The Impact of Political Advertising in the 2001 UK General Election

David Sanders* and Pippa Norris**

*Department of Government, University of Essex, UK
**Kennedy School, Harvard University

email contact: sanders@essex.ac.uk

The Impact of Political Advertising in the 2001 UK General Election

Abstract

The paper explores the extent to which advocacy and attack Party Election Broadcasts (PEBs) affected voters' party preferences during the British general election campaign of 2001. The analysis uses an experimental design that involved conducting 'media exposure' tests on a representative sample of Greater London voters (N=919) during the final weeks of the June 2001 election campaign. Respondents completed a pre-test questionnaire before being exposed to a variety of different media stimuli. Their political attitudes were then measured again in a post-test questionnaire. The empirical findings suggest that, in general, PEBs exerted little direct effect on voters' images of the main political parties in 2001. However, there were a series of 'partial' exposure effects confined to particular sub-groups of voters. For example, for non-partisan voters, 'attack' advertising appears to have been less effective than 'advocacy' advertising. Indeed, in the UK in 2001 there were contexts in which negative campaigning was explicitly counter-productive in the sense that it appears to have actively stimulated sympathy for the target of the attack rather than strengthening the relative position of the sponsor.

In recent years scholars and practitioners have turned increasing attention towards understanding the impact of political advertising. One aspect of the debate has revolved around the issue of how far there are significant electoral rewards from either '*advocacy*' broadcasts, which offer a positive vision of the advertised party, or '*attack*' broadcasts which concentrate on criticising the opposition.

In this paper, we explore the extent to which advocacy and attack Party Election Broadcasts affected voters' party preferences during the British general election campaign of 2001. Our analysis uses an experimental design that involved conducting 'media exposure' tests on a representative sample of Greater London voters (N=919) during the final weeks of the June 2001 election campaign. Respondents completed a pre-test questionnaire before being exposed to a variety of different media stimuli. Their political attitudes were then measured again in a post-test questionnaire. Our empirical findings suggest that, in general, PEBs exerted little direct effect on voters' images of the main political parties in 2001. However, there were a series of 'partial' exposure effects confined to particular sub-groups of voters. For example, for non-partisan voters, 'attack' advertising appears to have been less effective than 'advocacy' advertising. Indeed, in the UK in 2001 there were contexts in which negative campaigning was explicitly counter-productive in the sense that it appears to have actively stimulated sympathy for the target of the attack rather than strengthening the relative position of the sponsor. Part 1 of the paper outlines the theoretical debates and rationales that inform the specific hypotheses that we test. Part 2 describes the experimental design that we used in order to generate the data to test these hypotheses, together with our operational measures. Part 3 reports our empirical findings.

1. The Theoretical and Empirical Background

An extensive literature has sought to assess the effectiveness of television-based campaign advertising in American elections (Pfau and Kinski 1990; Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Lau and Sigelman, 2000; West 2001; Thurber 2000; Lau and Pomper 2002). In Britain, many studies have described the evolution and character of campaign communications (see, for example, Scammell 1995; Seymore-Ure 1996; Butler and Kavanagh 2001) and the impact of news media coverage upon electoral behavior (Miller et al. 1991; Norris et al. 1999). A smaller body of work has focused on trends in the format and contents of party election broadcasts (see Scammell and Semetko 1995; Johnson and Elebash 1986; Harrison 2001). In particular, content analysis by Hodess et al. (2000) noted a tendency towards increased negativity evident in PEBs aired during the 1997 campaign, compared with 1992. Similar trends have been documented as continuing in the 2001 election (Pipkin 2001).

Despite growing interest, there have been few rigorous attempts to evaluate the precise effects of campaign advertising on public opinion in Britain, and the possible impact of any rise in negative messages. Early studies of political advertising, dating from the time that television was first introduced into British campaigns, represent the most important exceptions (Treneman and McQuail 1961; Blumler and McQuail 1968). Blumler and McQuail found no influence on voting intention for Conservative and Labour, yet a small but significant increase in Liberal Democrat support from viewers of their broadcasts. They concluded that PEBs were of greater significance for smaller parties, and this corresponds with general research on the effects of political advertising in the USA; the greatest impact being associated with parties or candidates who have relatively low levels of background news media coverage (Kaid and Johnston 2001). Given the substantial changes in political marketing and

professional campaign communications that have occurred over the last thirty years or so, these early British studies are now seriously dated. This in turn suggests the need for a systematic attempt to examine the effects of contemporary PEBs.

