



Did the Media Matter?

Persuasion, Priming and Mobilization Effects in the 2005 British General Election Campaign

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Synopsis: Did campaign communications contribute towards changes in voter preferences in the 2005 UK general election through priming, persuasion and mobilization effects? And, if so, which communication channel proved most influential? To examine this topic, *Part I* summarizes the literature on the impact of campaign communications and develops the theoretical framework. *Part II* discusses the data and indicators, drawing upon the 2005 pre-post campaign British Election Study (NatCen) to compare the impact of exposure to mass media channels (newspapers and party political broadcasts on television), people-intensive channels (the effects of local party contact activity) and new technology channels (campaign information available on the Internet). *Part III* analyzes the results, focusing upon pre-post campaign changes in issue salience, perceptions of government competence, and propensity to vote among those using these different communication channels. In *Part IV* the conclusion summarizes the main findings and considers their implications.

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Scholars continue to debate the effects of media coverage of election campaigns on voting behavior and political attitudes. The most skeptical perspective suggests, at least by omission, that journalistic coverage exerts minimal effects on electoral choice. For example, the most comprehensive analysis of the 2001 UK election, by Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whately, compares rival theories of voting choice and examines the impact of local party communications, but the study excludes any analysis of communication theories about the role of the news media in this process¹. The 'campaign' is narrowly conceptualized as the direct role of local party contact activity, thereby omitting the way that parties communicate indirectly with the majority of electors via TV news studios and the press, as well as the Internet. Indeed the more general neglect of media effects can be regarded as reflecting the traditional approach in the British literature on voting behavior. A more common view today in contemporary American research suggests that the media's role in campaigns serves mainly to reinforce and crystallize pre-existing political predispositions. For Gelman and King, the campaign 'enlightens preferences' with news coverage providing information about party policies and economic performance, giving citizens reasons to support their prior voting choices². This reflects a far older tradition derived from Lazarsfeld's *The People's Choice* (1948)³. By contrast, many communication scholars, as well as most practitioners, argue that media coverage of campaigns has direct effects on electoral behavior, with the capacity to *prime* attitudes towards the salient issue agenda, to *persuade* citizens (especially waverers and the undecided) by shaping voting preferences, and to *mobilize* citizens to participate, thereby indirectly determining levels of party support and electoral outcomes.⁴ From this perspective, the media coverage of the campaign can alter voting behavior and party support in ways which differ from what the 'fundamentals', such as social cleavages and economic performance, would predict.

Which perspective is appropriate for understanding the role of the media in the 2005 British general election campaign? Initial analysis of voting intentions recorded in the opinion polls during this campaign confirms that voting preferences did alter. Some of the apparent shifts are due to survey error but there is evidence of real changes in party fortunes.⁵ Figure 1 illustrates support for the three major parties during the final month of the polls in the last three general elections. In the 2005 campaign, the Conservative share of the vote fell from 35% at the beginning of the period to 32% at the end (see Table 1). During the same period, the Liberal Democrat share rose from 20% to 22%. Meanwhile overall vote preferences for the Labour party hardly wavered from the start to the end. This contrasts with the trends observed in 1997 and 2001, when the leading party at the start of the campaign consistently lost ground during the final month. Of course the shift in voting intentions during the 2005 campaign was not that large in percentage points and nor did it alter Labour party control at Westminster or even the rank order of the parties. Nevertheless simulations by Wlezien and Norris suggest that the change in voting intentions registered in the opinion polls from the start to the end of the campaign was sufficient to cost the Conservatives 38 seats, 23 of which went to Labour and 14 of which went to the Liberal Democrats⁶. In effect, without the campaign, if the election had been held on 1st April rather than 5th May, Labour's majority would have been a mere 18 seats or so, providing a very different parliamentary base for the government and the opposition. In this regard, at least, the campaign mattered in 2005.

[Figure 1 and Table 1 about here]

The question which arises is what caused these changes in voter preferences in the 2005 UK general election and in particular whether campaign communications contributed directly and indirectly towards these shifts. If so, which communication channel was most influential? To examine this topic, *Part I* summarizes the literature on the impact of the media during election campaigns and develops the theoretical framework for analyzing priming, persuasion and

mobilization effects. *Part II* discusses the data and indicators, drawing upon the 2005 pre-post campaign British Election Study (NatCen) to compare the impact of exposure to mass media channels (newspapers and party political broadcasts on television), people-intensive channels (the effects of local party contact activity) and new technology channels (campaign information available on the Internet). *Part III* analyzes the results, focusing upon pre-post campaign changes in issue salience, perceptions of government competence, and propensity to vote among those using these different communication channels. In *Part IV* the conclusion summarizes the main findings and considers their implications.

I: The impact of campaign communications on voting intentions

What sort of impact might be expected to arise from the campaign coverage provided by the mass media, understood here in terms of television news and newspapers? And are these effects more or less significant than the impact of direct people-intensive or new technology channels? One way to understand this is to distinguish the main components of campaign communication outlined schematically in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

In this figure, the context is set by the structure of the mass media in any political system (for example the range of public and private television stations available on terrestrial, cable, and satellite channels, and the number and partisan affiliations of major national newspapers), the legal regulation of party and candidate activities during campaigns (including financial ceilings on expenditure and limits on advertising), and the social structure (such as levels of public access to the Internet and cable TV).

Within this context, party organizations develop their strategic campaign communication plans, including which citizens they seek to target and what key messages they hope to convey. Parties today have three primary channels for communication: people-intensive, the mass media, and new technologies.

