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# It's the occupation, stupid! Explaining candidates' success in low-information local elections

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## Abstract

We analyze the effects of personal characteristics of 4239 political candidates on their performance in local elections in Germany. Our results show that a candidate's occupation plays a decisive role. Occupational effects can be explained by (a) an occupation's public reputation and (b) public renownedness of individuals carrying out certain occupations. The findings regarding the occupational reputation effects are strongly correlated with polls on occupational reputation/prestige in the US and Germany.

*Keywords: low-information elections, local elections, occupational reputation, political economy*

*JEL: D72, D7*

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# 1 Motivation

It is well established in the literature that gathering information before an election is costly and that it is unlikely to be the decisive voter (Downs, 1957), which leads voters to look for information shortcuts (Stokes and Miller 1966, Riker and Ordeshook 1968, Conover and Feldman 1982, 1989, Bartels 1996, Goodman and Murray 2007). Scholars often argue that information about characteristics serve as such shortcuts especially in low-information elections<sup>1</sup> (see, e.g., McDermott 2005). In such kind of elections, all information about a candidate’s characteristics might help voters as cues.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to shed more light on the effects of occupational information as such an information shortcut on election results. More specifically, we use the fact that voters are provided with detailed information about candidates’ occupations on the ballot paper in local elections in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. We thereby provide several contributions to the literature. First, a great number of existing papers on information shortcuts do not use electoral results but opinion polls or experimental data to analyze cues’ influence on the candidates’ performance. Using a detailed dataset containing information on 4239 political candidates in local elections (“Gemeinderatswahlen”) in Baden-Württemberg 2009, we are able to analyze information effects in real elections. Second, all other papers dealing with occupational effects either look at very specific elections (e.g. judicial offices in the US) or do only take into account a very restricted number of occupations. However, we include more than 70 different occupations in the analysis in order to obtain a more detailed picture of occupational effects. We, third, do not only show the existence of occupational effects on the outcomes of low-information elections, but also provide two explanations for the existence of such effects. On the one hand, we show that an occupation’s positive effect on a candidate’s electoral performance can be explained by public renownedness as individuals carrying out certain jobs are better known to the public. Occupational effects, on the other hand, turn out to be highly correlated with polls on occupations’ public reputation. We can thus conclude that elections might serve as a smart approach of preference revelation in order to obtain a ranking of occupations’ public reputation without asking individuals directly. In contrast to constructing such a ranking using a survey, one does not have to deal with problems of social desirability using election data. Fourth, this paper is to our knowledge the first to analyze the effects of information

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<sup>1</sup>Typically, low-information elections are defined as elections which do not attract large-scale media coverage and/or do not involve offices with a transregional importance.

shortcuts in local elections in Germany.

Our regression results show that candidates' occupations play an important role. It turns out that physicians, farmers, and professors have the strongest advantage. In contrast, occupational disadvantages are strongest for salesmen, employees in the financial/insurance sector, and accountants. While women and candidates holding a doctoral degree are more successful, candidates with foreign names turn out to be less successful in the elections.

The paper is organized as follows. We discuss the related literature in section 2, section 3 then provides the empirical analysis using data from Germany's state of Baden-Württemberg. The electoral law in Baden-Württemberg is described in 3.1, section 3.2 provides a detailed overview about our data and section 3.3 depicts our empirical approach and results. Section 4 finally concludes.

## 2 Related Literature

But how do voters respond to electoral candidates' characteristics? On the one hand, this question has been investigated by scholars focusing on "objective" information such as gender, a candidate's name, ethnicity, and occupation. Some papers, on the other hand, focus on a candidate's beauty in order to explain her electoral success. Both strengths of the literature have in common that they do find candidates' characteristics to affect election results. Whereas the first focuses on information which can be found on the ballot papers, this is (in most cases) not the case for the latter. Rosenberg et al. (1986), Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) and Berggren et al. (2010a, 2010b) use ratings on candidates' beauty as predictor for electoral outcomes. By showing candidates' pictures to survey participants (both children and adults) and asking them to rate candidates according to their beauty, trustworthiness, intelligence, and competence, they develop a measure for these items. Regression results show that predicting electoral outcomes using these information on candidates' faces does work: the better the beauty rating, the better a candidate's electoral prospects. However, it seems to be likely that this procedure only works with high-information elections as voters must have the candidates' faces in mind when going to the ballot box.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary, in low-information elections, information shortcuts provided on the ballot paper might be more important. Buckley et al. (2007) use a feature of local elections in the

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<sup>2</sup>Antonakis and Dalgas (2009), for example, focus on the run-off stages of the French parliamentary election in 2002.

Republic of Ireland: since 1999, photographs of candidates are placed on the ballot papers. Using experimental results, they find that candidates' looks are a good predictor for the election outcome under such circumstances. As there are few elections with ballot paper photographs, other researchers focus on different cues. Goodman and Murray (2007) show that being the incumbent improves electoral prospects which they explain by the voters' potential costs of postdecision regrets when voting for the opponent. Candidates' party affiliations turn out to have an influence according to Klein and Baum (2001). The effect of candidates' gender and race are examined by McDermott (1998) using quasi-experimental data from the Los Angeles Times Poll. She finds that voters who characterize themselves as more conservative (liberal) are more likely to vote for male (female) candidates which can, according to McDermott's explanation, be explained by gender stereotypes. Her results furthermore indicate that the probability of voting for a black candidate is higher for voters who perceive themselves as being more liberal. Using data from the 1986 to 1994 American National Election Studies, McDermott (1997) finds that female Democratic candidates perform better than male Democratic candidates among more liberal voters and worse among conservative voters. However, Fox and Oxley (2003) do not find clear cut gender stereotype effects. Analyzing data from state executive office elections in the US, they find that women's likelihood of winning does not strongly across office types. Hence, their result indicates that women are not perceived to be more qualified for specific offices per se. Focusing on gender and academic or honorary titles, Kelley and McAllister (1984) find a female disadvantage in elections in Britain and Australia. Holding a honorary title turns out to be an advantage in Britain, while holding an academic title does not.

