis varimax-rotated component loadings

<i>2001 census variables</i>	<i>C1 Working class</i>	<i>C2 Affluence/ deprivation</i>	<i>C3 Retirement and rurality</i>
% Agriculture	–	–	0.73
% Employers (NSEC 1 and 2)	–0.86	0.33	–
% Degree	–0.92	–	–
% Non-white	–0.32	–0.53	–0.54
% Long-term ill	0.66	–0.50	0.39
% Manufacturing	0.82	–	–
% Owner occupation	–	0.87	–
% Pensioners	–	–	0.86
% Semi-routine and routine occupations (NSEC 6 and 7)	0.93	–	–
% Two cars	–	0.94	–
% Unemployment	–	–0.90	–
Variance	37.3%	34.1%	10.5%
Accumulated value – % total variance	37.3%	71.5%	82.0%

Components with eigenvalues > 1 are retained. Rotated component loadings (varimax rotation) greater than 0.3 shown.

is no electoral penalty for women candidates (Lovenduski, 2001). In 2005, both the main opposition parties selected more women candidates (Campbell and Lovenduski, 2005; Childs, 2006). With the Liberal Democrats stressing the gendered impact of policies much more explicitly than in previous elections – for example pensions and tuition fees – it could be that women Liberal Democrat candidates substantively benefited from this more progressive outlook (Childs, 2006).

It is also hypothesized that Respect Party (minor party with traditional socialist leanings) candidates affected Labour performance in 2005. Respect was extremely vocal in its opposition to the war in Iraq and particularly targeted areas with large numbers of Muslims. To reflect this, we add the main effect (Respect candidate) and the interaction between it and the percentage Muslim. Also, we include a dummy variable for Wales. Despite evidence that the 2001 general election was a devolution-blind event (Mitchell and Bradbury, 2002), there was a possibility that Labour could lose additional support in Wales over matters that were under the jurisdiction of the devolved Assembly. The Labour-led administration's record on the Welsh health service and its indecisiveness over variable top-up tuition fees were issues seized on by opposition parties, as Welsh specific, and, along with prominent national matters, dominated the election campaign (Bradbury, 2006).

A number of studies have consistently demonstrated that where a party campaigned more intensively, relative to its opponents, it gained a greater electoral payoff (Cutts, 2006; Denver and Hands, 1997; Johnston and Pattie, 1995; Whiteley and Seyd, 1994). The importance of local campaigns on electoral outcomes has now become the 'accepted truth'. We use party spending variables as a surrogate measure of local activism owing to its considerable and proven validity in numerous scholarly work (Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2006; Pattie et al., 1994, 1995).

Apart from including both demographic and contemporary controls, which tell us about the underlying pattern of support for Labour, it is important to ascertain which variables were not simply a reflection of support in 2001 and, primarily, whether there was still an AWS effect. In order to understand this, we fit models with previous vote-share as a predictor variable. This represents an ANCOVA approach, where the outcome variable effectively becomes the change in Labour vote-share not explained by prior vote-share. While this is more efficient, others prefer a change-score approach (Fieldhouse et al., 2006). There is actually little difference between either, with a number of advantages to both approaches (Allison, 1990).

Finally, we exclude Blaenau Gwent from the following models for statistical and theoretical reasons. Clearly, events in Blaenau Gwent were exceptional and part of the aim of this article is to ascertain whether an anti-AWS effect occurred elsewhere. Including Blaenau Gwent in the models would inevitably mask such effects by dramatically altering the gradient of the regression line and biasing the estimated regression coefficients. That said, we also ran models with Blaenau Gwent and will note any substantial differences in coefficients or significance briefly in the text.

Did Candidate Sex Matter?

