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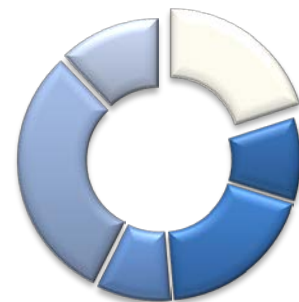**Parliamentary Questions as Instruments of Substantive Representation: An Analysis of the 2005-2010 Parliament**

Working Paper 1/2011

Parliamentary Questions as Instruments of Substantive Representation: Visible Minorities in the UK House of Commons, 2005-2010

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Abstract: *Does the growing descriptive representation of minority-ethnic legislators in the British House of Commons have any implications for the substantive representation of minority-related issues in the UK Parliament? This study is based on a data set of over 16,000 parliamentary questions tabled by 50 British backbench Members of Parliament (MPs) in the 2005-2010 Parliament, including the 16 immigrant-origin MPs with a 'visible-minority' background. Based on a series of multivariate models, it is found that all British MPs sampled for this study – irrespective of their ethnic status – respond to electoral incentives arising from the socio-demographic composition of their constituencies: Minority and non-minority MPs alike ask more questions relating to minority concerns, if they represent constituencies with a high share of non-White residents. Controlling for that general effect, however, MPs with a visible-minority status do tend to ask significantly more questions about ethnic diversity and equality issues.*

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Introduction

Despite many differences in their rules of procedure, all democratic parliaments provide their Members with some possibilities to ask questions, which the government of the day has to answer (Wiberg, 1995; Russo and Wiberg, 2010). Whether ministers' answers take the form of oral or written replies, whether or not responses are debated on the floor of the chamber, questions and answers will always be on public record. They are noted by the local media and advertised on the personal websites of many Members of Parliament (MPs). Backbenchers in the British House of Commons can ask 'Prime Minister's Questions', although only a few will be answered each week. More importantly in quantitative terms, they can table questions for oral and for written answer to ministers. 'Urgent' and 'topical' questions provide additional means of calling the government to account and articulating the concerns of constituents (Blackburn and Kennon, 2003; Franklin and Norton, 1993). In a fairly typical parliamentary session (2008-2009), the House of Commons spent over 91 hours of floor time on questions for oral answer, just over 4 hours on urgent questions and nearly 22 hours on topical questions. Taken together, questions and oral replies took up approximately 11.2 per cent of the 1,049 hours of debates on the floor of the Commons in that session. In addition, the government replied to 56,387 questions in writing (House of Commons, 2009).

MPs employ parliamentary questions for a number of reasons: If they belong to an opposition party, they may use them to challenge or press ministers over policy or personal conduct. Government backbenchers, by contrast, may support 'their' ministers by asking questions that invite the latter to highlight the government's policy success or to attack alleged or real inconsistencies in the opposition's policies. Independent of this government-versus-opposition mode (King, 1976), individual MPs may use parliamentary questions to enhance their own reputation and 'show concern for the interests of constituents' (Russo and Wiberg, 2010: pp.217-8, *verbatim* quote p. 218). This individual dimension of parliamentary questioning is of particular importance for the present contribution. In recent studies, scholars examined the extent to which Members of some European parliaments use parliamentary questions to cultivate individualised relationships with their constituents, complementing their relationship mediated by political parties (see particularly Martin, 2011; Rasch, 2009). These studies focus on the *electoral connection* of parliamentary behaviour and seek to link behaviour to possible incentives arising from *geographic*

constituencies. By contrast, the representative connection between MPs and particular socially defined (e.g., ethnic) constituencies, which may be geographically dispersed, remains underresearched, although some British MPs have clearly seen their role as minority representatives beyond the confines of their electoral districts (see Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011). Using the content parliamentary questions for written answer as a behavioural indicator, the present contribution examines whether British Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) MPs in the 2005-2010 Parliament can be found to be particularly responsive to *minority-related* as well as to district-related concerns. The study goes beyond existing scholarship in the study of the politics of immigration in that it uses parliamentary questions as a quantitative indicator and contrasts the behaviour of immigrant-origin MPs with a stratified random sample of non-minority autochthonous MPs.

Theory and Working Hypotheses

Why should an MP's status as an immigrant or member of a 'visible minority'[i] matter for their parliamentary behaviour as representatives? After all, it could be argued that – given certain (e.g., electoral or institutional) incentives – the substance of constituents' interests in a representative system of government can be advocated and promoted effectively by any good representative, irrespective of the latter's personal characteristics, although there may be a certain 'symbolic' value to adequate descriptive representation (e.g., Pitkin, 1967; Norton, 2005). Normative theorists have addressed this question by claiming that effective substantive representation of certain groups requires a deep understanding of the experiences of the represented, which is best achieved by a representative from the same group. Mansbridge (1999: p.641) argues that 'contexts of distrust' where a 'history of dominance and subordination typically breeds inattention, even arrogance, on the part of the dominant group and distrust on the part of the subordinate group' cannot be addressed without adequate descriptive representation. Empirical theories of democratic representation have sought causal explanations for variations in deputies' representative behaviour. In their classic study, Miller and Stokes' (1963: pp.50-1) find that constituency interests influence legislative behaviour via (a) the selection of a deputy via elections and (b) the deputy's perception of constituency preferences. Correspondence between popular preferences in the district and legislative behaviour (in roll calls) was found to depend on the

policy area (ibid.). Recent comparative studies (e.g., Wüst and Saalfeld, 2011) identified variations in party affiliation and electoral systems in a cross-national design covering four European democracies.