The major parties in the UK treat their broadcasts very seriously. PEBs represent the only opportunity to display television messages during the campaign that are unmediated by programme planners, producers, editors or potentially aggressive interviewers. The legal requirement that all five terrestrial channels must broadcast each party's PEB on the same day (although not simultaneously) means that most viewers, from the single-station devotee to the channel surfer, are aware that the PEB is being broadcast – even if a sizeable minority choose not to watch it. *Potentially,* PEBs can still reach the vast majority of the electorate. Despite the substantial proliferation of broadcasting channels available in Britain, it is estimated that the audience share for the television channels forced to carry PEBs remains at 80%, while the equivalent figure for radio stations is about 35% (Electoral Commission 2001). The 2001 British Election Study campaign panel survey found that 58% of the electorate saw at least one PEB during the campaign, and 37% saw PEBs from all three major parties, reflecting very similar estimates to those produced by commercial polling surveys commissioned by the Electoral Commission (MORI 2001). At the same time, ITC survey research found that during the campaign 57% of respondents claimed either to switch channels or to turn off when a PEB was broadcast (ITC 2001). Moreover, even if not viewed directly, secondary commentary on the contents of PEBs is often carried extensively in the daily press – the equivalent of US 'ad-watches'.

The simple and obvious task of television advertising is to persuade voters to take a more favourable view of the broadcasting party vis-à-vis its opponents. In principle,

rational political advertisers seek to *reinforce* the commitment of their existing

supporters, to *persuade* neutrals to view the party more sympathetically, and to *raise*

doubts in the minds of supporters of opposing parties about the likely performance of

their currently preferred party choice. PEBs attempt to achieve these objectives

through a mixture of *advocacy* and *attack*. Advocacy involves making a positive

appeal to voters. The party stresses its own record, in national, local or regional

government, in satisfying voters' demands. It emphasises its own vision and policies

for the future and indicates how these will contribute to meeting voters' continuing

needs and aspirations. Attack implies 'going negative'. It involves, *inter alia*,

criticising the record of the opposing party or parties; questioning the judgement,

experience and probity of opposing leaders; and generating fear about what the future

might hold if the opposing party or parties were in power.

In the UK, mixed advocacy-attack PEBs in the UK are relatively rare. Indeed, in the

2001 election campaign, all of the transmitted broadcasts were based either on

advocacy *or* attack. In order to consider the impact of PEBs on voters, we had

originally hoped to compare the effects of exposure to both attack and advocacy ads

broadcast by each of Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. In

practice, this proved impossible. Although Labour transmitted both attack and

advocacy PEBs, the Conservatives broadcast only attack ads while the Liberal

Democrats adopted an exclusively advocacy approach. As far as the Liberal

Democrats were concerned, therefore, we were able to assess only the effectiveness of

their advocacy approach. However, for the Conservatives, we attempted to assess

what the effects of an advocacy approach would have been, had they chosen to use

one, by exposing a group of our respondents to an advocacy broadcast that been made

by the shadow Secretary of State for Education in March 2001. The broadcast,

transmitted just before the official campaign began, was the same length as a PEB and was a statement of the Conservative Party's plans for education if they were successful in the next general election.

Before we state our specific hypotheses about the possible impact of exposure to PEBs, we need to introduce the dependent variable measures that we employ in our empirical analysis. Britain has an emerging 3-party system in its Westminster parliament. In the 2001 general election, the Liberal-Democrats received almost 18% of the popular vote and secured over 50 over the seats in the House of Commons. Analysing the consequences of exposure to PEBs, therefore, does not merely involve assessing voters' views of Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrat parties in isolation from each other. Voters who take a more (less) favourable of one party as a result of being exposed to a PEB implicitly take a less (more) favourable view of another in terms of electoral choice. In principle, any opinion changes that might result from exposure to PEBs involve three main *choice-sets*: Labour *versus* Conservative, Conservative *versus* Liberal-Democrat, and Labour *versus* Liberal-Democrat. Although the Labour *versus* Conservative choice-set is clearly the most important for the majority of UK voters, the other choice-sets are of increasing significance in British politics. Accordingly, in our empirical analysis we employ three separate scales as dependent variables. These measures were constructed in two stages.