The question how information on candidates' occupations affect electoral results has first been investigated by Mueller (1970). He analyzes the effects of information about the candidates on the ballot, using data for the 1969 election to the Junior College Board of Trustees in the Los Angeles area. 133 candidates ran for seven seats and each voter had 7 votes. The results show that the candidates' ballot position and ethnic identification had a strong impact on the number of votes received. Occupation effects are only weakly pronounced. Mueller uses three dummy variables to explore occupational effects and differentiates between education-related occupations, attorney/lawyer, and candidates who had no occupation listed. The results show that candidates with an education-related job gain more votes whereas candidates classified as attorney/lawyer or providing no occupational information gain less. However, these effects remain rather small in comparison to the ballot

position and ethnic identification effects. Byrne and Pueschel (1974) test for occupational effects in county central committee elections of Democrats and Republicans in California between 1948 and 1970. They find professors, engineers, and lawyers to be rather successful, whereas real estate brokers, salesmen, and housewives perform worse than one would expect if the votes were randomly distributed. Furthermore, the results indicate a disadvantage of being listed first on the ballot. As in Mueller's study, the ethnicity of the surname plays an important role for a candidate's performance: candidates with a Scandinavian name have an advantage; candidates with Jewish, East European, and Italian names have a disadvantage. Dubois (1984) focuses on judicial elections in California and finds that candidates with a "judicial" occupation label have a higher probability of being elected. McDermott (2005) shows that voters are more likely to support candidates having a qualification advantage. She uses data from the Los Angeles Times Poll prior to the 1994 statewide office elections in California (Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Controller, Treasurer, Secretary of State, Insurance Commissioner). Half of the participants were given a list with only the candidates' names and party affiliations. The other half, in addition, were given the candidates' official occupational ballot designations. McDermott finds that the vote share of candidates having a qualification advantage is significantly higher for the sample of voters having information about candidates' occupations.

### **3 Empirical Analysis**

#### **3.1 Electoral Law in Baden-Württemberg**

The electoral law in Baden-Württemberg allows the voters not only to choose among parties in local elections, but also among candidates on the parties' lists. Each voter has as many votes as there are seats in the respective council. Voters can give their votes to a single party list as well as vote for different candidates. When giving the votes to a single party list, each of the party's candidates receives one vote. In addition, a voter can cumulate votes to specific candidates on a party's list - with a maximum of three votes per candidate ("kumulieren"). Additionally, it is possible to distribute one's votes to candidates of different party lists - once again with a maximum of three votes per candidate ("panaschieren"). Hence, although the parties set up their party lists prior to the elections, voters can influence the outcome not only in terms of the number of a party's seats, but also with respect to the final order

of candidates entering the council.

It is reasonable to think of a local election as a low-information election. First, local parliaments only have a relatively small budget responsibility as they are, for example, not allowed to decide about tax rates.<sup>3</sup> Second, there are a lot more candidates than, for example, in the elections to the federal parliament (German Bundestag). There are on average 257 candidates in a local election in a town with about 60,000 inhabitants in comparison to four or five candidates per election district in a federal parliament election. Hence, it is far more likely to have some information about a particular candidate in a federal election than in a local election. Third, it is far easier to ascribe the consequences of a specific policy measure to a federal chancellor or minister than to a member of a local parliament as media coverage is by far greater. Furthermore, voter turnout is relatively small in local elections in Germany which points to the fact that voters are (on average) not that interested in local politics. Voter turnout in Baden-Württemberg was 72.4% in the 2009 election of the German Bundestag, but only 50% in the 2009 local elections.

In Baden-Württemberg, the ballot paper contains information on each candidate's fore-name and surname, profession, and address in local elections. An example for the party "Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)" in the city of Heilbronn is provided in Figure 1.

*Figure 1 about here*

## 3.2 Data

We take the 2009 local elections in Baden-Württemberg to test if and how candidates' characteristics influence election outcomes. Elections were held on 07/06/2009 and voters had to decide about the composition of local councils ("Gemeinderat").

As argued in section 2, information about candidates' characteristics serve as a cue to help voters making their decision in low-information electoral situations. We, therefore, only consider towns with at least 40,000 inhabitants in our analysis. Including small towns with, e.g., 5,000 inhabitants, it would be far more likely that voters know most of the candidates. Data

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<sup>3</sup>There are some exceptions concerning local business taxes and a kind of real estate tax. However, the former does not affect many voters and the amount of the latter is more or less meaningless.

are provided from the towns' electoral offices. We have the ballots and electoral results for 25 towns, namely Albstadt, Baden-Baden, Bietigheim-Bissingen, Bruchsal, Esslingen, Fellbach, Filderstadt, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Heilbronn, Karlsruhe, Konstanz, Lahr, Leonberg, Lörrach, Ludwigsburg, Mannheim, Offenburg, Reutlingen, Rottenburg, Stuttgart, Tübingen, Ulm, Villingen-Schwenningen, and Waiblingen. From the whole list of 38 towns with at least 40,000 inhabitants, we do not include Aalen, Böblingen, Heidenheim a.d.B., Nürtingen, Rastatt, Ravensburg, Schwäbisch Gmünd, Sindelfingen, Singen, and Weinheim as they all face an electoral system which in some details differs from the one described above.<sup>4</sup>

We only consider the five parties which are represented in the German Bundestag because their party lists contain the greatest number of candidates which gives us the best opportunity to exploit the specific electoral law. These parties are the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Green Party (Grüne), and the Left (Linke).<sup>5</sup> In total, we have information on 111 party lists with 4239 candidates. We know each candidate's party affiliation, name, occupation, sex, position on original party list, final position on party list, number of votes, and whether the candidate holds a doctoral degree.

As we have a large number of different occupations, we need to classify them into groups. One possibility to do that would be the ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88, ISCO-08). However, using this classification has disadvantages as some classifications seem to be a bit weird given our dataset. For instance, lawyers and judges are classified into the same category - although both occupations may be perceived as very different in public opinion. Therefore, we do not use a standard classification. Instead, we proceed similar as Byrne and Pueschel (1974) and take those occupations as "groups" which are represented most often. Occupations which are close to these groups are assigned accordingly. The classifications of occupations, their numbers of observations, and the average number of positions won (position on original party list - position on party list according to the election result) can be found in Table 1.