MPs face a complicated incentive structure shaped by institutional contexts, party ideology and discipline as well as individual preferences and strategies. In the language of principal-agent theory, they are agents of their parties on whose reputation their re-election largely depends. Simultaneously they are agents of their constituents. If MPs (or their parties) were to be modelled as actors predominantly interested in the pursuit of policy goals, the extent to which they substantively represent minority-related interests may depend on their party ideology or role orientations. If they define their role in Parliament as being 'policy advocates' (Searing, 1994) in areas important to minorities, they could be expected to articulate minority-related issues in parliamentary questions more frequently than MPs with different backgrounds, policy preferences or role orientations, irrespective of electoral or partisan incentives. Alternatively, MPs could be modelled as 'vote seekers' or 'office seekers' (Strøm, 1990; Müller and Strøm, 1999) whose behaviour in the parliamentary chamber depends on the expected utility of their activities in terms of votes and political career prospects. In this case, policies would be instrumental and predictions of representative behaviour would be more complex: Electoral incentives would affect *all* MPs irrespective of their ethnicity: In general, re-election-seeking MPs representing constituencies with a high concentration of immigrants and visible minorities could be expected to take the socio-demographic composition of their constituencies into account when setting priorities for their behaviour and questioning patterns in the chamber. Thus, electoral incentives could be expected to dominate personal characteristics. Moreover, studies of the behaviour of US legislators suggest that ethnic-minority candidates are often highly strategic in sending signals to voters. Depending on the expected costs and benefits of emphasising minority-related issues in the chamber, they may find it more beneficial engage in a deliberate 'deracialization' of their personal profile (McCormick and Jones, 1993) or adopt a sophisticated strategy of 'toggling' between 'racialized' and 'deracialized' signals to voters and observers in different arenas and media (Collett, 2008).

It is an empirical question whether MPs with a BAME background highlight ethnic issues in parliamentary questions. Variations may also be a result of differences in party strategy as

parties are increasingly sophisticated in targeting specific voter groups (Strömbäck 2009), amongst others by offering popular and/or credible candidates in clearly defined communities. This contribution seeks to establish whether there are any links between an MP's ethnic status and the content of his or her parliamentary questions. Therefore the following work is driven by the following null and alternate hypotheses:

- H_0: There is no difference between BAME and non-BAME MPs in the minority-related content of their parliamentary questions.

- H_1: There is a significant statistical association between the MP's ethnic background and the content of their parliamentary questions: MPs from visible-minority backgrounds will ask more questions that are of particular concern to the ethnic groups they are associated with.

Figures 1 and 2 near here

Figures 1 and 2 represent two possible variants of the null hypothesis: In Figure 1 the number of parliamentary questions relating to minority concerns tabled by MPs with a 'visible-minority' background does not differ significantly from the number of questions tabled by all other MPs. The null hypothesis in its variant in Figure 1 is termed 'non-responsive', because the number of relevant parliamentary questions is independent of the share of the visible-minority population in the constituency. MPs from both minority and non-minority backgrounds behave like 'trustees' in the familiar terminology of Eulau, Wahlke and their co-authors. Such trustees are free agents following either the dictates of their own conscience or their own judgements based on an independent assessment of the issues involved (Eulau, Wahlke et al., 1959: p.749). Alternatively, however, they may behave like 'delegates' in the typology of Eulau, Wahlke and their collaborators. In this role, MPs 'should *not* use their independent judgment or convictions as criteria of decision-making' but subordinate their independence 'to what is considered a superior authority' (ibid., p.750). This 'superior authority' could be their party or their constituents.

If the superior authority is the plurality of voters in an MP's constituency, the 'responsive variant' of the null hypothesis (Figure 2) would be more likely to hold. It would predict no difference between minority and non-minority MPs. In contrast to the non-responsive variant, however, the questioning patterns of both types of MPs reflect the socio-demographic compositions of their respective constituencies. In other words, both visible-minority MPs and non-minority MPs should systematically respond to the policy problems and electoral pressures in their constituencies. MPs representing constituencies with high concentrations of residents and voters with visible-minority backgrounds should tend to emphasize the needs and concerns of such groups more strongly than MPs representing constituencies with few visible-minority voters.

Figures 3 and 4 near here

Like the null hypothesis, the alternate hypothesis can be phrased in a responsive and a non-responsive fashion. Figure 3 represents the non-responsive variant, predicting a significant difference between the parliamentary questioning patterns of MPs with and without visible-minority backgrounds. The former should emphasise minority-related concerns more frequently than the latter, irrespective of the socio-demographic composition of their respective electoral districts. This may be due to the fact that MPs from visible-minority backgrounds are single-minded policy seekers with a particular concern for minority-related issues. This concern may be rooted in the personal experiences such MPs have had. Alternatively, it may be based on a division of labour within the political parties where MPs from visible-minority backgrounds are encouraged to specialise in this area and enhance the party's attractiveness amongst minority voters. These differences do not matter for the specific purposes of this contribution. In Figure 4, both types of MPs – those from visible-minority backgrounds and those without such a background – are responsive to their constituencies' socio-demographic compositions. Nevertheless, the number of parliamentary questions asked by MPs with visible-minority backgrounds will always be significantly higher than the number asked by MPs without. Thus, in a multi-variate design,

both constituency composition and minority background should have a significant positive net effect on the number of parliamentary questions reflecting relevant issues.