In the first stage, for each party, we calculated a measure of 'party image'. We used 'party image' scores because of the need in experimental analysis to use multiple indicators of key concepts. The use of multiple indicators helps to insulate the analysis from random variations in subjects' responses to individual questionnaire items. In conducting our experiments we did not ask respondents' vote preferences in

both the pre-test and post-test. This was because we felt that, during the course of an experiment that lasted no more than one hour, it was not feasible to ask respondents on two separate occasions how they intended to vote in the forthcoming general election. However, we were able to ask our subjects, both before and after our experimental test exposures, about (1) their feelings towards each party leader, (2) their feelings towards each party, and (3) the likelihood that they would vote for each party. All of these items were measured on 0-10 point scales. Reliability tests showed that the three items scaled satisfactorily in both pre- and post-tests for all three parties, yielding Cronbach's alpha scores greater than 0.8 in every case. Pre- and post-test 'party image' scores for each party were calculated by summing the scores on these three items and dividing by 3.

The second stage of our dependent variable measure construction involved combining each pair of party image scores for both pre- and post-test scales. Thus, for example, the Labour *versus* Conservative pre-test scale was constructed by subtracting the Conservative party image scores from the Labour party image scores. This produces a 21-point 'LabCon' scale that varies from −10 (very positive image of the Conservatives) to +10 (very positive image of Labour). The post-test scale was produced in the same way. Equivalent pre- and post-test scales were also constructed for 'ConLib' (where +10 denotes a very positive Conservative image and −10 denotes a very positive Liberal Democrat image) and for 'LabLib' (where +10 denotes positive Labour and −10 positive Liberal Democrat).

(Table 1 about here)

The specific hypotheses that we test, together with their implications for pre-test to post-test changes in our LabCon, ConLib and LabLib scales, are outlined in Table 1. Our first set of hypotheses reflects the expectations of the rational politicians who

produce PEBs. Other things being equal, politicians believe that they can *persuade*

voters to take a more favourable view of their respective parties. They use advocacy

PEBs in order to increase the attractiveness of their own party (H_{1a}) and attack PEBs

to reduce the attractiveness of opponents (H_{1b}). If their efforts at persuasion are

successful, these two approaches should have 'symmetrical effects' in the sense that

they should have the same empirical implications for our choice-set scales. In

comparison with our control groups (discussed below), exposure to Labour's

advocacy or attack PEBs should lead to post-test increases in LabCon and LabLib

scores (implying a more favourable view of Labour relative to each of its main rivals).

Similarly, exposure to Conservative PEBs should reduce LabCon and increase

ConLib (implying, in both cases, relatively more sympathy for the Conservatives),

while exposure to the Liberal Democrat PEB should reduce both LabLib and ConLib

(implying increased relative sympathy for the Liberal Democrats).

Given the frequency with which politicians' aspirations are confounded, it would be

surprising if the 'simple persuasion hypothesis' embodied in H_1 applied universally.

Indeed, it has long been recognised that the effectiveness of political messages

depends both on the *political context* in which advertising is undertaken and on the

characteristics of different subgroups of the target population (Lazarsfeld, Berelson

and Gaudet, 1944; Klapper, 1960).

Hypothesis H_2 reflects the simple contextual point that in party-based electoral

contests, most voters are very familiar with the *advocacy* messages produced by the

major parties. The long campaign invariably begins well before the dissolution of

parliament. Politicians use legislative debates, formal speeches, policy launches, by-

elections, local and regional elections, and journalists' briefings throughout the

parliamentary cycle to influence press and television reporting. In these

circumstances, through constant repetition, the public becomes familiar with the arguments and styles of presentation that the parties espouse (Norris et al, 1999). Advocacy advertising is accordingly unlikely to benefit the two parties – Labour and the Conservatives – that receive the lion's share of media coverage throughout the long campaign, precisely because the marginal effect of exposure to one more advocacy message is likely to be negligible. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats – who tend to receive substantially less media coverage prior to the start of the official campaign – are likely to benefit from an advocacy approach. This suggests that the consequences of exposure to the Liberal Democrat Advocacy PEB should be non-trivial. Indeed, such exposure should reduce both ConLib and LabLib scores (implying increased sympathy for the Liberal Democrats).