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<sup>4</sup>Each district is represented by some representatives in the local council in these 8 towns ("unechte Teilortswahl"). This has an impact on the parties' lists and, therefore, on the results of the vote with respect to our dependent variable which we will discuss in section 3.3.

<sup>5</sup>One could, of course, include all party lists in the analysis. However, many smaller parties do not exploit the maximum number of candidates on their list. Voters do not only have the possibility to give their votes to single candidates, but also to a full party list. When doing so, the votes are assigned to the party list's candidates according to a specific mechanism which benefits candidates at the first ballot positions more. As this might lead to a bias in the results, we do not include the lists of the smallest parties and regional voters' associations in our analysis.



*Table 1 about here*

The candidates' classification with respect to gender, holding a doctoral degree, and having a double name is straightforward. Descriptive statistics with respect to these characteristics for the five parties are shown in Table 2. We classify the candidates' names as foreign names for (1) the combination of a not typically German forename and a German surname and (2) the combination of both a not typically German forename and surname.<sup>6</sup> Descriptive statistics are also provided in Table 2.

*Table 2 about here*

### 3.3 Empirical Model and Results

The composition of a party's list of candidates is typically the result of an internal selection process which takes place several months before the election date. However, we observe four party lists having all candidates in alphabetical order. As established candidates can usually be found on the first positions of a list, we drop these four lists in order to prevent any bias here.<sup>7</sup> We, therefore, lose 147 observations and end up with 4092 observations in our dataset.

Our dependent variable is the difference between a candidate's position on the original party list and her position on the election outcome party list:  $\Delta_{\text{party list position}} =$

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<sup>6</sup>The classification is somewhat arbitrary in some cases. However, as there is no clear-cut definition of a "German name", we see our approach as a second-best solution. We explicitly do not follow Byrne and Pueschel (1974) who only look at surnames because, e.g., a woman with the "traditional" German forename "Gerlinde" would certainly not be perceived to be foreign even if her surname was Arabic.

<sup>7</sup>We drop the candidate lists of the CDU in Bruchsal, Filderstadt, and Offenburg and the list of the FDP in Offenburg.

position<sub>party list</sub> - position<sub>election outcome</sub>. The empirical model reads

$$\begin{aligned}
\Delta \text{party list position}_i = & \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{female}_i + \alpha_2 \text{doctoral degree}_i \\
& + \alpha_3 \text{female}_i * \text{doctoral degree}_i + \alpha_4 \text{double name}_i \\
& + \alpha_5 \text{female}_i * \text{double name}_i + \alpha_6 \text{foreign name}_i \\
& + \alpha_7 \text{letters (full name)}_i + \alpha_8 \text{party list position}_i \\
& + \sum_j \beta_j \text{occupation}_{ij} + \sum_k \gamma_k \lambda_k + \epsilon_i
\end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

with individual  $i$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, 4092$  and occupation  $j$ ,  $j = 1, \dots, 70$ .  $\text{occupation}_{ij}$  are dummy variables indicating candidate  $i$ 's assignment to occupation  $j$  and  $\lambda_k$ ,  $k = 1, \dots, 24$ , are town dummy variables.

We follow the ideas of Byrne and Pueschel (1974) and control for foreign name effects using a dummy variable ( $\text{foreign name}_i$ ) which takes the value of 1 whenever a candidate's name matches the criteria defined above, and 0 otherwise. To test for effects from holding a doctoral degree (as has been done by Kelley and McAllister 1984), we employ a  $\text{doctoral degree}_i$  dummy variable, taking the value of 1 whenever a doctoral degree can be found on the ballot, and 0 otherwise. As, for example, Byrne and Pueschel (1974), McDermott (1998) and Fox and Oxley (2003) look for gender specific effects, we also control for this and use a dummy variable  $\text{female}_i$  which takes the value of 1 whenever a candidate is female, and 0 otherwise. Furthermore, we control for a candidate's name's length, summing up the number of letters of her forename and surname.<sup>8</sup> In Germany, married couples can decide whether to choose the wife's surname, the husband's surname, or a combination of both surnames which results in a "double name". To check whether there are double name effects on the election outcome, we add a dummy variable  $\text{double name}_i$  which takes the value of 1 in the case of a candidate having a double name, and 0 otherwise. We additionally interact the gender dummy variable with the doctoral degree dummy variable and the double name dummy variable. Furthermore, we control for a candidate's initial position on his party's list because it obviously has an impact on the candidate's chances to win or lose positions. However, in contrast to other literature (Goodman and Murray 2007), we do not control for incumbency effects. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, there is no information about incumbency on the ballot paper in local elections in Baden-Württemberg. Second, as there

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<sup>8</sup>Byrne and Pueschel (1974) also control for name length effects.

are on average 43 members in the local parliament, it is unreasonable that voters do know many incumbents' names.<sup>9</sup>

We estimate our model using OLS with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The results can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

*Tables 3 and 4 about here*

Column (1) of Tables 3 and 4 provides the coefficients for the total sample. Our results contradict with the findings of Byrne and Pueschel (1974) with respect to gender effects. We find that female candidates have an advantage and are able to win 1 position. The coefficient of the doctoral degree dummy variable is also positive and highly significant: holding a doctoral degree improves a candidate's performance by 3 positions. We do not find any statistically significant differences between male and female candidates with respect to the impact of the doctoral degree effect. Our results show the expected positive effect of a candidate's position on the original party list on the difference between her position on the original party list and her position on the election outcome party list. The better a candidate's position on the original list, the worse are her chances of being elected upwards. There is no significant effect of her name's length on a candidate's performance. The same holds for double names, regardless whether the candidate is female or male. However, we find a negative effect of having a foreign name which is statistically significant at the 10% level. Its numerical impact is slightly smaller than the gender effect and about one fourth of the doctoral degree effect.