The linear models are built in stages in order to see how the key variables are affected by the introduction of others. The first stage includes the two key variables without any controls. Demographic and contemporary factors are added in the second stage, along with variables describing the local political context. The final stage takes into account prior Labour vote-share in 2001. The inclusion of Labour vote-share in 2001 means that the model indicates the effects of the other predictors on Labour vote change between 2001 and 2005, in that continuity of support is held constant. The inclusion of control variables during the second stage of the model increases the explanatory power of the model to just under 75 percent of the total variance. This increases to 90 percent when prior vote-share is added.¹²

We first model whether candidate sex mattered (Table 5). Both women non-AWS candidates and AWS candidates are compared against all male Labour candidates (incumbents and new). The first stage of the model indicates that there is a candidate sex effect although there is an additional

Table 5. Impact of candidate sex on Labour support in 2005 (Labour incumbent seats only)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 1 AWS and sex only</i>	<i>Model 2 Social cleavages and contemporary factors</i>	<i>Model 3 Previous Labour vote-share</i>
Constant	48.80*	58.41*	6.81*
Base: All Labour male candidates			
All-Women Shortlist 2005	-4.68*	-3.14*	-2.47*
Labour women candidates non-AWS	-3.13*	-0.07	-0.34
Opposition candidates			
Gender conservative candidate 2005		1.05*	0.41
Gender Lib Dem candidate 2005		-0.54	-0.70*
Respect candidate		-0.01	0.32
Muslim*Respect candidate		-0.11	-0.13*
Plaid Cymru candidate		-1.40	0.70
Social Cleavages			
FAC1: Working class		1.59*	0.89*
FAC2: Affluent		-4.48*	-0.62*
FAC3: Retirement and rural		-1.75*	0.03
Muslim %		-0.35*	-0.17*
Full-time students %		-0.23*	-0.09*
Local campaign			
Labour spending %		-0.03*	0.01
Conservative spending %		-0.10*	-0.03*
Lib Dem spending %		-0.07*	-0.02*
Previous vote-share			
Labour vote-share 2001 %			0.79*
R ²	0.04	0.73	0.90

Unstandardized coefficients, $p < 0.05 = *$, $n = 354$.
Models do not include Blaenau Gwent.

penalty for being an AWS candidate. However, once the underlying levels of Labour support are taken into account by controlling for different factors (stage 2), there is no evidence of candidate sex effect. Yet, Labour support in 2005 declined by more than three percentage points where they fielded an AWS candidate. Even when prior vote is taken into account (stage 3), a similar pattern emerges. Labour did slightly worse in constituencies where it selected AWS candidates.¹³ Therefore, while candidate sex did not matter, there is a possibility that there was an anti-AWS effect.

The control variables largely acted in the expected manner. Labour did better in more working-class areas and significantly worse in affluent areas and rural constituencies in 2005. These patterns are confirmed when prior vote is taken into account. The Labour vote declined in the more suburban middle-class areas associated with higher levels of home and multiple car ownership. As expected, Labour did significantly worse in constituencies with a large Muslim population and areas with more full-time students. These variables remained negative and significant in 2005 relative to Labour vote-share in 2001, reflecting the importance of key issues such as the war in Iraq and the introduction of tuition fees. In stage 3 of the model, prior vote-share was positive and significant, which suggests that Labour performed best where it previously had most support.

Labour did much better in constituencies where the Conservatives fielded women candidates, although when prior vote-share is added to the model this variable becomes insignificant. Labour's relative performance also suffered where the Liberal Democrats selected women candidates, reflecting a number of high profile successes, and where Respect candidates stood in highly populated Muslim areas. The latter is shown by the negative interaction. Finally, intensive opposition campaigning further eroded Labour support, while Labour activism did not affect its performance once prior vote-share was added into the model.

A New Candidate Effect?

So the first part of the hypothesis has been realized. There is no evidence of a sex effect (excluding AWS candidates) on Labour performance in 2005, while Labour support declined where there were AWS candidates. But was this due to Labour's policy of AWS or could it simply have been a new candidate effect, given that AWS women were new candidates. The models reported in Table 6 largely address this question. The control variables all behave as before (Table 5), while the total variance explained at each stage of the modelling process is also similar.¹⁴ Both new non-AWS candidates (new candidates in vacant seats) and AWS candidates (new candidates selected by AWS) are compared against all Labour incumbent non-AWS candidates.