Hypothesis H_3 refers to a second possible contextual effect – the potentially counterproductive character of attack broadcasting in party systems where confrontational party politics is endemic. Anyone who has watched a broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons will be familiar with what in contemporary British political journalism is often called 'yah-boo politics'. In Commons debates and question sessions, insults, asides and interjections are traded freely. MPs frequently jeer at the opposing side's speakers or talk when they are speaking so that they cannot be heard. Points are typically scored as much by embarrassing opponents as by serious and considered political argument. It would be surprising if this sort of combative party activity, reported on an almost daily basis on radio and television news, had no effect on the way that voters view 'negative' political messages. Indeed, it is entirely possible that, in the context of UK party politics, 'negative' attack PEBs could have precisely the opposite effect to that intended by their creators. Voters know that PEBs represent an opportunity for parties to present a positive

(advocacy) vision of their plans for government. Against a background of endemic yah-boo politics, many voters may react with irritation to 'yet another' negative onslaught on the opposition that consciously spurns an advocacy opportunity. In these circumstances, such voters may even be inclined to take a more *critical* view of the offending, sponsoring party and to view the *target* of the attack with a greater degree of sympathy. Although this reaction is unlikely among the partisans of the sponsoring party, it seems plausible to us to suppose that both 'neutral' voters and those who are partisans of other parties may well react in such a 'contrary' manner.

Our fourth hypothesis (H_4) provides a direct corollary to H_3. If, as H_3 suggests, Party X's attack PEB fuels a counterproductive response among both neutrals and the partisans of Parties Y and Z, X's attack may nonetheless serve to stiffen the resolve of *X's partisans*. H_4 accordingly suggests that Party X identifiers who are exposed to X's attack PEB will be reinforced in their dislike of rival parties. It is entirely possible, of course, that UK parties' primary aim in producing attack broadcasts is to strengthen the loyalty and commitment of existing supporters. However, the potential mobilising benefits among partisans implied by H_4 need to be set against the potential counterproductive reversals among neutrals and others that are implied by H_3. An assessment of the balance of costs and benefits of attack PEBs clearly requires an empirical evaluation of the impact of such broadcasts on voter opinion.

Finally, hypothesis H_5 concerns the extent to which voters think they can trust the messages conveyed in PEBs in general. Voters who generally trust these messages are clearly more likely to be persuaded to take a more sympathetic view of the advertising party and/or a less sympathetic view of its opponents than those who display low levels of trust. This again implies an interaction effect. To the extent that

respondents trust PEBs in general, exposure to Party X's PEB should be associated

with a pre- to post-test increase in Party X's image relative to its opponents.

2. The Experimental Design

There are clearly many ways of seeking to assess the effects on voters' perceptions of

exposure to political advertising. Panel survey designs, where the panel waves

straddle an election campaign offer one obvious approach. However, even with a

very tightly defined survey-based design, it is extraordinarily difficult to show that

any observed changes in preference result from exposure to the *particular* set of

messages being analysed – rather than from exposure to the multiplicity of *other*

campaign messages that are *not* being analysed (Hovland 1959; Iyengar and Simon

2000). The huge advantage of an experimental design is that respondents' views can

be ascertained immediately prior to exposure to a known message and then re-

assessed immediately afterwards. Provided that suitable controls are applied – in

particular, that subjects are randomly assigned to test and control groups – any change

in perceptions that are observed can be more directly linked to the exposure than is

the case with survey designs.

This said, experimental designs carry their own limitations. First, experimental

exposures are by definition artificial. We sought to reduce the artificiality of our

experimental settings by ensuring that our respondents watched PEBs in a relaxed

environment, in small groups of four or five. Second, many experiments are limited

because they rely upon small groups of student respondents and it is difficult to

generalise from these results to the general population. In contrast, this project used a

large cross-section of the public, involving some 919 participants selected by quota

sample, that was broadly representative of the Greater London electorate (see Table A1 in the Appendix). Table 2 compares the socio-demographic characteristics and key political attitudes of our respondents with those of the respondents to the 2001 British Election Study panel survey. As the table shows, with the exception of ethnicity (which should have been higher in our sample since around 20% of Londoners are from ethnic minorities), the profiles of the BES and experimental samples are very similar. This reinforces our confidence that our results have considerable relevance beyond the specific groups of subjects who participated in our experiments.