Turning to the occupational effects, we find that 43 of the 70 dummy variables have significant coefficients.<sup>10</sup> From the set of occupations that lead to a statistically significant deterioration in terms of positions on the party list, soldiers ( $-7.25$  positions), salesmen ( $-6.02$ ), and management consultants ( $-5.3$ ) turn out to perform poorest. Negative effects can also be found for civil servants ( $-2.86$ ), accountants ( $-4.17$ ), directors/general managers ( $-1.5$ ), computer scientists ( $-1.92$ ), candidates with a commercial occupation ( $-2.92$ ), case

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<sup>9</sup>It may be the case that voters do know some incumbents as some of them might be more visible in the election campaign, for example the prime candidate who is likely to be incumbent. As we run our regression dropping the first positions on each party's list for robustness checks, we implicitly control for incumbency effects.

<sup>10</sup>The reference category are candidates without any occupational declaration on the ballot.

workers ( $-3.16$ ), secretaries ( $-4.48$ ), candidates working in other financial/insurance jobs ( $-5.11$ ), and candidates who work in other jobs that do not fit into one of the categories ( $-1.63$ ).

Statistically significant positive effects can be found for 31 occupations, with the largest effects for the 3 (relatively small) groups of unemployed candidates ( $+12.38$ ), viniculturists ( $+11.57$ ), and bakers/butchers ( $+9.76$ ). Furthermore, we find positive effects for pharmacists ( $+2.73$ ), architects ( $+2.12$ ), physicians ( $7.06$ ), veterinarians ( $+6.95$ ), physician's assistants ( $+4.2$ ), career politicians ( $+8.74$ ), candidates who are member of a works council/union officials ( $+3.87$ ), booksellers ( $+5.21$ ), gardeners ( $+7.65$ ), craftspersons ( $+5.09$ ), housewives/househusbands ( $+3.01$ ), engineers ( $+1.2$ ), journalists ( $+2.71$ ), nurses/elderly care nurses ( $+7.1$ ), farmers ( $+7.99$ ), teachers ( $+2.31$ ), mathematicians/physicists ( $+3.04$ ), musicians ( $+6.23$ ), pedagogues ( $+3.42$ ), pastors ( $+6.99$ ), policemen ( $+7.5$ ), professors ( $+5.67$ ), judges/prosecutors ( $+3.62$ ), pupils ( $+4.11$ ), candidates being self-employed ( $+1.34$ ), social scientists ( $+2.62$ ), students ( $+1.55$ ), and candidates having other medium skilled jobs that do not fit into one of the categories ( $+1.9$ ). Hence, there are a number of occupational effects which we can identify.

Going into more detail, columns 2 and 3 of Tables 3 and 4 provide results for two different groups of parties. In Germany, CDU and FDP formed a coalition in the lower unicameral house of the federal parliament (Bundestag) for 28 years since 1949 and are typically seen as the "civic camp" ("Bürgerliches Lager"). The same holds for SPD and Grüne which formed the German federal government for 7 years, but are often referred to as one camp since the German reunification. The Left party has been founded in 2007. Although a number of observers subsumes the Left party to the "leftern block" of SPD and Grüne, there is no cooperation between the latter two parties and the Left party on a federal level. We, thus, do only look at SPD and Grüne lists in column (3) Tables 3 and 4.

Looking at the 43 significant occupation coefficients in column (1), we find that in 16 of these cases the coefficients of both party camps are significant. In the remaining 27 cases, the total sample result is either driven by the CDU/FDP camp, the SPD/Grüne camp or the Left party. However, the coefficients/the signs of the coefficients are mostly consistent between the two camps reported in columns (2) and (3). Notable exceptions are hairdressers and media designers/press officers with significant positive effects on the election outcome whenever a candidate is placed on CDU and FDP lists and negative effects whenever she is placed on SPD and Grüne lists. Looking at typical ideological differences between the two

camps in Germany, one might expect different effects with respect to certain occupations. This is exactly what we find in the data. Candidates with occupations fitting to the historical and or ideological background of the CDU and FDP gain when being on CDU and FDP lists (e.g. pharmacists, engineers, housewives/househusbands, farmers). The same holds for pedagogues, cultural scientists, and veterinarians (driven by the Grüne party) on SPD and Grüne lists. However, works council members suffer losses when being placed on CDU and FDP lists. The same holds for soldiers on SPD and Grüne lists. With respect to gender, we only find a significant positive female effect for the SPD/Grüne camp. The coefficient of the female dummy variable is also positive for the CDU/FDP camp, but remains statistically insignificant. We find significant positive effects from holding a doctoral degree for both party camps. The numerical impact is twice as large for the CDU/FDP camp. Our results furthermore show that the negative effect of having a foreign name in the total sample is driven by CDU and FDP lists. We find a highly significant negative effect for this camp, whereas the coefficient of the foreign name dummy variable is positive but insignificant for the SPD/Grüne camp.

As one could argue that voters might know some candidates from campaign advertising (those might, as described above, mostly be incumbents), we ran the regressions again, dropping candidates on party list positions 1 – 5 or, respectively, 1 – 10. The results remain highly robust which supports our hypothesis that incumbency effects do not play a significant role in a low-information election such as the Baden-Württemberg local elections.

Summing up, we find that a candidate’s performance is driven by her/his gender and occupation, and her/his name’s foreign origin. It also depends on whether the candidate holds a doctoral degree. To put it in a nutshell: the ideal candidate is female, holds a doctoral degree, does not have a name of foreign origin and works as a viniculturist. Being male, holding no doctoral degree but having a foreign name and working as a salesman does, in contrast, not seem to be such a good idea with respect to one’s chances in the election. However, there are some differences between the parties from the two camps analyzed above, leading to differing compositions of the “prototype” candidate for both camps.

### **3.4 How to explain the results**

As our results in the previous section show, occupational information serve as cues in this kind of low-information election. We try to explain the results of the preceding section

with respect to occupational effects using two different approaches. First, electoral success of a certain occupation could be explained by the occupation's public reputation. Surveys show that the public has different perceptions of occupations' reputations. The German Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, a polling research institute, periodically asks people the following question: "Here are some occupations. Please mark the five you have the most respect for." (Germany, Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2008). The results show that the respect is high for physicians, pastors, and professors and rather low for politicians, trade union leaders, and military officers. Looking at the US, one finds very similar results, e.g. using data from The Harris Poll. Participants are asked: "I am going to read off a number of different occupations. For each, would you tell me if you feel it is an occupation of very great prestige, considerable prestige, some prestige or hardly any prestige at all?" (USA, The Harris Poll #86, 2009). A comparison between the results for Germany and the US is provided in Figure 2. The correlation between the results turns out to be positive and significant on the 5%-level with a correlation coefficient of 0.6818.