Figures 5, 6 and 7 near here

The alternate hypothesis may also be specified in various interactive variants. Figures 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the link for three different possible interaction effects between constituency composition and MP's minority status. In Figure 5, MPs from visible minorities will always ask a relatively high number of parliamentary questions on minority-related issues, whereas non-minority MPs will do so only, if they have personal electoral incentives to do so. All else being equal, the higher the share of voters from visible minorities in the non-minority MP's constituency, the higher the number of relevant questions he or she will ask. For the visible-minority MP, by contrast, the socio-demographic composition of his or her constituency would be irrelevant. Figure 6 illustrates the opposite case: Non-minority MPs would generally ask a relatively small number of questions on minority-related issues, and this number is relatively independent of the socio-demographic composition of their constituencies. MPs from visible-minority backgrounds, by contrast, would respond to individual electoral incentives in the constituency: If the share of voters from visible-minority backgrounds in the constituency is low, they will not differ significantly from non-minority MPs. As the share of visible-minority voters increases, the share of minority-related questions should increase for MPs from visible-minority backgrounds. In Figure 7 both visible-minority and non-minority MPs respond to electoral incentives (i.e., the share of visible-minority voters in the constituency). However, the extent of the response (the slope of the stylised regression line) should be stronger in the case of visible-minority MPs. Differences in relevant parliamentary questioning patters may not be significant where MPs represent constituencies with low shares of visible-minority voters. However, this variant of an interactive alternate hypothesis would predict that the difference will grow as the population share of visible minorities in the constituency increases.

Research Design

To test these hypotheses in their different variants, data were collected providing information about all questions for written answer tabled by the 16 Black, Asian or other minority-ethnic (BAME) MPs in the 2005-2010 UK Parliament.[ii] In addition, the questions of nine further MPs of immigrant origin without visible-minority status were coded.[iii] This wider category 'immigrant origin' extends to MPs who were immigrants themselves (first generation), or the immediate descendants of at least one person born outside the UK as citizen of a different state (second generation) but are not 'visible' or 'non-Western' minorities (it includes, for example, the immediate descendants of Polish and other Eastern European immigrants during the Second World War). The inclusion of these MPs in the sample allows for a better test of policy preferences that might be traced back to particular ethnic experiences. Finally, a stratified random sample of 25 autochthonous MPs (without visible-minority or immigration characteristics) was drawn as a control group (see below) in a quasi-experimental design. Information on the questions they tabled was added to the data set. In total, therefore, 50 MPs were included in the analysis. The sample of autochthonous MPs was stratified in such a way that it matches the party-political orientations of all immigrant-origin MPs (irrespective of their ethnic status) and the ethnic composition of their constituencies (non-White population < 2.5 per cent of the total population according to the 2001 Census; non-White population ≥ 2.5 per cent and < 10 per cent; ≥ 10 per cent and < 25 per cent; and non-White population ≥ 25 per cent). In other words, the intention is to compare the 16 BAME MPs and nine further immigrant-origin MPs to an equal number of non-BAME MPs with matching party and constituency characteristics.

Table 1 near here

The MPs included are listed in Table 1. Persons who held ministerial positions throughout the entire window of observation were excluded from the multivariate analyses as they do not ask questions.[iv] In total the data set contains information about 16,361 questions tabled

by the 50 (backbench) MPs in the sample. Just over 30 per cent these questions were asked by the 16 BAME MPs (49.2%, see the marginal distributions in Table 3), the remainder of questions (just under 70 per cent) was tabled by Members drawn from the two control groups. This ratio is roughly proportional to the distribution of MPs in the sample used (32 per cent minority: 68 per cent non-minority).

For each question (observation), a dummy variable was created registering whether the question explicitly referred to ethnic minorities in, or immigration to, the United Kingdom. This was established by searching the content of the questions for a number of (sometimes truncated) keywords that reflect the two possible dimensions of questioning in the area of immigration and ethnic minorities: (a) questions relating to the costs of immigration, which are often critical of immigration and (b) questions relating to (and explicitly or implicitly promoting) ethnic diversity and equality. These keywords are listed in Table A1 in the Appendix. The questions identified in an automated search were subsequently read in order to ensure they really did relate to immigration to, and minority issues in, the United Kingdom. For most analyses, these data were aggregated for each MP. In other words: the individual MP is the decisive unit of analysis. The count variables mentioned above constitute the various dependent variables for the multivariate analyses below. Table 3 summarises these data and cross-tabulates them by visible-minority status and content. It shows that 1,014 (of a total of 16,361) questions referred explicitly to immigration to, and ethnic minorities in, the United Kingdom. Of these 681 related to the costs of immigration, 333 referred to ethnic diversity and equality. For the multivariate analyses in the next section, the *adjusted* number of parliamentary questions was used correcting for variations introduced by an MP's length of service in the Commons resulting from changes in a parliamentary seat.[v]

Table 2 near here

The key independent variables in this study (for a list of summary statistics see Table 2) are the MP's visible-minority background (as a dichotomous 'dummy' variable) and the share of non-White residents in his or her constituency. The source for the latter is the 2001 UK Census. Since the share of non-White residents is used for the construction of interaction terms (visible-minority status of MP * share of non-White residents in his or her constituency), the variable was centred at the mean, and the mean was set to the value of zero. The remaining variables serve as control variables: One further dummy variable registers whether the MP is of immigrant-origin without belonging to a visible minority (e.g., immigrants or children of immigrants from Europe). Dummy variables for the party membership allow for the control of party effects (the Labour Party being the omitted category). An MP's length of service as government minister during the 2005-2010 Parliament is an important control as ministers do not ask questions. The number of previous sessions as MP was introduced to control for the MP's experience as a parliamentarian. In addition, controls were introduced for the number of questions an MP asks on issues other than those relating to minorities and immigration. This variable captures any effects caused by 'industrious' MPs asking many questions in general. Finally, controls were introduced for the marginality of an MP's seat to capture electoral incentives other than those arising from the socio-demographic composition of the MP's constituency.