People-intensive forms are exemplified by traditional party rallies and leadership speeches, party canvassing and candidate pamphlets, and face-to-face discussions on doorsteps, shopping malls, and town hall meetings. The local party campaign used to be regarded by many commentators as a rather quaint or old-fashioned ritual, of marginal importance to the national outcome in the television age. An extensive literature has also documented the erosion of party membership, in Britain and elsewhere, and if this has reduced the number of core activists as well as passive members, this process should have reduced the capacity of parties to utilize grassroots campaigns⁷. For example, the number of Labour party members has shrunk by half from 407,000 in May 1997 to 200,000 in May 2005⁸. Despite these trends, recent revisionist research suggests that the activity of local parties during general elections continues to play an important role in British constituencies, including studies based on surveys of party agents, surveys of party members, and patterns of local campaign expenditure⁹. Interpersonal or face-to-face political communications exemplified by doorstep canvassing and meet-the-candidate events are also regarded as important in the United States, especially for mobilizing electors¹⁰.

Media channels provide an important opportunity for party leaders to reach a far wider audience, however, as well as less partisan electors, through national newspapers and magazines, television and radio news, and party election broadcasts. Parties devote considerable campaign resources in the battle to dominate the airwaves and headlines, from their morning news conferences and policy launches through leadership meet-and-greet events to early evening

rallies. At the same time media channels are usually mainly indirect, with journalists, editors, producers, and commentators acting as gatekeepers for party messages. The chief exception remains the Party Election Broadcast, where politicians continue to control unfiltered messages which reach a considerable audience¹¹.

The newest channel to emerge for campaign communications since the mid-1990s arises from developments in communication and information technologies, including party websites, news websites, group email and political blogs. More than half the adult population in Britain now has regular access to the Internet and three-quarters have mobile phones, with growing capacity to use mobiles for online services¹². The effect of using these technologies for campaign communications are expected to differ from traditional forms of exposure to the mass media, even when people are accessing online news, because these technologies are far more individualized for users' preferences as well as being interactive two-way channels. Debate continues to surround the impact of these technologies on election campaigns, with their functions for activities such as fund-raising and networking continuing to evolve over successive contests¹³. The adoption of interactive technologies symbolizes a return to some of the more localized and 'horizontal' forms of party communication that characterized people-intensive communications. This includes the development of political discussion user-groups on the Internet, internal party Intranets, interactive political sites used by community associations and policy advocacy networks, and the political use of email or list-serves to mobilize and organize, as well as activist web-logs. All these are similar, in some important regards, to some of the interactivity and targeted forms of communication characteristic of face-to-face party meetings, canvassing, and local party newsletters¹⁴.

The literature suggests that communication processes can be understood to generate direct effects upon citizens through the process of priming, persuasion, and mobilization, and thus to have indirect effects upon voting choice. *Priming* effects activate certain underlying predispositions, by altering the importance of different factors, so that voters come to prioritize certain things over others. This process is strongly related to agenda-setting effects, where political communications shift issue priorities among the electorate. For example, during the 2005 election, when the media covered Howard's speeches on immigration and refugees, and reported on events in Iraq, this may have increased concern about these issues among the public. But priming can also be understood as a wider phenomenon, for example if this process comes to prioritize certain leadership qualities, such as the importance of strength, competence, or compassion. Alternatively with *persuasion* effects the election campaign may have altered people's minds about certain policies, the performance of the government, or the competence of leaders, thereby changing people's evaluation of parties and their voting choice. For example, the *Guardian* and *Independent* had both become increasingly critical of the Labour government, especially on the conduct of the Iraq War and Britain's intervention in the American-led coalition, which could have switched some Labour readers towards the Liberal Democrats. *Mobilizing* effects focus on the way that campaigns function to activate citizens, so that party supporters turn out on polling day or voters participate through discussing politics with friends and neighbors¹⁵.

Which of the available channels of communication – people-intensive, mass media, or new technology - are most effective for generating priming, persuasion and mobilization effects? What remains unclear from the research literature is the relative importance of each of these main channels as most studies commonly focus exclusively upon one or another. Television news is often assumed to be the primary way that most citizens learn about the campaign, as commonly reported in surveys when people are asked directly about where they learnt about the election¹⁶. Nevertheless even if television news still remains the most popular source for finding out about parties and issues, cited far more often than being contacted directly or turning to online

resources, this does not mean that this is necessarily the most *influential* source affecting voting behavior. Self-reported assessments remain unreliable. Moreover the predominance of television coverage is challenged both by the revisionist view emphasizing the importance of traditional local party campaigns, and by the rise of the Internet as more and more people gain access and as viewer-ship figures for terrestrial television news and as readership figures for national newspapers gradually erode. The last comprehensive examination of the role of communication channels in British campaigns analyzed the 1997 general election, when the Internet was first starting to become easily available, and since then much has changed in election communication processes.¹⁷ Models assessing the impact of people-intensive local campaigns, such as canvassing, are commonly under-specified by failing to consider the independent effects of exposure to the national mass media and the internet.

II: Evidence and data

To examine the evidence for campaign communication effects we can draw upon the 2005 British Election Survey, a panel survey of a representative sample of the electorate contacted before and after polling day. The pre-campaign data were gathered by in-person CAPI interviews carried out in February and March 2005. Survey fieldwork was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NATCEN). The post-election data was also based on face-to-face surveys using similar procedures. The pre-post total re-contacted sample involved 2,959 respondents.