*Figure 2 about here*

Hence, given that local elections are low-information elections, voters seem to compensate their lack of information using candidates' occupations as cues and vote for candidates with a high occupational reputation. Local elections might, therefore, be a good mechanism to reveal individuals' views of occupations' public reputation without directly asking them. The results would, unlike the results of personal interviews, not be affected by social desirability bias and, thus, be more reliable.

Our second approach to explain an occupation's electoral success focuses on the question whether individuals in some occupations are generally more known in the public. In this case, electoral success of a certain occupation might not only be driven by a high public reputation but by the fact that a number of voters simply know the candidates personally and therefore give them their votes. A candidate owning a bakery might, e.g., be well-known as all customers carry bags with the bakery's name through the town. Looking at the list of occupations in our estimation, such an effect might be present for bakers/butchers, booksellers, caterers, craftspersons, dentists, farmers, gardeners, hairdressers, pharmacists,

physicians, veterinarians, and viniculturists.

However, not every candidate declaring to be baker does own a bakery. We argue that the renownedness effect is only relevant for a baker who owns a bakery in the town where she is candidate. In order to separate the reputation effect from the renownedness effect, we use google.de to check whether a candidate with occupation baker owns a bakery in the respective town, a physician owns a medical office in the town, and so on.<sup>11</sup> Whenever we find a clear validation for, e.g., a baker owning a bakery on the first two result pages on google.de, we assign the candidate to the group of candidates who are known in the public.<sup>12</sup> For each of the  $m$ ,  $m = 1, \dots, 12$ , occupations listed above, we have one dummy variable  $renowned_{im}$  taking the value of 1 whenever the candidate owns a shop/farm/surgery/..., and 0 otherwise. These dummy variables are interacted with the occupational dummy variables in order to identify whether electoral success is driven by the occupation itself or a candidate’s renownedness due to his occupation. Our modified empirical model has the following appearance:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \Delta \text{party list position}_i = & \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{female}_i + \alpha_2 \text{doctoral degree}_i \\
 & + \alpha_3 \text{female}_i * \text{doctoral degree}_i + \alpha_4 \text{double name}_i \\
 & + \alpha_5 \text{female}_i * \text{double name}_i + \alpha_6 \text{foreign name}_i \\
 & + \alpha_7 \text{letters (full name)}_i + \alpha_8 \text{party list position}_i \tag{2} \\
 & + \sum_j \beta_j \text{occupation}_{ij} + \sum_m \delta_m \text{occupation}_{im} \cdot \text{renowned}_{im} \\
 & + \sum_k \gamma_k \lambda_k + \epsilon_i.
 \end{aligned}$$

The results of the OLS estimation of (2) are depicted in Table 5. The bold coefficients are the ones estimated in our basic empirical model (1). Each occupation’s first line in Table 5

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<sup>11</sup>Our search requests have the following structure: “‘forename surname’ + town”.

<sup>12</sup>There might, however, be different approaches to classify a candidate as “known to the public”. It might be the case that media coverage is significant for a specific candidate due to several possible reasons. This might then lead to a greater public interest and, for example, to a greater number of Google search requests for the candidate’s name. In order to develop an indicator for this, we used Google Insights (<http://www.google.com/insights/search/>) and requested the number of Google queries for the three front-runners of each list. As we found hardly any significant number of search requests before the elections, we conclude that voters did not gather information via Google which supports our low-information election argument. We, therefore, do not refer to the number of Google search requests in our analysis, but concentrate on the renownedness measure described above.

indicates the number of positions won for individuals carrying out the respective occupation. According to our considerations above, we interpret this effect as *reputation effect*. To capture the *renownedness effect*, the respective coefficients tell us how many positions a candidate carrying out the respective occupation and having her own shop/farm/surgery. The results show that, for example, being a physician yields to an average win of 5.4826 positions in comparison to the initial party list. Having an own surgery in the town leads to an additional improvement of 3.9101 positions.

However, there is, of course, a strong correlation between the occupational dummy variables and the occupational dummy variables-renownedness interaction terms (with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.6 to 0.9). One should therefore be careful when looking at the significance levels reported in Table 5. A not statistically significant coefficient thus does not necessarily mean that there is no corresponding reputation/renownedness effect, but that we are not able to isolate this effect due to the structure of our data. What we can definitely say is that we find that both reputation and renownedness do play a role for a candidate's performance. The numerical impact of the reputation effect is larger than that of the renownedness effect in 6 of the 12 cases. There are some occupations for which we find both a significant reputation and renownedness effect (craftspersons, gardeners, and physicians). For bakers/butchers we are not able to find statistically significant effects of renownedness or reputation although the overall impact of the respective job on a candidate's performance was statistically significant in the initial estimation of model (1). The reason is straightforward: most bakers and butchers (16 of 23) have their own bakery/butchery in our sample. However, the numerical impact of the coefficients of both the baker/butcher dummy variable and the renownedness interaction term is very similar, indicating that both effects improve bakers' and butchers' electoral performance.

For the group of occupations without a statistically significant occupation effect on the electoral outcome in model (1), we also do not find significant reputation or renownedness effects (caterers, dentists, and hairdressers).

Having separated the occupational reputation effect for a couple of occupations shown in Table 5, Figure 3 depicts our results (only considering the reputation effect) in comparison to the latest Harris Poll for the US. Taking our results and comparing them to occupational reputation polls, we find a strong positive correlation. We therefore feel justified in interpreting the "basic" occupational effects as reputation effects.



*Figure 3 about here*

The picture does not change when applying the results of the latest Allensbach occupational prestige poll for Germany to our empirical results: as for the US data, there is a strong positive correlation between our occupational effects and the poll results. Therefore, we conclude that elections (with this kind of election law) can serve as a suitable mechanism to reveal voters' views about occupational reputation.

## 4 Conclusion

We analyze the effects of candidates' characteristics as information shortcuts on election results in low-information elections in Germany. The dataset consists of 4239 candidates running for the local councils of the largest towns in Baden-Württemberg in the 2009 local elections. Our dependent variable is the change in a candidate's position on the party list, i.e. her position on the original list minus her position on the election result party list.