(Table 2 about here)

Our experiments involved administering a pre-test questionnaire to each respondent. Respondents were then randomly allocated to one of 14 test or control groups. The experiments, all 30 minutes in duration, involved watching a video compilation, reading compilations from newspaper articles or exploring party websites. The video compilations, including the PEBs, were configured to represent a 'typical' evening news programme during the campaign. We drew on stories recorded from all the main news programmes on the terrestrial channels in the three months prior to polling day. The videos were edited to follow the same format. This consisted of a 'sandwich', with ten minutes of identical, standard footage at the top and bottom of each programme and one of the different experimental video stimuli (news, sport, or a PEB) in the middle 'core'. Respondents were not told which media was being shown to which group, or even that different media were being used by different groups of respondents. Respondents were told that the experiments were concerned with 'selective perception' – how men and women, young and old people differed in their views of the media. After these various exposures, respondents completed a post-test

questionnaire. The entire process took about an hour to complete. The full details of the methodology, including the stimuli and questionnaires, are available at www.pippanorris.com.

Table 3 summarises the full range of experimental groups that we examined. In the analysis that we report here, we regard our PEB groups (N=239) as our *test groups*. As our *control group*, we combine the 'explicit' control group (N=91), who were shown stories about sport in the 'middle core' of their video, with the 'campaign learning' group (N=389), who were supplied with factual information about the campaign. These two groups had very similar profiles in terms of pre-and post-test responses to a wide range of attitudinal questions, including those about the political parties. Combining them both as our control group for estimation purposes substantially increases the number of cases that we can analyse and hence strengthens the robustness of our results.[1]

(Table 3 about here)

An important caveat

Throughout the foregoing discussion, and in the ensuing empirical analysis, we attempt to distinguish between the effects of attack and advocacy PEBs. It should be stressed that in so doing we are not in a position to follow the classic experimental design developed by Iyengar and Ansolabehere (1995). In that study, both positive and negative ads used the same presenters and focused on the same issues, arguments and personalities. In these circumstances, it was a relatively straightforward matter to attribute any test differences to the positive or negative character of the ads concerned. In our analysis, as described above, we used the actual PEBs that the

parties chose to broadcast in the 2001 UK general election. We are confident that any neutral observer would agree with us as to which of the PEBs we used represented an 'advocacy' approach and which represented an 'attack'. However, it must be acknowledged that the presenters, the personalities and the issues and arguments covered varied across the PEBs that we employed. (For details, see Table 3, note b). This obviously restricts our ability to determine definitively whether it is specifically the advocacy or attack character of a particular PEB *per se* that produces any observed effect on party-image – or whether it is the issue-focus, the presenter or something else. This does not mean, however, that we cannot draw *any* inferences about the likely effects of attack as opposed to advocacy PEBs *in 2001*. In our view, although any apparent observed attack or advocacy effect *could* derive from personality or issue-coverage differences in the PEBs to which our respondents were exposed, it is equally possible that they could indeed derive from genuine differences in the effects of attack as opposed to advocacy messages. With our limited experimental design, we cannot definitively establish advocacy *versus* attack causal effects. However, we can at least provide preliminary evidence for the idea that, in the UK at least, the two varieties of approach may in certain circumstances have different sorts of effect. It is in this spirit of providing preliminary supporting evidence for such differentials that our empirical results below are presented.

3. Model Specification and Empirical Findings

In order to assess whether the messages contained in the PEBs had any effect on our respondents' political views, we use a model specification that enables us to make a fair comparison of the pre-test to post-test changes in respondents' attitudes towards the parties across the test and control groups.