Details of all variables and coding conventions are given in Appendix A. Communications channels are classified according to their use and also their direction (which party). In terms of media channels, the BES included items monitoring readership of daily newspapers and specific papers were reclassified into categories, following Bartle's classification, based on their editorial endorsements of the Labour or Conservative parties during the 2005 election.¹⁸ The BES also monitored whether people saw a Party Political Broadcast during the campaign, and, if so, from which party or parties, although the BES did not gauge exposure to television news or indeed more habitual patterns of media use, asked in previous BES surveys. To compare an indicator of the newer technological channels, the BES asked people whether they used the Internet for election information, although not how extensive and frequent their use of online sources, nor whether they accessed specific party or news websites. For the people-intensive channels, the BES monitored whether people reported being contacted before the campaign, or canvassed, knocked up on election day, or phoned by a party during the campaign and, if so, for which party. This information was summed to form a 4-point party party contact scale. If the respondent was canvassed, the main party was classified.

The pre-post panel design allows us to monitor priming in the public's issue agenda, measured by an open-ended question about the 'most important issue facing the country'. Persuasion effects are monitored through vote-switching and by changes in perceptions of government competence on a range of half a dozen issues. Mobilizing effects are gauged by changes in the propensity to vote and by attention to politics.

It should be noted that this study has several important limitations. The analysis only focuses upon short-term effects during the period of the five-week official election campaign running from 1st April to 5th May 2005. As such, we cannot take into account the role of communications and developing events during the 'long-campaign' in the twelve-months run up to the election, nor the cumulative influence of habitual attention to certain mass media such as television and radio news and current affairs. Any short-term effects from campaign communications are therefore expected to be relatively modest. It is to be regretted that the BES did not include items monitoring habitual patterns of exposure to the mass media, to other dimensions of Internet use,

and to media attention as well as use. Attention is commonly seen to generate stronger effects than exposure. Moreover the context of the election proved relatively uneventful and fairly low-key, with most commentators predicting the return of another Labour government, albeit with a closer result than in 2001. There were few, if any, unexpected 'shocks' arising from crisis events, breaking stories, or unpredicted kaffuffles occurring during the official campaign which might be expected to suddenly alter the smooth running of the party campaigns and therefore public perceptions of their policies, leaders, or government competence. In addition, this study relies upon the BES survey, and even with a panel sample, this method is not ideal at measuring the full impact of campaign messages. Experimental designs, offering more precise control of the type of political messages, are better instruments for this purpose. The two-wave panel survey allows us to monitor the net impact of any 'before' and 'after' changes, such as the flow of the vote, but not the degree of any day-to-day fluctuations in electoral behavior or political attitudes occurring during spring. The final qualification is that using this design we cannot hope to distinguish self-selection biases, such as interest, which determine some patterns of media use as well as some patterns of voting behavior.

III: Priming, Persuasion and Mobilizing Effects

Priming

To start to explore the effects of campaign communications, did the public's issue agenda shift from the start to the end of the campaign and, if so, was this change consistently related to use of different communication channels? Ever since the early-1970s, the 'agenda-setting' function of the mass media has become one of the best known and most widely discussed types of media effects. The news headlines are believed to shape the electorate's issue priorities.¹⁹ Despite the extensive literature exploring this topic, in the United States and elsewhere, empirical studies of previous British election campaigns have failed to establish a consistent link between the issue agenda covered in television and newspaper headlines and the public's top issue concerns²⁰. For example, in the 1997 campaign, despite extensive news headlines about Britain's membership of the EU, the public's main concerns remained focused on the social agenda of health and education²¹. Even if there is a long-term link, for example if coverage of dramatic events such as 9/11 and the London bombings raised public worry about terrorist threats, it is not clear that significant net change occurs during the relatively brief official campaign, let alone that any change can be attributed to communication channels. For example, during the 2005 election, analysis of the issue agenda based on ICM campaign polls (with closed-ended questions) suggested little shift in the public's main concerns occurred during the course of the campaign, although the issue of education rose in salience while immigration dropped slightly²².

The 2005 BES monitored the '*most important issue facing the country*' using identical open-ended (unprompted) questions in the pre and post-campaign surveys. Table 2 shows the net change registered in the public's issue agenda. The results indicate that among all issues, public concern rose most sharply about immigration, the European Union/euro, and law and order. These are all issues where the Conservative party has traditionally been strongest and the issue of immigration also featured heavily in Michael Howard's campaign and its media coverage²³. The presence of the British National Party and the UK Independence party on the far right may also have heightened the salience of immigration. There was also a more modest rise in concern about the economy and the NHS, where Labour remains stronger. By contrast, however, public concern about the Iraq war, regarded by many as Blair's Achilles heel, appeared to diminish slightly, along with concern about terrorism. There was also a more marked fall in the proportion mentioning asylum-seekers as the most important issue, for reasons which remain puzzling. It is not clear why the public appeared to shift concern from the issue of asylum-seekers to the

closely-related topic of immigration, but one reason, which requires further exploration from content analysis, may have been the way that leading politicians and media commentators framed debate about these topics.