The first two stages of the model show that while there was an AWS effect, the new non-AWS candidates variable was insignificant. However, when we take account of prior vote-share, both variables have a significant negative effect on Labour support. This suggests that new candidates performed worse than incumbent candidates. After taking account of being a new candidate, the additional penalty of being an AWS candidate on Labour support in 2005 relative to 2001 was roughly 0.71 (the difference between -2.47 and -1.76). While both coefficients are significantly different to the base category (Labour incumbents), they are not statistically different to each other (at the 95 percent confidence level, using a standard *t*-test).¹⁵ Even so, being a new

Table 6. Impact of new candidates on Labour support in 2005 (Labour incumbent seats only)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 1 AWS and new candidates only</i>	<i>Model 2 Social cleavages and contemporary factors</i>	<i>Model 3 Previous Labour vote-share</i>
Constant	48.08*	58.54*	7.03*
Base: Labour incumbent candidates (male and female)			
All-Women Shortlist 2005	-3.96*	-3.22*	-2.47*
New candidates non-AWS (other vacant seats)	-0.54	-1.72	-1.76*
Opposition candidates			
Gender conservative candidate 2005		1.03*	0.39
Gender Lib Dem candidate 2005		-0.57	-0.73*
Respect candidate		0.06	0.40
Muslim*Respect candidate		-0.11	-0.14*
Plaid Cymru candidate		-1.38	0.74
Social cleavages			
FAC1: Working class		1.58*	0.88*
FAC2: Affluent		-4.48*	-0.62*
FAC3: Retirement and rural		-1.79*	0.02
Muslim %		-0.35*	-0.17*
Full-time students %		-0.23*	-0.10*
Local campaign			
Labour spending %		-0.03*	0.01
Conservative spending %		-0.10*	-0.03*
Lib Dem spending %		-0.07*	-0.02*
Previous vote-share			
Labour vote-share 2001 %			0.79*
R ²	0.02	0.74	0.90

Unstandardized coefficients, $p < 0.05 = *$, $n = 354$.
Models do not include Blaenau Gwent.

candidate in 2005 still accounts for a substantial proportion of the AWS coefficient.

Before we can draw such conclusions, it is important to note that, theoretically, there could have been a sex effect for new women candidates who were non-AWS. Because there were only two cases that fell within this category, we included them as women incumbent non-AWS candidates in Table 5 and as new non-AWS candidates in Table 6. An alternative approach

is to add variables (sex, AWS and incumbency) separately (Table 7). Then there should be effects for ‘women’ (versus men), ‘incumbents’ (versus non-incumbents) and AWS (versus non-AWS). However, it is likely that this would not be identified because of the lack of variation of sex in AWS. This is borne out by the results in Table 7. Here, we report the coefficients and confidence intervals after controlling for prior vote-share and the other covariates. As expected, both AWS and sex are insignificant, while incumbent candidates did significantly better than new candidates. While this approach confirms our original findings, the fact that these three variables are not independent of each other causes potential multicollinearity problems. This is borne out by collinearity diagnostics (tolerance statistics for AWS and sex variables are just above the 0.2 level), which means that we prefer our method shown in Table 6 to this approach.

AWS versus a New Candidate Sex Effect

Earlier, we found that there was no evidence of any candidate sex effect on Labour Party performance in 2005, although there remains the possibility of a differential sex effect for new candidates which could be interpreted as a possible AWS effect (Curtice et al., 2005). In Table 8, we compare our new candidate effect model (coefficients derived from Table 6) with a new candidate sex effect model (comparing new candidate men and women against all Labour incumbent candidates). While there is evidence of a small sex effect for new candidates, the upper confidence interval for new women is higher than the lower confidence interval for new candidate men, indicating no significant difference. The confidence intervals also reveal no significant difference between AWS candidates and other new candidates. Given that two women candidates were not selected by AWS, it is impossible to infer an AWS effect from a sex effect for new candidates. However, this does not really matter given that the results from both models are insignificant.

Table 7. An alternative model: the impact of sex, AWS and incumbent candidates on Labour support in 2005 (controlling for prior vote-share 2001 and other covariates – Labour incumbent seats only)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Labour 2005 vote-share</i>	<i>Confidence intervals</i>	
		<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Constant	5.02*		
AWS	-0.26	-2.02	1.49
Sex	-0.53	-1.21	0.16
Incumbent candidate	1.82*	0.46	3.19

Unstandardized coefficients, $p < 0.05 = *$, $n = 354$.
Models do not include Blaenau Gwent.