The model that we employ has four main components. First, following standard practice in experimental and 2-wave panel survey designs (Iyengar and Simon, 2000; Whiteley and Seyd, 1998), we use a lagged endogenous variable specification in which the post-test party image scores constitute the dependent variable and the pre-test party image scores appear as an independent variable on the right-hand-side of the equation. This specification implicitly models the change in pre- to post-test party image scores without artificially constraining the coefficient on the lagged dependent variable to unity. Second, the exposures to the five 'test' PEBs (Labour advocacy and attack; Conservative advocacy and attack; and Liberal Democrat advocacy) are regarded as independent interventions that allow us directly to test the rival claims of H_1 and H_2. Third, we include a series of interaction terms designed to capture the various claims, embodied in hypotheses H_3 to H_5, that certain groups of respondents will react distinctively to exposure to different sorts of PEB. These include interactions (a) for partisanship and exposure and (b) for trust in PEBs in general and exposure. Finally, we control for prior partisanship. Simply being involved in an experimental process that asks participants about their political attitudes, that then presents them with media messages that contain some political content, and that then, *inter alia*, again solicits their political views could in itself trigger a positive reinforcement of existing political preferences. In order to take account of this possible 'priming' effect, which could in principle have affected all of our respondents – not just those in our test groups, we include appropriate terms for partisanship. Our working assumption is that, other things being equal, Party X's partisans will be more likely to view Party X favourably and less likely to view its opponents favourably.[2]

Our formal model specification for assessing the effects of exposure to PEBs in the

Labour *versus* Conservative choice set is:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\text{LabCon}_{t2} \ = \ & a \ + \ b_1\text{LabCon}_{t1} \ + \ b_2\text{LabPartisan}_{t1} \ + \ b_3\text{ConPartisan}_{t1} \\
& + \ b_4\text{ConAdvocPeb} \ + \ b_5\text{ConAttackPeb} \\
& + \ b_6\text{LabAdvocPeb} + \ b_7\text{LabAttackPeb} \ + \ b_8\text{DemAdvocPeb} \\
& + \ b_9\text{ConPartisan*ConAdvocPeb} \ + \ b_{10}\text{ConPartisan*ConAttackPeb} \\
& + \ b_{11}\text{LabPartisan*LabAdvocPeb} \ + \ b_{12}\text{LabPartisan*LabAttackPeb} \\
& + \ b_{13}\text{ConAdvocPeb*TrustPebs} \ + \ b_{14}\text{ConAttackPeb*TrustPebs} \\
& + \ b_{15}\text{LabAdvocPeb*TrustPebs} \ + \ b_{16}\text{LabAttackPeb*TrustPebs} \\
& + \ e_i \qquad\qquad\qquad [1]
\end{aligned}
$$

where LabCon is a 21-point Labour *versus* Conservative party image scale as

described above; the subscript t1 refers to the pre-test, t2 to the post-test; b_2 and b_3

measure the effects of partisanship; b_4 to b_8 measure the simple effects of exposure to

PEBs as in H_1 and H_2; b_9 to b_{12} measure interaction effects between PEB exposure

and partisanship as in H_3 and H_4; b_{13} to b_{16} measure interactions between exposure

and trust in PEBs in general, as in H_5; and e_i is a random error term.

(Table 4 about here)

Table 4 reports the results of estimating [1] with our experimental data, together with

equivalent models for the Conservative *versus* Liberal Democrat (ConLib) and

Labour *versus* Liberal Democrat (LabLib) scales. Only those independent variables

that are relevant to each choice-set are included in the estimation. (For example, in

the LabCon model, only Labour Partisanship and Conservative Partisanship terms are

included; Liberal Democrat Partisanship is excluded). Estimation is by OLS. The

coefficients reported in the table need to be interpreted carefully since they refer to

movement along 21-point choice-set scales. Thus, for example, the b=-.10 in the

LabCon model for exposure the Conservative Advocacy PEB means that exposure

was associated with a 0.10 point movement away from Labour to Conservative –

though this change was not statistically significant. The b=+.36 for the same

exposure variable in the ConLib model means that exposure to the Conservative

Advocacy model was also associated with a 0.36 point movement away from the

Liberal Democrats to the Conservatives – though again, the change was not

statistically significant. The robustness of the estimates reported in Table 4 is

reinforced by the results shown in Table A2 in the Appendix. This latter table

provides 'reduced form' versions of the equations estimated in Table 4, with only

significant effects from Table 4 included in the specifications. All the effects remain

significant and the coefficient magnitudes are similar in both tables.