Table 3 near here

Results

A first test of the null hypothesis ('Ethnic background does not makes any difference in the number of minority-related questions tabled by an MP) consists of a simple crosstabulation of a dichotomous independent variable ('BAME MP – yes/no') and a dichotomous dependent variable ('Question is explicitly related to immigration or minority issues – yes/no'). Table 3 reports the results of this test. At first glance, the null hypothesis can be

confidently rejected. More than half of all questions relating to immigration and minority issues (53.16 per cent) were tabled by BAME MPs, compared to an expected share of just 30.1 per cent. The chi^2 value is high (273.23) and significant at the one-percent level. If the content of the questions is broken down further, 71.47 per cent of all questions relating to ethnic diversity and equality were tabled by visible-minority MPs (again, compared to an expected value of 30.1 per cent). Again, the chi^2 test suggests that the differences between visible-minority and non-minority MPs are extremely unlikely to be caused by a Type I error. Visible-minority MPs also ask significantly more questions about the costs of immigration, although the difference is not as stark as for questions relating to ethnic diversity and equality (44.20 per cent of all questions on the costs of immigration, compared to an expected share of 30.1 per cent).

Table 4 near here

A more nuanced picture arises from the multivariate tests reported in Table 4. Since the dependent variable is an overdispersed count variable, a series of negative binomial regression models were fitted, regressing the adjusted number of minority-related questions each MP in the sample asked on a number of independent and control variables (see Table 2 above). Given the observation of differences between the questions aiming at the costs of immigration on the one hand and issues of ethnic diversity and equality on the other, three dependent variables were specified, the adjusted number of all questions relating to immigration and minority issues (encompassing both costs of immigration and ethnic diversity and equality, Models 1a and 1b), the adjusted number of questions relating to the costs of immigration (Models 2a and 2b) and the adjusted number of questions relating to issues of ethnic diversity and equality (Models 3a and 3b).

Model 1a suggests that the *adjusted number of all questions relating to immigration and minority issues* increases when the dummy variable registering visible-minority status switches from zero to one, although in this specification, the effect is only significant at the ten-percent level (two-tailed test). Immigrant-origin MPs without visible-minority status, by

contrast, do not differ from the reference group, autochthonous MPs, at conventional levels of statistical significance. The share of non-Whites in the MP's constituency has a highly significant effect in the expected direction: The higher the share of non-Whites in an MP's constituency, the higher his or her number of questions relating to immigration or ethnic minorities (independent of the MP's minority status). These findings would allow ruling out the null hypothesis in both variants (Figures 1 and 2) and the non-responsive variant of the alternate hypothesis in Figure 3. Of the control variables, the number of months an MP served as government minister in the 2005-2010 Parliament has the expected negative (but trivial) effect, which is highly significant across all models estimated here. Similarly, MPs who ask many questions about minorities and immigration also tend to ask many questions in other policy areas. The association between the adjusted number of questions about immigration and ethnic minorities and the adjusted number of questions about other issues is positive and highly significant in all models. Model 1b in Table 4 adds an interactive variable multiplying visible-minority status and the (centred) share of non-White residents in the MP's constituency. This effect is positive but not significant at conventional levels. In other words, Models 1a and 1b rule out all variants of the null hypothesis and the interactive alternate hypothesis in all its variants. The only hypothesis not eliminated in this specification is the responsive variant of the alternate hypothesis illustrated in Figure 4.

Models 2a and 2b test for the impact of the same independent variables on the *adjusted number of questions relating to the costs of immigration*. The two control variables found to influence the number of all questions relating to immigration and minorities significantly retain their effect in both models. Holding all other independent variables constant, visible-minority status does not have a significant effect on the number of such questions at conventional levels. The percentage of non-White residents in an MP's constituency, by contrast, has a positive effect at the ten-percent level of statistical significance (two-tailed). The interacted variable 'visible-minority status * share of non-Whites in the constituency', which is added in Model 2b, is not statistically significant *per se*, but influences the estimates for other independent variables: Controlling for this interaction effect, the positive effect of visible-minority status is significant at the ten-percent level (two-tailed). The effect of the share of non-Whites in an MP's constituency is now stronger and statistically more robust (significant at the five-percent level). Being a Conservative MP also increases the adjusted number of questions about the costs of immigration significantly. On balance, therefore, the

results of Models 2a and 2b would also suggest to rule out the null hypothesis and any interactive variants of the alternate hypothesis. The only hypothesis that cannot be rejected confidently is, again, the responsive variant of the simple (i.e., non-interactive) alternate hypothesis as illustrated in Figure 4. Model 2b is the only one where party ideology has a significant impact: In this specification, Conservative MPs are significantly more likely to ask questions about the costs of immigration than Labour MPs. This suggests a relevant effect of party ideology which will be explored in future studies.

In Models 3a and 3b the *adjusted number of questions relating to ethnic diversity and equality* is regressed on the same set of independent and control variables. Visible-minority status increases the number of such questions significantly. At the ten-percent level, immigrant-origin MPs who are not ethnically distinguishable from the majority population also tend to ask more questions in this area. These effects are independent of the share of non-White residents in an MP's constituency. The interaction term added in Model 3b does not change these results. The only control variable with a significant impact is the adjusted number of questions in areas unrelated to immigration and ethnic minorities. In the models focusing on the adjusted number of questions about ethnic diversity and equality, therefore, the non-responsive variant of the alternate hypothesis (see Figure 3) is the only one that cannot be ruled out.