Our results show that voters use candidates' occupational information as cues. We find that 43 of our 70 different occupational groups have significant effects on the election outcome. From the set of occupations that lead to a statistically significant deterioration in terms of positions on the party list, soldiers, salesmen, and management consultants turn out to perform poorest. The largest statistically significant positive effects can be found for unemployed candidates, viniculturists, and bakers/butchers. Furthermore, our results show that women have better chances to improve their position than men. We also find a significant positive effect from holding a doctoral degree on a candidate's election outcome. Furthermore, candidates with foreign names perform worse.

We can explain the results with respect to occupational effects using two approaches: first, an occupation's public reputation and, second, the renownedness of individuals in certain occupations. Our results regarding the occupational reputation effects are strongly correlated with polls on occupational reputation/prestige in the US and Germany. We therefore conclude that elections (with similar kinds of election laws like in Baden-Württemberg) can serve as a suitable mechanism to reveal voters' views about occupational reputation.

# 5 Appendix



Figure 1: Ballot: Free Democratic Party, Heilbronn, local elections 2009.

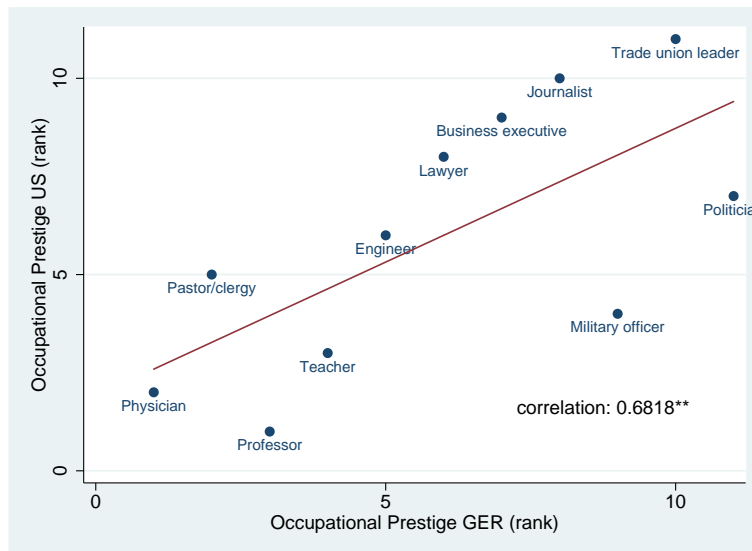


Figure 2: Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (2008); The Harris Poll #86 (2009).

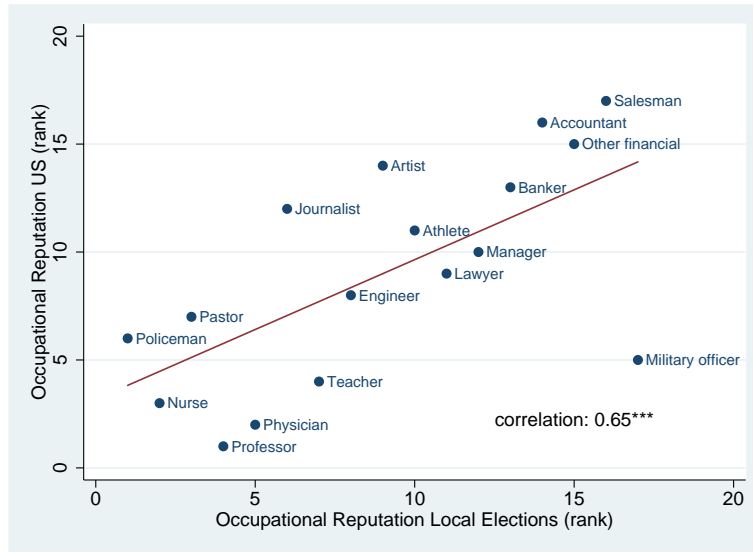


Figure 3: Source: Own calculations; The Harris Poll #86 (2009).

Occupation	Obs.	Av. positions won	Occupation	Obs.	Av. positions won
Pharmacist	23	1.22	Blue-collar worker	11	0.09
Unemployed	7	14.29	Architect	63	0.16
Physician	139	7.97	Physician's assistant	19	2.95
Apprentice	14	0.07	Baker/butcher	23	7.57
Banker	49	-1.88	Biologist/chemist	50	1.2
Civil servant/Empl. civ. ser.	134	-4.18	Works council/Union offic.	47	-0.02
Business economist	142	-2.27	Accountant	19	-5.37
Bookseller	16	2.5	Hairdresser	12	0.17
Gardener	30	6.03	Caterer	33	0.64
Humanist	25	0.24	Director/General manager	114	-3.16
Craftsperson	147	3.39	Housewife/Househusband	92	2.2
Computer scientist	70	-3.26	Engineer	214	-0.64
Journalist	55	1.31	Jurist	201	-0.59
Commercial occupation	261	-3.7	Nurse/Elderly care nurse	91	5.55
Cultural scientist	7	-0.57	Artist/Designer	35	1.09
Farmer	27	5.67	Teacher	354	0.81
Mathematician/Physicist	31	3.45	Media designer/Press officer	9	-4.67
Medical technical assistant	20	-2.75	Musician	23	4.22
Pedagogue	198	2.1	Pastor	26	5.19
Career politician	32	4.91	Policeman	76	4.43
Professor	47	7.83	Psychologist	16	-2.44
Retiree	315	-0.06	Judge/Prosecutor	14	3.07
Case worker	13	-4.85	Pupil	61	2.74
Secretary	20	-3.35	Self-employed	179	0.21
Soldier	5	-9.4	Other	250	-3.14
Other financial/insur. sect.	14	-6.14	Other low skilled	35	0.43
Other high skilled	80	-2.78	Other executive employee	51	-2.2
Other medium skilled	53	-0.17	Social scientist	26	-1.61
Athlete/Physiotherapist	24	0.13	Tax counselor	24	-3
Student	163	0.02	Technician	87	-1.80
Interpreter	24	-3	Management consultant	21	-7
Entrepreneur	41	1.44	Salesman/Agent	27	-6.96
Economist	39	-2.41	Viticulturist	15	9.6
Dentist	17	1	Civilian service	14	-4.21
Cook	8	-1.88	Veterinarian	8	8
Female	1481	0.02	Male	2611	-0.01
Double name	268	-0.59	Foreign name	250	-1.31

Table 1: Descriptive statistics. Positions won = position on original party list - position on party list according to the election result (+ indicates an improvement).