Did those paying closest attention to different forms of campaign communication differ in their agendas? To examine this issue we can focus upon analyzing whether those who paid attention to alternative channels of campaign communication were particularly prone to alter their view of the most important problem from the pre- and post-waves. Responses to the 'most important problem' question were therefore simply recoded as consistent or inconsistent across the two waves. Binary logistic regression models were used which enter the standard range of social characteristics predicting use of different channels of campaign communications and then indicators of exposure to the people-intensive, media, and Internet channels, where the change in the issue agenda is the dependent variable. Contrary to the media agenda-setting hypothesis, and confirming some of the previous studies of this effect in British elections, the results indicate that none of the uses of campaign communications generated a significantly greater propensity for the public to alter their issue agenda. Of course this is only a preliminary test of the agenda setting thesis and it remains possible that there were more systematic changes underlying these patterns, for example if readers of Conservative tabloids were likely to regard immigration or crime as more important after the campaign, and further analysis is required in future research to match the contents of the media's campaign agenda against changes in the public's issue agenda.

Persuasion

Any persuasive effects could relate to many alternative indicators of party popularity. This study focuses upon two which are often regarded as the most important: net shifts in perceptions of the government's policy competence on a range of issues and also changes in voting intentions. Clarke et al conclude that during the 2001 election, valence politics dominated, meaning that the outcome was strongly shaped by the public's evaluation of the managerial competence of the main parties in handling major issues of concern²⁴. In this argument, valence rather than positional politics has come to the fore in Britain following policy reforms in the Labour party and their shift under Tony Blair's leadership towards the center ground in Westminster politics. Any closure of the ideological gap between Labour and the Conservatives on many major policies, notably the shared consensus about the need to combine effective economic performance with effective investment in social policies, means that the electorate may now place greater emphasis on the best team of leaders to deliver these goals.

The government's competence was evaluated in the BES pre and post campaign surveys in terms of six issues, namely crime, the number of asylum-seekers coming to Britain, the National Health Service, the risk of terrorism, the economy in general, and the level of taxation. Evaluations of the government's handling of each of these issues were monitored using five-point scales contained in each survey. The overall results shown in Table 3 indicate that the net effect of the campaign was to reinforce public approval of the Blair government's handling of these major issues: their mean evaluations improved slightly and consistently across the board. It is striking that their performance evaluation strengthened on their 'homeland' issues, such as the NHS and the economy, as well as on the issues emphasized most heavily by the Conservative campaign, such as asylum-seekers and taxation. It appears that Howard's hard-line focus on the issue of asylum-seekers during the campaign may have backfired, by unintentionally reinforcing approval of the government's handling of this policy.

[Table 3 about here]

Was the improvement in the government's evaluations similar across use of alternative channels of campaign communications? Table 4 presents the results of OLS regression models which enter the standard range of social characteristics predicting use of different channels of campaign communications and then indicators of exposure to the people-intensive, media, and Internet channels, where the changes in the government's performance evaluation across these six policy areas are the dependent variables. The results in Table 4 indicate that no single communication mode proved most influential in persuading electors about the government's competence at handling these issues. Party election broadcasts by Labour and the Conservatives influenced perceptions of government competence on the issue of asylum-seekers and their economic record, while the Conservative PEB also shaped views of tax and the Labour PEB influenced perceptions of their handling of health care. Readership of Labour and Conservative papers were associated with changes in perceptions of the government's record of asylum seekers, while Labour papers shaped views of crime. The people-intensive channels of canvassing, and the new channels of the Internet, both appear to have had little effect on perceptions of government competence across the range of issues.

[Table 4 about here]

Mobilization

Use of communication channels is commonly regarded as most important for the process of mobilizing voters. Proponents of the videomalaise school believe that viewing television entertainment generates cynicism and passivity, leading to a lack of civic engagement. By contrast, however, there is extensive evidence that attention to newspapers and television news is consistently associated with greater than average propensity towards political activism²⁵. The *raison d'être* of party get-out-the-vote drives and canvassing during campaigns is to encourage supporters to get the polls. What effect does this activity have upon the electorate?

Electors were classified in the pre-campaign wave according to their self-reported estimate of their likelihood of voting, on a 10-point scale. Those classified at the maximum point (10) were recoded as the most likely voters. The comparison can be made with those who reported voting in the election, in the post-wave. Mobilization effects are those who were not the most likely to vote in the pre-wave (ranging from 0 to 9) who in fact actually cast a ballot on election-day. The BES also monitored attention to politics on a ten-point scale and again we can examine change in this indicator of civic engagement in the pre- and post-election waves. Table 5 shows the results which again appear to indicate that no single type of channel proved the most effective at mobilizing voters. Labour party election broadcasts appear to be significantly related to all the indicators of mobilization although by contrast none of the Conservative PEBs produced these effects. To explore this further we would need to be able to match the specific contents of the PEBs against groups in the electorate to see which messages produced these effects. Readership of Labour newspapers and being canvassed by the Conservative party also seems to have mobilized voters.

[Table 5 about here]