Figure 8 near here

Figure 8 uses the data in Model 1a (Table 4) to estimate a smoothed curve of predicted values for the 16 visible-minority MPs and the 34 other MPs in the sample depending on the share of non-White residents in the MPs' constituencies. The values of all other independent variables in Model 1a are held constant at the mean. The predicted values for the visible-minority MPs almost follow an exponential function. The diagram underlines that both minority and non-minority MPs are responsive to the socio-demographic composition of

their constituencies, but that MPs from a BAME background generally ask more questions relating to immigration and minority concerns. While the differences between minority and non-minority MPs are small in constituencies with a non-White population of less than 25 per cent of the residents, the gap is growing in constituencies with a non-White population with of more than 40 per cent. This suggests the presence of a threshold below which the null hypothesis cannot be rejected confidently. From that threshold (at around 40 per cent of non-White residents in the constituency), the graph leaves only the responsive variant of the alternate hypothesis in Figure 4 or an interactive pattern such as the one depicted in Figure 7. Given the fact that the sample included a matching number of MPs representing the varying levels of socio-demographic constituency composition, a strong selection effect (through an MP's party membership) is unlikely.

Conclusions

The substantive representation of minority-related policy issues by immigrant-origin MPs is underresearched for European democracies. The goal of the present contribution was to contribute to help to close this lacuna. The main question was whether there are significant differences in the way BAME MPs and their non-BAME peers used parliamentary questions for written answer in the 2005-2010 Parliament in order to articulate a minority-related agenda. Parliamentary questions for written answer are a valid and reliable indicator of MPs' policy agendas (see generally Martin, 2011), because their use is relatively unconstrained, allowing MPs to reveal their preferences and act on behalf of their constituents without too many institutional and partisan constraints, even under the competitive conditions of the Westminster system. One of the most innovative features of the present contribution is the quantitative analysis of this behavioural indicator using a control group of non-minority MPs. The results of the bivariate and multivariate tests presented here suggest that MPs with a BAME background do ask more questions about the status of immigrants and ethnic minorities in British society. However, it also demonstrates that *all* MPs in the sample were responsive to the demographic composition of their constituencies, irrespective of the MP's own ethnic background. Both effects – the personal traits of the MP and the socio-demographic composition of the MP's constituency – are found to be positive and statistically significant in most of the models fitted. The differences between minority and

non-minority MPs are particularly strong in constituencies with relatively high shares of non-White residents.

All of these findings are highly tentative and need further corroboration. Given the small number of visible-minority MPs in the UK and other European democracies, a comparative cross-national approach is the only feasible way of reducing the small-n problem so typical for such studies. The increasing presence of minority MPs in the British House of Commons elected in 2010 (and other European parliaments elected in recent years) suggests that it will be possible to expand the scope of such investigations in the future, allowing researchers to compare across time as well as across space. In this context, parliamentary questions provide a good, usually well-documented source of information on parliamentary activity that exists in most parliamentary democracies, although the rules governing their use vary.