Table 8. Comparing new candidate effect and new candidate sex effect models on Labour support in 2005 (controlling for prior vote-share 2001 and additional covariates – Labour incumbent seats only)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Labour 2005 vote-share</i>	<i>Confidence intervals</i>	
		<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
New candidate effect model			
Constant	7.03*		
Base: Labour incumbent candidates (male and female)			
All-Women Shortlist 2005	-2.47*	-3.51	-1.44
New candidates non-AWS (other vacant seats)	-1.76*	-3.13	-0.40
New candidate sex effect model			
Constant	6.95*		
Base: Labour incumbent candidates (male and female)			
New candidates women	-2.57*	-3.56	-1.57
New candidates men	-1.43*	-2.90	0.04

Unstandardized coefficients, $p < 0.05 = *$, $n = 354$.
Models do not include Blaenau Gwent.

Conclusions

Labour's high profile debacle in Blaenau Gwent exposed its policy of AWS to intense media scrutiny. The loss of a further six seats where the party put up AWS candidates gave the impression that Labour had suffered a widespread AWS backlash. Here we show, however, that Blaenau Gwent was an exceptional case. In reality, there was no significant AWS effect in 2005. The perceived AWS effect had *nothing* to do with candidate sex or being an AWS candidate and *everything* to do with being a new candidate. We also cannot differentiate between an AWS effect and a new candidate sex effect, although this did not matter given that neither had a significant impact on Labour performance in 2005.

Labour, therefore, has little to fear from its continued use of AWS. To be sure, there are normative arguments for and against AWS that advocates and critics will argue over. Yet, what is beyond dispute is that Labour's AWS have delivered and delivered quickly: the outcomes of the general elections in 1997, 2001 and 2005 show that AWS are the only strategy that has returned significantly higher numbers of women MPs to Parliament. And with women's numerical representation in the House of Commons remaining at less than 20 percent, and in the PLP below 30 percent, AWS are likely to remain critical to the party's aspiration for parity of representation. Rather than apologizing for Blaenau Gwent – and by implication the use of

AWS per se – Labour should be bold in highlighting AWS achievements. Importantly, as we have shown, they can do this without fear of damaging electoral implications. Indeed, there is no evidence that Labour performed worse in AWS seats, once other factors have been taken into account, and it is plausible that the increased representation of women enhances Labour's national vote-share.¹⁶ Finally, in the context of David Cameron's recent reforms of Conservative Party selection (Campbell et al., 2006), an apologetic and timid Labour Party risks handing the issue of 'women's numerical representation' – an issue which they own – to a party whose selection procedures lack the guarantees of AWS.

Appendix

Socio-economic variables – constituency level

- % Two Cars, 2001 Census
- % Degree, 2001 Census
- % Manufacturing, 2001 Census
- % Agriculture, 2001 Census
- % Retired people, 2001 Census
- % Long Term Ill, 2001 Census
- % Non-white, 2001 Census
- % Owner Occupation, 2001 Census
- % Employers (NSEC 1 & 2), 2001 Census
- % Semi-routine & Routine Occupations (NSEC 6 & 7), 2001 Census
- % Unemployment, 2001 Census

Notes

- 1 Peter Law was the Welsh Assembly Member for Blaenau Gwent when he joined the internal Labour row in the constituency over the imposition of an AWS candidate for the Parliamentary seat. Most local party members were opposed and boycotted the selection process, which was overseen by the Welsh Labour Party. Law joining the protest and deciding to stand against the selected Labour candidate had official constituency backing. He mounted a highly personalized local campaign, although this was hindered by persistent health problems. Law split the local party, with a number of members aiding his campaign and withdrawing their support for the Labour candidate. At one stage, Law himself withdrew from the campaign on health grounds only to recover in time to rejoin the race. By contrast, the Labour leadership poured resources into the constituency with high profile visits from senior Labour cabinet ministers. The scale of local infighting only became apparent after the election when 20 Labour members were expelled from the party on the suspicion of helping Law.
- 2 Scotland was excluded from this process because of the reduction of Scottish parliamentary seats at the 2005 general election following significant redistricting.
- 3 There is some discrepancy as to whether the date was 23 or 31 December. We follow the NEC documentation, which suggests the former.