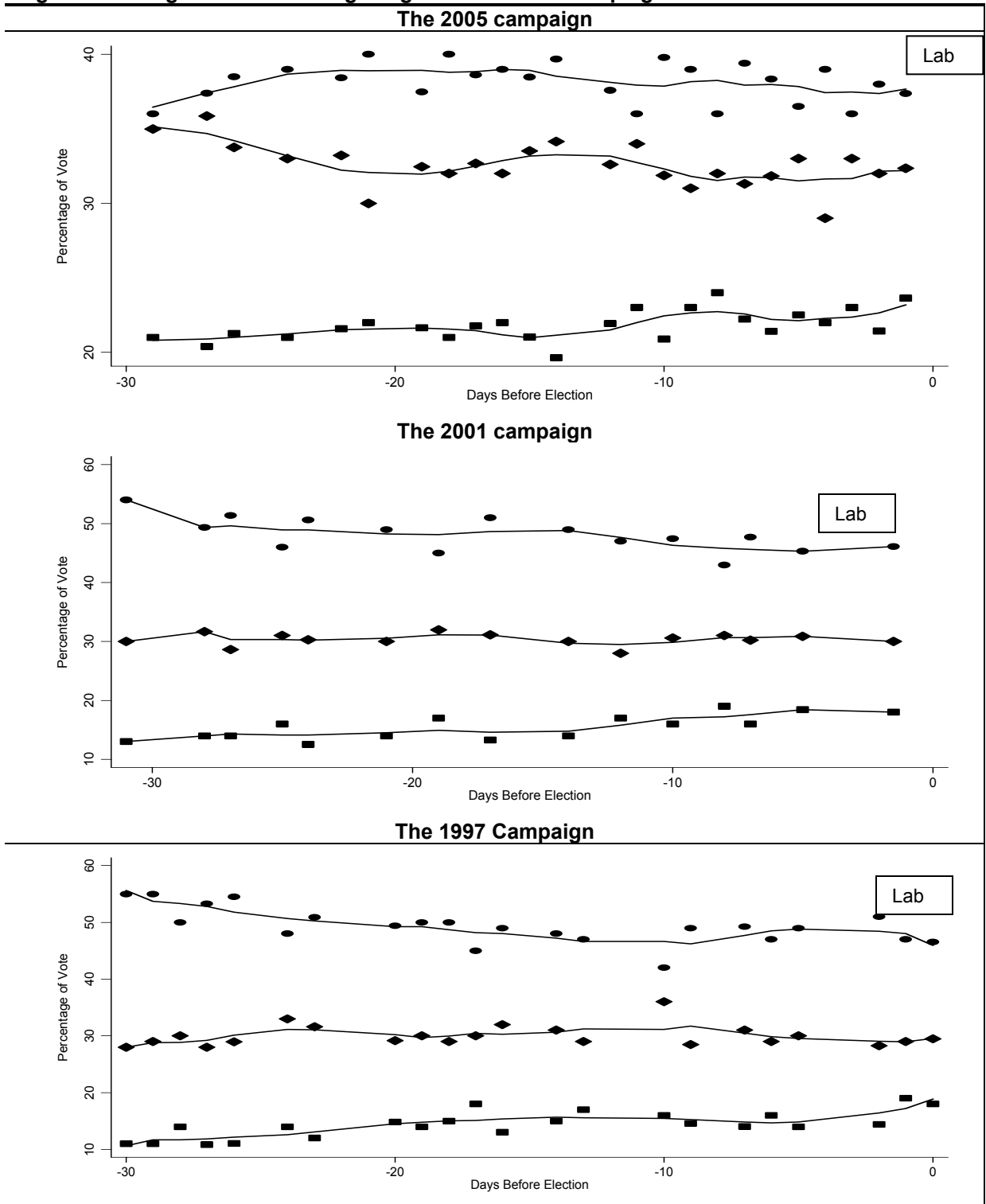
IV: Conclusions and implications

There are many reasons why attention and exposure to different channels of campaign information and communication could have an important impact on political attitudes and voting behavior. Despite the extensive literature which has developed around this topic in the United

States, in Britain the focus of much recent research has been confined to examining the effects of local party contact activity rather than comparing the influence of the many alternative channels by which citizens learn about parties and candidates. This comparison presents some of the initial exploration of the impact of some main channels of communication used in the 2005 British general election.

The results of the analysis presented in this study suggest that no single channel is the most effective; the agenda-setting effects that are associated with priming were not consistently linked with exposure to any of the campaign communications compared in this study. Persuasion effects were more evident, particularly evaluation of the policy performance of the Labour government. Mobilization effects were also found through the use of certain channels. Subsequent research needs to consider both a wider range of type of persuasion effects, for example concerning evaluations of party leaders as well as policies, and perceptions of prospective policies offered by each party as well as the government's record. We also need to explore whether certain types of media effects are stronger among certain sub-categories of voters, such as vote switchers and the undecided versus strong partisans. The analysis also remains limited in other important regards, however, as it would have been desirable to also monitor and compare the impact of other channels (television entertainment, TV news, and radio news), as well as the amount of attention to different channels, not just exposure. The preliminary results presented here do not provide a clear-cut and unambiguous answer to the question of whether certain channels are more influential than others. At the same time, any simple assumptions prioritizing one over others, for example the claim that people-intensive face-to-face communications in traditional party campaigns automatically generate greater effects than exposure to the mass media, also appear ill-founded.

Figure 1: Voting intentions during UK general election campaigns



Note: Voting intentions for the major parties recorded in the published opinion polls, smoothed trends using lowess.

Source: Christopher Wlezien and Pippa Norris. 2005. 'Conclusions: Whether the campaign mattered and why.' In *Britain Votes 2005* Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford University Press.