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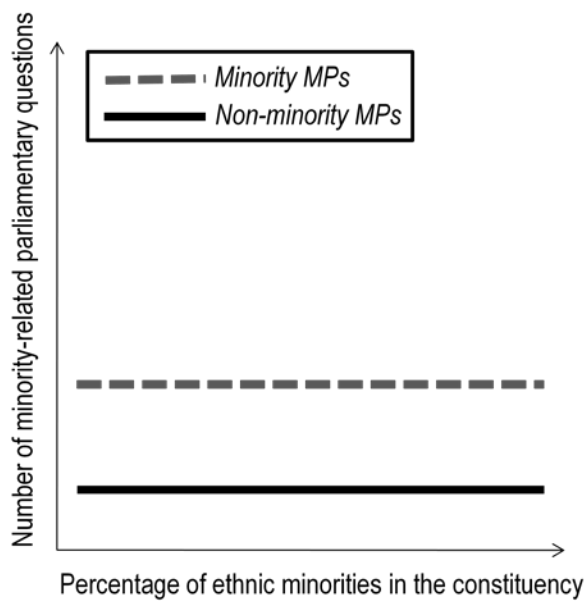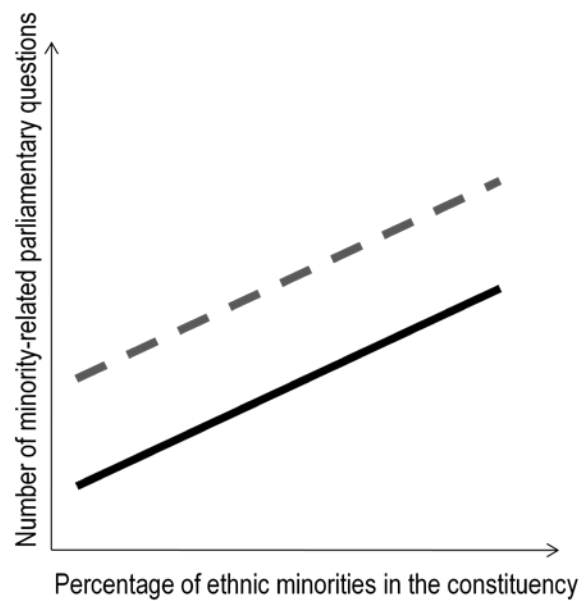
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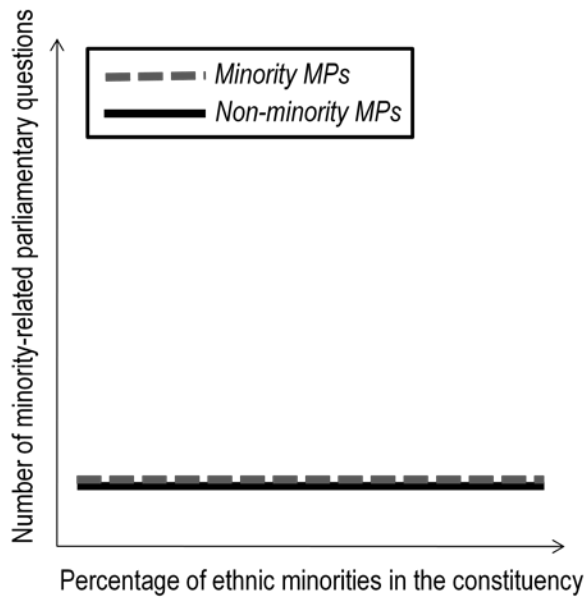
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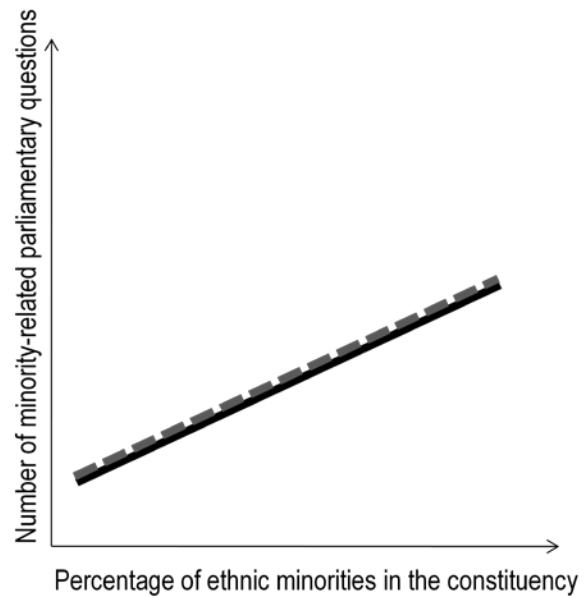
Figure 2: Null hypothesis (responsive variant)

Figure 3: Alternate hypothesis (non-responsive variant)

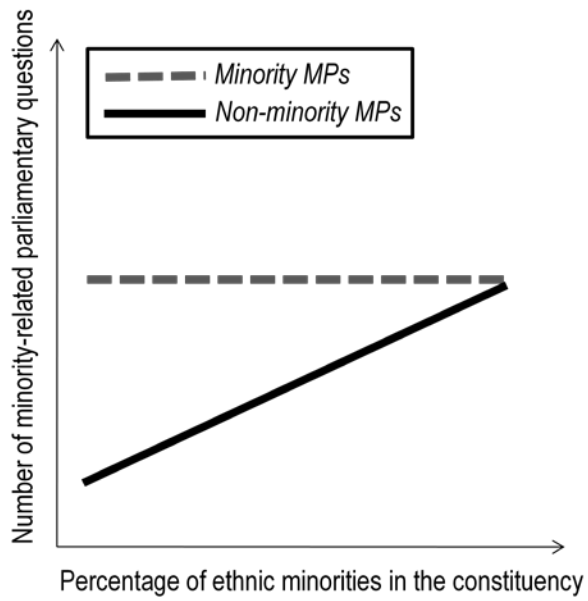**Figure 4: Alternate hypothesis (responsive variant)**
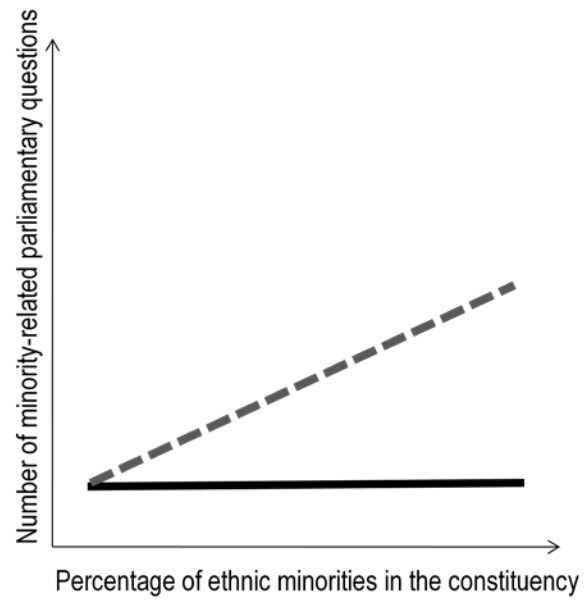
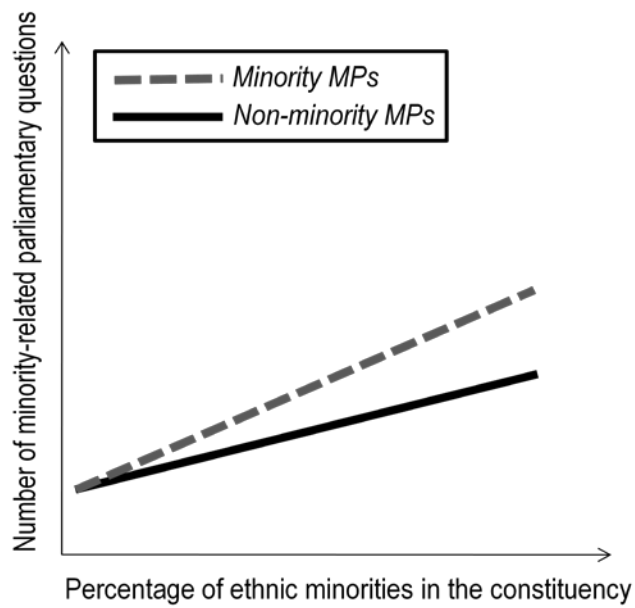**Figure 5: Interactive variant 1**