	CDU	SPD	FDP	Grüne Linke	Total	
<b>Observations</b>	977	977	927	906	4239	
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	289	380	255	452	149	1,525
Male	688	597	672	454	303	2,714
<b>Doctoral degree</b>						
Yes	89	71	143	76	15	394
No	888	906	784	830	452	3845
<b>Double name</b>						
Yes	38	67	46	92	27	270
No	939	910	881	814	425	3969
<b>Foreign name</b>						
Yes	39	56	44	57	61	257
No	938	921	883	849	391	3982

Table 2: Descriptive statistics.

	Total sample	CDU/FDP	SPD/Grüne
Accountant	-4.1737** (-2.15)	-3.9642* (-1.88)	-2.6418 (-0.69)
Apprentice	-0.4036 (-0.22)	-0.8190 (-0.50)	0.4873 (0.14)
Architect	2.1176** (2.12)	3.5706** (2.54)	1.1938 (0.85)
Artist/Designer	1.5778 (0.97)	0.2925 (0.12)	-0.1944 (-0.10)
Athlete/Physiotherapist	1.2359 (0.99)	3.6722 (1.56)	0.2311 (0.13)
Baker/Butcher	9.7630*** (5.43)	11.223*** (5.48)	3.9531 (0.57)
Banker	0.4097 (0.35)	1.7687 (1.12)	0.1722 (0.09)
Biologist/Chemist	1.0308 (0.94)	-0.2546 (-0.16)	2.2482 (1.50)
Blue-collar worker	2.0283 (1.09)	0.9854 (0.65)	-1.2874 (-0.65)
Bookseller	5.2087*** (3.42)	4.8000** (2.33)	5.7652*** (2.87)
Business economist	-0.5388 (-0.74)	0.5254 (0.58)	-2.5559 (-1.63)
Career politician	8.7417*** (5.78)	5.9045*** (4.59)	11.144*** (4.68)
Case worker	-3.1594** (-1.99)	-1.9978 (-1.01)	-4.5243* (-1.70)
Caterer	2.2316 (1.41)	3.6271* (1.73)	1.3432 (0.51)
Civil servant/Employee civil service	-2.8596*** (-3.17)	-2.3833* (-1.70)	-3.1126** (-2.46)
Civilian service	-2.5811 (-1.01)	3.0321 (0.59)	-5.7328* (-1.91)
Commercial occupation	-2.9222*** (-3.96)	-0.7774 (-0.77)	-5.2067*** (-4.21)
Computer scientist	-1.9161** (-2.25)	-1.9670* (-1.77)	-1.8738 (-1.32)
Cook	-0.2625 (-0.12)	4.7604 (1.53)	-4.8366** (-2.48)
Craftsperson	5.0866*** (6.61)	6.5833*** (6.45)	2.7027* (1.67)
Cultural scientist	2.7041 (1.23)		5.4526*** (3.37)
Dentist	-0.09835 (-0.06)	0.1570 (0.09)	0.3662 (0.05)
Director/General manager	-1.5033* (-1.74)	-0.9344 (-0.85)	-1.2447 (-0.63)
Economist	0.2899 (0.28)	0.8874 (0.63)	0.9768 (0.63)
Engineer	1.2028* (1.79)	1.6916* (1.78)	0.8288 (0.79)
Entrepreneur	1.6925 (1.27)	0.9312 (0.66)	6.2824* (1.66)
Farmer	7.9954*** (4.23)	9.3116*** (3.66)	6.7699** (2.00)
Gardener	7.6510*** (4.63)	5.8321** (2.47)	7.8649** (3.99)
Hairdresser	1.3851 (0.67)	3.9656* (1.88)	-7.5986** (-2.46)
Housewife/Househusband	3.0140*** (3.50)	4.7099*** (3.46)	1.2661 (1.13)
Humanist	1.2883 (0.78)	-1.6641 (-0.73)	1.5738 (1.00)
Interpreter	-1.3231 (-1.04)	-3.2218 (-1.09)	-0.002539 (-0.001)
Journalist	2.7148** (2.11)	3.9490 (1.19)	0.8948 (0.58)
Judge/Prosecutor	3.6223** (2.31)	2.2721 (1.09)	6.7251*** (3.32)
Jurist	0.9765 (1.36)	1.2226 (1.30)	1.1903 (0.90)
Management consultant	-5.3034*** (-3.47)	-4.3189** (-2.46)	-7.4469** (-2.44)
Mathematician/Physicist	3.0432** (2.21)	3.9534** (2.18)	3.5848 (1.31)
Media designer/Press officer	-3.7476 (-1.51)	7.3324*** (6.23)	-5.5996* (-1.75)
Medical technical assistant	-2.2299 (-1.04)	2.9734 (1.08)	-4.5238 (-1.55)

... to be continued on next page ...

Notes: t-statistics in brackets; \* significant at 10%; \*\* sign. at 5%; \*\*\* sign. at 1%

Table 3: OLS Regression results. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Dependent variable:  $\Delta$ party list position.