Figure 2: Channels of Party Campaign Communications

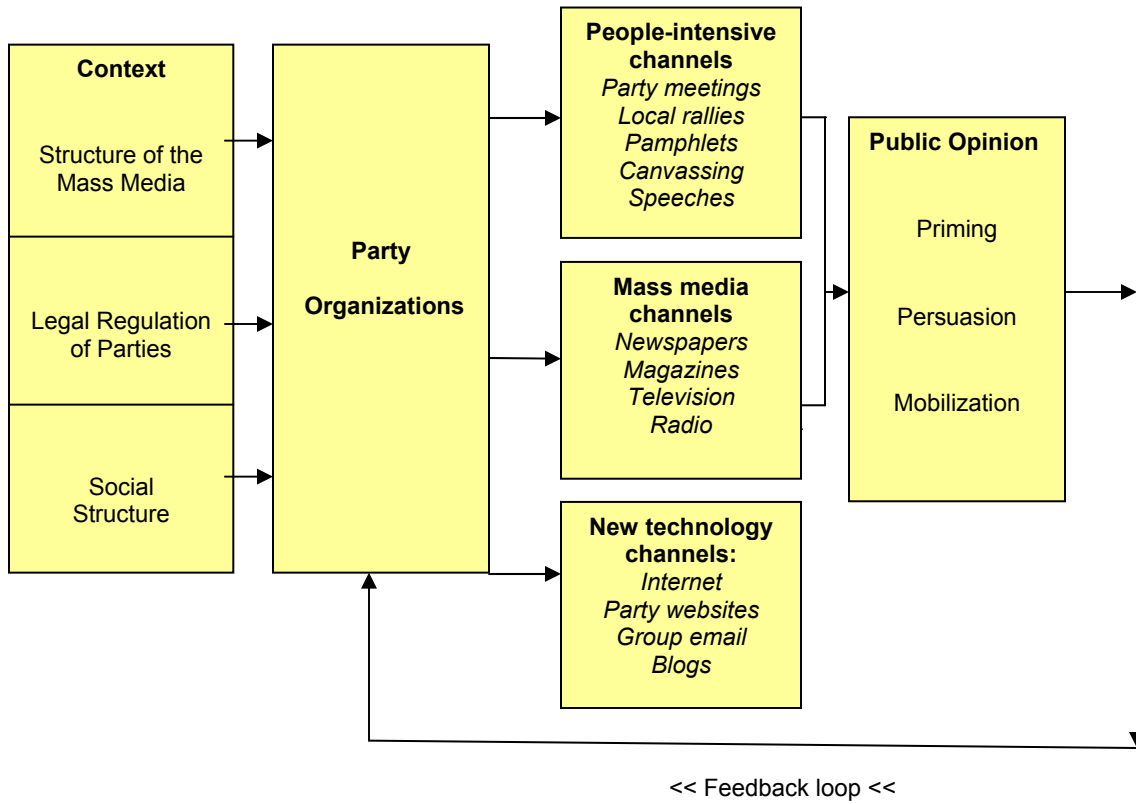


Table 1: The opinion polls during the 2005 election campaign

	Date	N. polls	Labour lead	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Other
Week 1	April 1-7	9	1.7	35.1	36.8	20.4	7.7
Week 2	April 8-13	10	4.5	33.6	38.1	21.3	7.0
Week 3	April 15-21	11	5.8	32.8	38.6	21.3	7.0
Week 4	April 22-May 1	15	5.2	32.4	37.6	22.3	7.8
Week 5	May 1-4	6	5.0	32.5	37.5	22.5	7.5
Change weeks 1-5			+3.3	-2.6	-0.7	+2.1	-0.2
Actual GB result	May 5 2005		2.9	33.1	36.0	22.6	8.3

Note: Excludes the Populus/Times and BES rolling polls. Fieldwork dates in the week-by-week comparisons refer to the first day of fieldwork.

Source: Ivor Crewe. 2005. 'The Opinion Polls: The election they got (almost) right'. Extract from Table 5. In *Britain Votes 2005*. Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Table 2: Change in the public's issue agenda

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Pre-campaign</i>	<i>Post-campaign</i>	<i>Change</i>
Immigration	4.7	14.0	9.3
EU/EURO	2.2	7.3	5.1
Law and order	10.1	14.1	4.0
Economy	4.1	7.7	3.6
NHS	14.7	16.9	2.2
Taxation	1.9	1.8	-0.1
Environment	1.6	1.7	0.1
Standard of living	1.2	1.1	-0.1
Pensions	2.2	2.0	-0.2
Education	6.8	6.5	-0.3
Unemployment	2.3	1.9	-0.4
Iraq war	7.3	5.0	-2.3
Terrorism	5.6	2.1	-3.5
Other	15.7	10.6	-5.1
Asylum seekers	19.6	7.3	-12.3

Note: Q “As far as you’re concerned, what is the single most important issue facing the country at the present time?” The table lists all issues mentioned as ‘most important’ by at least 1.0% of respondents in either the pre-or post-campaign waves.

Source: British Election Study 2005 Pre-Post election panel survey (NatCen)

Table 3: Change in the public’s perception of government competence

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Pre-campaign</i>	<i>Post-campaign</i>	<i>Change</i>
The number of asylum-seekers coming to Britain	0.93	1.14	+ .21
The level of taxation	1.73	1.93	+ .20
The National Health Service	1.79	1.98	+ .19
Economy in general	2.46	2.60	+ .14
Risk of terrorism	2.15	2.25	+ .10
Crime in Britain	1.68	1.75	+ .07

Note: Q. “How well do you think the present government has handled each of the following issues? Very well, fairly well, neither well nor badly, fairly badly, very badly.” The mean scores on a 5-pt evaluative scale (reversed) ranging from 1 ‘Very badly’ to 5 ‘Very well’.