Figure 6: Interactive variant 2

Figure 7: Interactive variant 3

Table 1: Selection of MPs Included Sample of MPs

Party	Percentage of 'non-White' population in constituency											
	< 2.5%			≥ 2.5% and < 10%			≥ 10% and < 25%			≥ 25%		
	Majority	*Immigrant origin*	*Of Which: Visible minority*	*Majority*	*Immigrant origin*	*Of Which: Visible minority*	*Majority*	*Immigrant origin*	*Of Which: Visible minority*	*Majority*	*Immigrant origin*	*Of Which: Visible minority*
Labour	Baird Blackman-Woods Chapman David, W	Hain Kumar Miliband, D Miliband, E	Kumar	Palmer Starkey	Dhanda Lazarowicz	Dhanda	Caborn McCabe Ryan Watson	Hendrick Malik Sarwar Stuart	Hendrick Malik Sarwar	Cohen Corbyn Dobson Gardiner Gerrard Keen McDonagh McDonnell Pound Slaughter	Abbott Butler Khabra Khan Lammy Mahmood Sharma Singh Vaz Vis	Abbott Butler Khabra Khan Lammy Mahmood Sharma Singh Vaz
Conservative	Clifton-Brown Ruffley Young	Howard Kawczynski Vara	Vara	Baldry	Afriyie	Afriyie	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liberal Democrat	Breed	Öpik	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	8	8	2	3	3	2	4	4	3	10	10	9

Majority MPs were selected randomly.

Table 2: Independent Variables (descriptive statistics)

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Visible-minority MP (dummy)	50	0.32	0.47	0	1
Non-visible' immigrant-origin (dummy)	50	0.18	0.39	0	1
Member of autochthonous control group (dummy)	50	0.50	0.51	0	1
Share of non-White population in constituency (2001, centred at the mean)	50	0.00	19.05	-20.11	43.86
Labour MP (dummy)	50	0.80	0.40	0	1
Conservative MP (dummy)	50	0.16	0.37	0	1
Liberal Democrat MP (dummy)	50	0.04	0.20	0	1
Length of service as government minister in the 2005-2010 Parliament (months)	50	10.08	18.44	0	60
Experience: Number of previous sessions as MP	50	2.16	1.84	0	8
Adjusted number of questions not relating to minorities and immigration	50	309.03	421.03	0	1,482
MP's electoral majority in constituency at the 2005 general election	50	7,712.76	3,808.75	1,808	15,876

Table 3: Questions for Written Answer in the 2005-2010 House of Commons Crosstabulated by Ethnic Background of MP and Minority-related Content

a) Minority-related questions – total number and column per cent

BAME MP?	Question explicitly related to immigration or minority issues?		
	No	Yes	Total
No	10,962	475	11,437
	(71.43%)	(46.84%)	(69.90%)
Yes	4,385	539	4,924
	(28.57%)	(53.16%)	(30.1%)
Total	15,347	1,014	16,361
	(100.00%)	(100.00%)	(100.00%)

Pearson chi^2 = 273.23   p = 0.000

b) Questions about the costs of immigration (subset of a)) – number and column per cent

BAME MP?	Question explicitly related to the costs of immigration?		
	No	Yes	Total
No	11,057	380	11,437
	(70.52%)	(55.80%)	(69.90%)
Yes	4,623	301	4,924
	(29.48%)	(44.20%)	(30.10%)
Total	15,680	681	16,361
	(100.00%)	(100.00%)	(100.00%)

Pearson chi^2 = 67.18   p = 0.000

c) Questions about the diversity issues and equality for BAME groups (subset of a)) – number and column per cent

BAME MP?	Question explicitly related to diversity issues and equality for BAME groups?		
	No	Yes	Total
No	11,342	95	11,437
	(70.76%)	(28.53%)	(69.90%)
Yes	4,686	238	4,924
	(29.24%)	(71.47%)	(30.10%)
Total	16,028	333	16,361
	(100.00%)	(100.00%)	(100.00%)

Pearson chi^2 = 276.60   p = 0.000

Questions extracted from www.theyworkforyou.com (last access 17 February 2011)

Table 4: Negative Binomial Regression for the Number of Minority-related Questions of 50 MPs (2005-2010): Incidence rate rations (standard errors in brackets)