	Total sample	CDU/FDP	SPD/Grüne
	... continuation from previous page ...		
Musician	6.2300*** (4.16)	4.4612 (1.53)	7.5958*** (3.98)
Nurse/Elderly care nurse	7.0999*** (8.61)	7.4833*** (3.93)	6.2813*** (5.72)
Other	-1.6310** (-2.26)	-0.5253 (-0.48)	-1.8718* (-1.67)
Other executive employee	0.2251 (0.18)	2.1709 (1.14)	-1.5104 (-0.83)
Other financial/insurance sector	-5.1066** (-2.26)	-4.0786 (-1.59)	-7.6206 (-1.50)
Other high skilled	-1.5801 (-1.56)	-1.4298 (-0.88)	-1.9606 (-1.34)
Other low skilled	1.5353 (1.15)	-0.2081 (-0.07)	-1.9303 (-1.01)
Other medium skilled	1.8987* (1.68)	3.4663** (2.19)	0.6560 (0.34)
Pastor	6.9879*** (3.90)	10.205** (2.03)	6.0163*** (3.49)
Pedagogue	3.4191*** (4.66)	0.2359 (0.12)	2.7896*** (2.80)
Pharmacist	2.7272** (2.04)	4.4241*** (2.94)	-0.5983 (-0.27)
Physician	7.0612*** (7.65)	8.5701*** (6.89)	5.2524*** (3.56)
Physician's assistant	3.2040** (2.35)	2.2827 (1.02)	3.7230* (1.94)
Policeman	7.4958*** (7.76)	9.5786*** (7.51)	5.3545*** (3.48)
Professor	5.6708*** (4.64)	6.1922*** (3.88)	5.0285*** (2.58)
Psychologist	-0.6053 (-0.29)	-8.1944*** (-3.47)	-2.5021 (-1.08)
Pupil	4.1136*** (4.06)	2.2406 (1.01)	4.4656*** (3.29)
Retiree	-0.6277 (-1.13)	0.09249 (0.10)	-1.0492 (-1.23)
Salesman/Agent	-6.0216*** (-4.35)	-7.2149*** (-3.61)	-5.1101*** (-3.05)
Secretary	-4.4763*** (-3.17)	-6.0345*** (-2.94)	-4.6247** (-2.47)
Self-employed	1.3406** (2.07)	1.6657** (2.32)	-0.5687 (-0.33)
Social scientist	2.6158*** (2.85)	0.7121 (0.28)	2.4671** (2.07)
Soldier	-7.2452** (-2.44)	-3.4363 (-0.78)	-11.569*** (-7.85)
Student	1.5471** (2.24)	-0.1143 (-0.11)	2.3571** (2.19)
Tax counselor	-1.6122 (-1.16)	-0.9973 (-0.57)	-2.0539 (-0.78)
Teacher	2.3079*** (3.62)	2.1349* (1.87)	2.2676** (2.43)
Technician	0.1769 (0.18)	1.1695 (0.81)	1.1501 (0.75)
Unemployed	12.384** (2.32)		3.8026 (1.11)
Veterinarian	6.9460*** (3.19)	5.2225 (1.03)	7.3933*** (3.51)
Viniculturist	11.570*** (4.19)	13.196*** (4.03)	3.6589*** (2.97)
Works council/Union official	3.8733*** (3.77)	-7.3082*** (-3.94)	1.0188 (0.80)
Female	1.1922*** (4.10)	0.8099 (1.58)	1.2796*** (3.16)
Doctoral degree	3.2159*** (5.17)	4.0274*** (4.77)	2.0258* (1.92)
Female * Doctoral degree	-0.1751 (-0.22)	-0.7057 (-0.59)	1.9127 (1.51)
Position on party list	0.2873*** (26.25)	0.3059*** (17.86)	0.2779*** (17.34)
Double name	0.6794 (0.64)	1.1505 (0.62)	0.8777 (0.64)
Double name * Female	-1.6432 (-1.41)	-2.3993 (-1.12)	-2.5245* (-1.71)
Foreign name	-0.8807* (-1.77)	-3.5078*** (-3.74)	0.3577 (0.51)
Letters (full name)	-0.04377 (-1.05)	0.01924 (0.29)	-0.02508 (-0.42)
Constant	-5.0678*** (-5.11)	-6.3451*** (-4.71)	-4.8282*** (-3.10)
Fixed Town Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4092	1757	1883
R-Squared	0.31	0.37	0.30

Notes: t-statistics in brackets; \* significant at 10%; \*\* sign. at 5%; \*\*\* sign. at 1%

Table 4: OLS Regression results cont'd. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Dependent variable:  $\Delta$ party list position.

	Total sample
<b>Baker/Butcher (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>9.7630***</b>
	(5.43)
Basic effect	5.6718
	(1.57)
Renownedness effect	5.9211
	(1.48)
<b>Bookseller (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>5.2087***</b>
	(3.42)
Basic effect	3.1685
	(1.36)
Renownedness effect	4.3378*
	(1.67)
<b>Caterer (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>2.2316</b>
	(1.41)
Basic effect	3.2195
	(0.98)
Renownedness effect	-1.3123
	(-0.36)
<b>Craftsperson (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>5.0866***</b>
	(6.61)
Basic effect	3.0557***
	(3.01)
Renownedness effect	3.9498***
	(3.45)
<b>Dentist (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>-0.09835</b>
	(-0.06)
Basic effect	-0.5851
	(-0.21)
Renowned effect	1.0113
	(0.31)
<b>Farmer (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>7.9954***</b>
	(4.23)
Basic effect	3.7916
	(1.56)
Renownedness effect	8.4103**
	(2.56)
<b>Gardener (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>7.6510***</b>
	(4.63)
Basic effect	5.8563**
	(2.52)
Renownedness effect	4.7806*
	(1.18)
<b>Hairdresser (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>1.3851</b>
	(0.67)
Basic effect	1.2710
	(0.43)
Renownedness effect	0.4177
	(0.11)
<b>Pharmacist (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>2.7272**</b>
	(2.04)
Basic effect	0.1800
	(0.10)
Renownedness effect	5.7071***
	(2.64)
<b>Physician (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>7.0612***</b>
	(7.65)
Basic effect	5.4826***
	(5.58)
Renownedness effect	3.9101***
	(3.05)
<b>Veterinarian (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>6.9460***</b>
	(3.19)
Basic effect	4.2917***
	(3.78)
Renownedness effect	3.3647
	(1.31)
<b>Viniculturist (Table 3/4 coefficient)</b>	<b>11.570***</b>
	(4.19)
Basic effect	9.5166***
	(4.46)
Renownedness effect	4.2958
	(0.83)

Notes: t-statistics in brackets; \* significant at 10%;  
\*\* sign. at 5%; \*\*\* sign. at 1%

Table 5: OLS Regression results: reputation vs. renownedness. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Dependent variable:  $\Delta$ party list position.

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