Source: British Election Study 2005 Pre-Post election panel survey (NatCen)

Table 4: The impact of channels of campaign communication on changes in the public's perception of government competence

Issue	Broadcast channels		Newspaper channels		People-intensive channels		Internet channels
	Lab PPB	Con PPB	Lab Pap	Con Pap	Lab canvass	Con canvass	Internet info
Crime in Britain	.023	.014	.069***	.009	.055*	.035	.034
Asylum-seekers	.064**	.054*	.054*	.059*	.033	.025	.033
The NHS	.053*	.026	.033	.038	.044	.000	.029
Risk of terrorism	.012	.006	.004	.020	.018	.041	.006
Economy in general	.071**	.071***	.008	.025	.026	.018	.008
Taxation	.020	.056*	.023	.019	.006	.018	.059*

Note: The table presents the results of OLS regression analysis models (the standardized beta coefficient and its significance). The dependent variable is the respondent's mean change from the pre- to post-campaign panel survey in their evaluation of government competence on each issue dimension, measured by a 5-point scale. The models control for age, gender, ethnicity, education, social class, income, and the respondent's self-reported left-right location. The models were checked to be free of the problems of multicollinearity. See Appendix A for details of the coding and instruments. Significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold** ***=.001 **=.01 *=.05

Source: British Election Study 2005 Pre-Post election panel survey (NatCen) Weighted by NATWEIGHT

Table 5: Mobilization effects

	Broadcast channels		Newspaper channels		People-intensive channels		Internet channels
	Lab PPB	Con PPB	Lab Pap	Con Pap	Lab canvass	Con canvass	Internet info
Did R vote? (i)	.429***	.402	.471**	.402	.424	.749**	.600***
Change in propensity to vote (i)	.159***	.132	.534	.202	.200	.325	.346*
Change in political attention (ii)	-.075**	-.044	.060**	-.202	.001	.049*	-.021
Changed voting preference (i)	.222*	.109	.429***	.320*	.620***	.356*	.254

Note: The table presents the results of: (i) binary logistic regression analysis models (the unstandardized beta coefficient and its significance) and (ii) OLS regression models (the standardized beta and significance). The dependent variable is the respondent's mean change from the pre- to post-campaign panel survey in indicators of propensity to vote (0/1), political attention (20-pt scale), and changed party vote preference (0/1). The models control for age, gender, ethnicity, education, social class, income, and the respondent's self-reported left-right location. The models were checked to be free of the problems of multicollinearity. See Appendix A for details of the coding and instruments. Significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold**
 ***=.001 **=.01 *=.05

Source: British Election Study 2005 Pre-Post election panel survey (NatGen) Weighted by NATWEIGHT

Appendix A: Variables and coding

<i>Variable</i>	<i>BES Q</i>	<i>Coding</i>
SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Age	tq77	In years
Gender	tq76	Male (1)/Female (0)
Ethnicity	aq60	White (1)/Non-white (0)
Education	tq82b	Highest educational qualification (18-pt scale)
Occupational class	aq58a	R's employment recoded into 5-fold categories
Income	tq84	(10-pt scale)
CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS		
Read daily newspaper	Bq68a	Yes (1)/ No (0)
What paper?	Bq68b	Papers coded as Conservative (Mail, Telegraph or Express) or Labour (FT, Guardian, Mirror, Independent, Sun, and Times)
Used Internet for election information	Bq73	Great deal/fair amount/not much (1)/ Not at all (0).
Saw Party election broadcast	bq72a	Yes (1)/ No (0)
Contacted by party during campaign	ac11a, bq60a, bq70a, bq71a	4-pt scale constructed from reported being contacted before campaign, or canvassed, knocked up, or phoned during the campaign)
POLITICAL ATTITUDES		
Attention to politics	aq43/bq60	10-point scale
Left-right ideological position	bq39a	Self-placement (10-pt scale)
Most important issue facing the country	Amistot & bq2amisz	Open-ended questions
Evaluations of government competence	Aq4, bq3	Each issue evaluated using a 5-point approve-disapprove scale
ACTIVISM		
Reported voting in the 2005 general election	bq12a	Voted (1), did not (0)
How likely to vote in the 2005 GE	aq10a	10-point scale

Note: Details of the Blaise questionnaire and the dataset for the British Election 2005 Post-Election Wave (August 2005) are available from <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bes/> 'aq' questions are from the pre-campaign wave and 'bq' questions from the post-campaign wave.

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¹ The 2001 study only examines impact of attention to the mass media on turnout, not party choice. See Harold D. Clarke, David Sanders, Marianne C. Stewart and Paul Whiteley. 2004. *Party Choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Moreover this reflects a systematic bias by the BES team of Principle Investigators; in the 2005 pre-post campaign British Election Survey by NattCen and the BES Internet rolling campaign survey by YouGov, out of over 800 items in each study, not one in either survey monitored attention or exposure to television news.

² A. Gelman and Gary King, 'Why are American Presidential Election Polls so Variable When Votes are so Predictable?' *British Journal of Political Science* 1993, 409-451.

³ Paul F. Lasarsfeld, Bernard R. Berelson and H. Gaudet. 1948. *The People's Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press; Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lasarsfeld and William N. McPhee. 1963. *Voting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁴ T. Holbrook. 1996. *Do Campaigns Matter?* London: Sage; J.E. Campbell, 2000. *The American Campaign: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote*. Texas A&M University Press. Richard Johnston, Andre Blais, Henry E. Brady, & J. Crete. 1992. *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press. Also see Richard Johnston, Michael G. Hagen, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2004. *The 2000 Presidential Election and the Foundations of Party Politics* New York: Cambridge University Press. See also the extensive examination of British campaign communication in Pippa Norris, John Curtice, David Sanders, Margaret Scammell, and Holli Semetko. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage.