- 4 This is a sub-committee of the Organization Committee, which is itself a sub-committee of the NEC. As of 25 January 2005, the selection procedures were amended (timetable shortened) to ensure the completion of selections.
- 5 The NEC established a six-monthly Race Equality Forum which supported the work of selection monitors designed to scrutinize the selection process from an equal opportunities perspective.
- 6 If the sitting Labour MP wishes to stand for re-election, a trigger ballot will be carried out through various party units and affiliates associated with that particular local constituency party. If the MP wins a trigger ballot, he/she will be subject to endorsement by the NEC and be selected as the constituency Labour Party's prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC). If the MP fails to win the trigger ballot, he/she will be eligible for nomination as the PPC and shall be included in a shortlist of candidates from which the selection is made. This shortlist can be open to all candidates or in certain circumstances be designated as an All-Women Shortlist. In total, there were three open selections caused by the sitting MP losing the trigger: Peterborough (where Helen Clarke was successful in winning the selection), Tooting (where Tom Cox lost) and Reading East (where Jane Griffiths lost).
- 7 Curtice et al. (2005) claim that in seats where a previous male incumbent was replaced by a new female candidate they did worse than where a male incumbent was replaced by another man. While the promotion of female candidates through AWS is mentioned as a possible explanation, there is no attempt to distinguish between a new candidate sex effect and AWS.
- 8 The instrumental variable (IV) method is a subtype of the two-stage least squares estimation method. The first-stage equation regressed AWS on covariates (includes instrumental variables as explanatory variables) to obtain predicted values of AWS. We used a probit model in the first stage (AWS is a dichotomous outcome). The plan was then to regress Labour 2005 vote-share on the covariates (OLS procedure) including the predicted values of AWS obtained from the first regression equation.
- 9 We also attempted to ascertain whether the candidate was local or had been 'parachuted' into the seat from elsewhere. This would have been an extremely useful instrumental variable; however, we could not obtain this information from party records or confidential interviews.
- 10 There are standard procedures for testing whether an instrument is weak. In the first-stage equation, where instruments are added, an F-statistic less than 10 indicates a weak instrument (we assessed this using a linear model). All our instruments recorded F-test values of less than 10. If we proceeded with the model, the sampling distribution of the two-stage least squares estimator would not be normal, inevitably resulting in misleading confidence intervals.
- 11 We attempted to calculate propensity scores (the conditional probability of receiving the treatment) using a logit regression of the probability of treatment as a function of the observed covariates. Our information comes from the estimated model and should be regarded as only preliminary findings. Future research will involve changing the model specification and re-estimating the propensity score until the distributions of covariates are similar between the control and treatment groups, i.e. to achieve this balance. However, this may not be feasible given the small sample size.
- 12 There was no evidence of multicollinearity at any stage of the modelling process. The average VIF for stage 2 of the model on Labour vote-share is 1.83 compared

- with 2.08 in stage 3. All tolerance statistics are well above 0.2 for all models. Also, each predictor has most of its variance loading on a different dimension, which is further indication of little or no multicollinearity.
- 13 When Blaenau Gwent is included in the model of 2005 Labour vote-share, the AWS coefficient is -3.82 . There are no significant changes to the control variables. When prior vote-share is included, the coefficient for AWS is -3.49 . Again, there is no significant impact on any of the control variables.
 - 14 Again, there was no evidence of multicollinearity in any model. The average VIF for stage 2 of the model on Labour vote-share is 1.83 compared with 2.08 in stage 3. All tolerance statistics are well above 0.2 for all models. In addition, each predictor has most of its variance loading on a different dimension, which is further indication of little or no multicollinearity.
 - 15 When Blaenau Gwent is included in the model that accounts for prior Labour vote-share, the two coefficients are as follows: AWS -3.49 ; new candidates non-AWS -1.67 , giving a difference of 1.8. There are no significant changes to the control variables.
 - 16 This cannot be demonstrated using constituency level data such as this, and would require a different research strategy (e.g. a comparative analysis of parties' performance and women's representation).

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Paper submitted 29 September 2006; accepted for publication 04 February 2007.