Dependent variable	All questions relating to immigration or minorities		Questions about the costs of immigration		Questions about ethnic diversity and equality	
Independent variables	*Model 1a*	*Model 1b*	*Model 2a*	*Model 2b*	*Model 3a*	*Model 3b*
Visible-minority MP (dummy)	0.93*	1.19**	0.73	1.03*	1.83***	1.87**
	(0.49)	(0.55)	(0.50)	(0.56)	(0.64)	(0.72)
Non-visible' immigrant-origin (dummy)	-0.52	-0.34	-1.44*	-1.14	1.67*	1.68*
	(0.71)	(0.70)	(0.86)	(0.86)	(0.89)	(0.90)
Share of non-White population in constituency	0.04**	0.06**	0.04*	0.06**	0.04	0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Interaction Visible-minority MP * Share of non-White population in constituency		-0.04		-0.04		0.00
		(0.03)		(0.03)		(0.04)
Conservative MP	0.89	1.03	1.25	1.41*	-0.83	-0.81
	(0.84)	(0.85)	(0.84)	(0.84)	(1.11)	(1.13)
Liberal Democrat MP	-0.11	0.14	0.94	1.17	-23.86	-20.81
	(1.26)	(1.26)	(1.38)	(1.36)	(69486.13)	(15293.14)
Length of service as government minister in the 2005-2010 Parliament	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.06**	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Experience: Number of previous sessions as MP	0.09	0.10	0.15	0.17	-0.20	-0.20
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Adjusted number of questions not relating to minorities and immigration	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
MP's electoral majority in constituency at the 2005 general election	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	1.84***	1.62***	1.71***	1.47**	-0.56	-0.58
	(0.63)	(0.61)	(0.65)	(0.62)	(0.83)	(0.85)
Pseudo R^2	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.18	0.18
N	50	50	50	50	50	50

Figure 8: Predicted Total Number of Questions Relating to Immigration and Ethnic Minorities in the House of Commons 2005-2010 (as a function of constituency demographics)
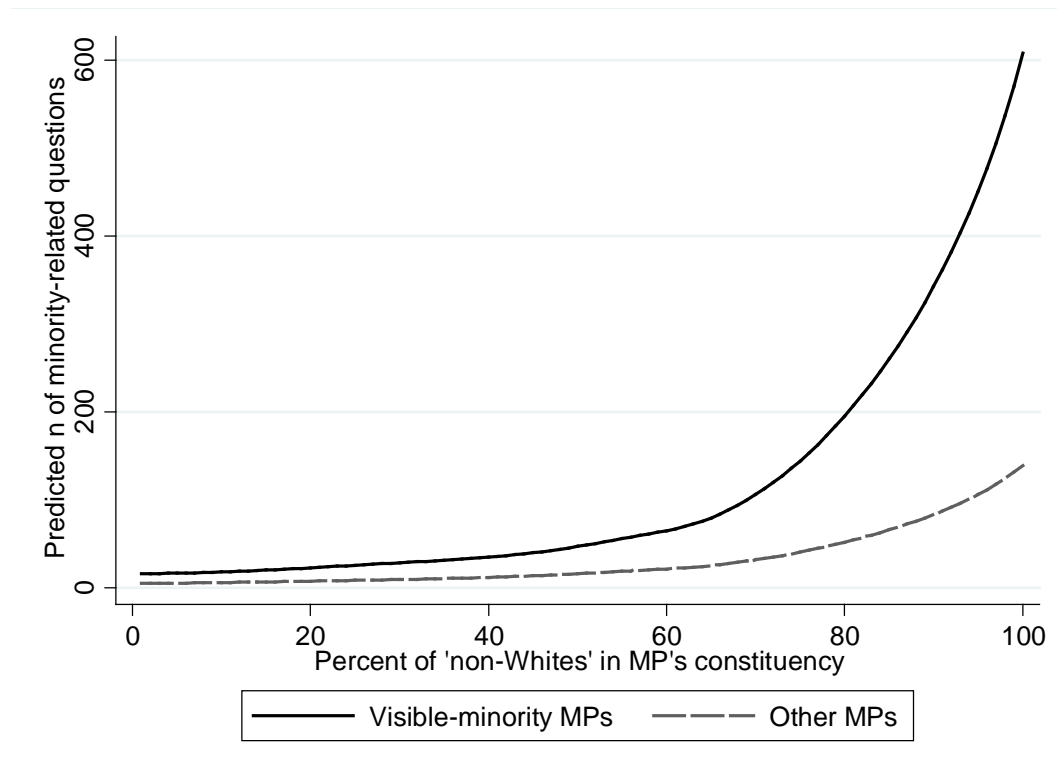
Table A1: Search Terms Used to Identify Immigration-related and Minority-related Questions

Ethnic diversity and equality	Costs of immigration
ethnic	asylum
minorit*	illegal immigra*
diversity	UK border
Asian	extradit*
Black	repatriat*
racial	removal
race	remove
integration	deport*
community cohesion	detention centre
Islam	migra*
Muslim	terror* (if explicitly linked to minorities and post 9/11 terrorism in the UK; excluding IRA but including far right)
Hindu	foreign
Sikh	refugee

Endnotes

[i] The terms 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' (BAME) and 'visible minority' are used synonymously.

[ii] The total number of MPs with a BAME background in the 2005-2010 House of Commons was 16. Piara Khabra, died in 2007. His successor in the constituency Ealing Southall, Virendra Sharma, also had a BAME background.

[iii] These MPs were identified by reading all MPs' biographies in various sources including the biographical sources linked to via www.theyworkforyou.com. The data were verified against a number of sources, including the website of Operation Black Vote, an organization promoting 'greater racial justice and equality throughout the UK' (http://www.obv.org.uk/about-us, last accessed 20 March 2011).

[iv] Five BAME MPs and ten non-minority MPs served as government ministers at least for part of the 2005-2010 Parliament.

[v] This affected two MPs, Piara Khabra and Virendra Sharma. Khabra died in 2007 and was succeeded by Sharma.