⁵ For details, see Ivor Crewe. 2005. 'The Opinion Polls: The election they got (almost) right' and also Christopher Wlezien and Pippa Norris. 2005. 'Conclusions: Whether the campaign mattered and why.' Both in *Britain Votes 2005* Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford University Press.

⁶ To generate these estimates, Wlezien and Norris simulated the voting day results at the constituency level, using Pippa Norris' *British Parliamentary Constituency Database, 1992-2005* at: <http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris/datafiles/Britain%20Votes%202006%20Resources.htm>. Specifically, the estimate assumed a uniform swing and adjusted the 2005 results in each constituency based on the changes in preferences from the start to the end of the official campaign (see Table 1). This estimate therefore ran the results of the 2005 election as if the outcome was determined by voting preferences recorded at the start of the campaign.

⁷ See in particular Peter Mair and Ingrid van Biezen. 2001. 'Party membership in twenty European democracies 1980-2000.' *Party Politics*. 7(1): 7-22; Susan Scarrow. 2001. 'Parties without Members?' In *Parties without Partisans*. Eds. Russell J. Dalton and Martin Wattenberg. New York: Oxford University Press; Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd. 2002. *High-Intensity Participation: The Dynamics of Party Activism in Britain*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

⁸ Phillip Webster. 'Labour inquiry will try to explain exodus from the party.' *The Times*. 8 Sept 2005.

⁹ See, for example, Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd. 1994. 'Local party campaigning and mobilization in Britain.' *Journal of Politics* 56: 242-52; David Denver and Gordon Hands. 1997. *Modern Constituency Electioneering*. London: Frank Cass; Ron Johnston and Charles Pattie. 2003. 'Do canvassing and campaigning work? Evidence from the 2001 general election in England.' In *British Elections and Parties Review 13* Ed. Colin Rallings, Roger Scully, Jonathan Tonge and Paul Webb. Frank Cass.

¹⁰ Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Charles Pattie and Ron J. Johnston. 2002. 'Assessing the television campaign: the Impact of party election broadcasts on voter's opinions at the 1997 British general election.' *Political Communications* 19: 333-58.

¹² John Curtice and Pippa Norris. 2004. 'e-politics? The impact of the internet on political trust and participation.' In *British Social Attitudes – the 21st Report*, Eds. Alison Park, John Curtice, Katarina Thomson, Catherine Bromley and M. Phillips. London: Sage.

¹³ See Elaine Kamarck and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 1999. *democracy.com*. Hollis, NH: Hollis Publishers; Richard Davis and Diana Owen. 1998. *New Media and American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press; Kevin A. Hill and John E. Hughes. 1998. *Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield; Edward Schwartz. 1996. *Netactivism: How Citizens Use the Internet*. Sebastapol, CA: Songline Studios; Richard Davis. 1999. *The Web of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ See Elaine Kamarck and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 1999. *democracy.com*. Hollis, NH: Hollis Publishers; Richard Davis and Diana Owen. 1998. *New Media and American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press; Kevin A. Hill and John E. Hughes. 1998. *Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield; Edward Schwartz. 1996. *Netactivism: How Citizens Use the Internet*. Sebastapol, CA: Songline Studios; Richard Davis. 1999. *The Web of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ See, for example, Kenneth Newton. 1997. 'Politics and the News Media: Mobilisation or Videomalaise?' In *British Social Attitudes: the 14th Report, 1997/8*, eds. Roger Jowell, John Curtice, Alison Park, Katarina Thomson and Lindsay Brook. Aldershot: Ashgate.

¹⁶ See, for example, the series of Independent Television Commission (subsequently OfCom) surveys reported in Barrie Gunter, Jane Sancho-Aldridge, and Paul Winstone. 1994. *Television: The Public's View, 1993*. London: John Libbey; Robert Towler. 2002. *The Public's View 2002*. ITC/BSC. http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/uploads/The_Publics_View_2002.pdf

¹⁷ Pippa Norris, John Curtice, David Sanders, Margaret Scammell, and Holli Semetko. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage.

¹⁸ See John Bartle. 2005. 'The press, television and the internet.' Table 1. In *Britain Votes 2005* Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Maxwell McCombs and D.L. Shaw. 1972. 'The agenda-setting function of the mass media.' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36: 176-187; Holli A. Semetko, Jay G. Blumler, Michael Gurevitch, David H. Weaver. 1991. *The Formation of Campaign Agendas: A comparative analysis of party and media roles in recent American and British elections*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

²⁰ William L. Miller. 1991. *Media and Voters: the Audience, Content, and Influence of Press and Television at the 1987 General Election*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Pippa Norris. 1998. 'The Battle for the Campaign Agenda'. In *New Labour Triumphs: Britain at the Polls*, ed. Anthony King. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House; John Curtice and Holli Semetko. 1994. 'Does It Matter What the Papers Say?' In *Labour's Last Chance?* Eds. Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, and John Curtice. Aldershot: Dartmouth.

²¹ Pippa Norris, John Curtice, David Sanders, Margaret Scammell, and Holli Semetko. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage. Pp126-7.

²² Christopher Wlezien and Pippa Norris. 2005. 'Conclusions: Whether the campaign mattered and why.' In *Britain Votes 2005* Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford University Press. Table 2.

²³ Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon. 'The Conservative Campaign'. In *Britain Votes 2005* Eds. Pippa Norris and Christopher Wlezien. Oxford University Press.

²⁴ Harold D. Clarke, David Sanders, Marianne C. Stewart and Paul Whiteley. 2004. *Party Choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁵ For a full discussion of this debate in the literature, see Pippa Norris. 2000. *A Virtuous Circle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.