The results reported in Table 4 suggest, at best, only partial support for some of our

hypotheses and little or no support for others. Consider, first, the coefficients on the

simple PEB exposure terms (in the block headed 'H$_{1-3}$'). Looking at all three models,

it is evident that *of the ten estimated 'simple exposure' effects only one is statistically

significant at conventional levels.* This clearly contradicts the 'rational politician's

hypothesis', embodied in H$_1$, that exposure to a particular party's PEB increases

support for that party and reduces support for its rivals. H$_2$ fares a little better, but not

much. As predicted in H$_2$, *exposure to major parties' advocacy PEBs (i.e. to Labour

and Conservative advocacy PEBs) has no significant effect on voters' party image

scores.* However, contrary to H$_2$, the Liberal Democrats' advocacy PEB also fails to

exert a significant effect in either the ConLib or the LabLib models.

Even more seriously for H$_1$, however, the only significant effect in the entire simple

exposure 'block' of coefficients is the b=2.02 for exposure to the Conservative attack

PEB.[3] This indicates that, in comparison with the control group and holding other

relevant variables constant, *exposure to the Conservatives' attack PEB actually*

increased support for Labour by an average of 2 points on the 21-point LabCon scale.
This clearly provides support for H_3, which anticipates that 'going negative' in
conditions of endemic yah-boo politics risks increasing support for the target of the
attack. This pattern is replicated with regard to Labour's attack PEB, which
weakened Labour's average party image score by b=-.74, though this latter effect was
not statistically significant.

H_4 suggested that the partisans of a given party would be more likely to respond
positively to the PEBs of 'their' party. The results in the H_4 block in Table 4 do not
support this hypothesis. With only two exceptions, none of the coefficients in the H4
block in Table 4 is significant. The exceptions, however, are noteworthy. The first
exception is the significant negative coefficient on the interaction term between
Conservative partisanship and exposure to the Conservative attack PEB (b=-1.36).
The substantive implication of this coefficient is that Conservative identifiers, in
comparison with non-identifiers and other party identifiers, were significantly less
likely to downgrade their image of the Conservatives vis-à-vis Labour as a result of
exposure to the Conservative attack PEB (b = 2.02 - 1.36 = .66). However, the fact
that the overall effect remains positive (a relative improvement in *Labour's* image, as
a result of exposure, of b=.66) even for Conservative identifiers suggests that the
Conservatives failed to benefit at all from their attack PEB in 2001. The second
exception is the significant negative coefficient in the ConLib model for Conservative
partisans who were exposed to the Conservative advocacy PEB (b=-1.01). In contrast
to the stated hypotheses, Conservative partisans, when confronted with a Conservative
advocacy PEB, downgraded their image of the Conservative party *vis-a-vis* the
Liberal Democrats. Notwithstanding these exceptions, it is clear that H4 should be
rejected on the basis of the results here.

A slightly more consistent pattern of partial support is apparent in the H_5 block of Table 4. People who, in the pre-test, admitted to being more trusting of PEBs in general were likely to respond to the Labour and Conservative attack PEBs in more or less the way that party managers had presumably hoped they would. The interaction between Conservative attack exposure and 'trust in PEBs' produced both a significant reduction in Labour support vis-à-vis the Conservatives (b=-.48) and a significant increase in Conservative support vis-à-vis the Liberal Democrats (b=.27). Similarly, trust/Labour attack exposure interaction term produced a significant increase in Labour support relative to the Liberal Democrats (b=.29). Yet again, however, the results in the H5 block indicate that these effects were not universal. No such effects were observed in relation to any of the advocacy PEB/trust interactions.

Finally, the partisanship control variables in the equations behave more or less as anticipated. Labour and Conservative *partisanship* dispose those parties' respective adherents to take a more favourable of 'their' party's image – though this pattern does not extend to the Liberal Democrats, who have fewer partisans (only 9% of our sample) in any case.

All of this suggests that, *in general, party election broadcasts failed to exert very much effect on voters' party images in the 2001 UK general election.* There were certainly no simple, universal, PEB exposure effects that applied to all groups of voters. Given the widespread belief, embodied in hypotheses H1a and H1b, that political communications can exert quite powerful effects on voters' perceptions and political preferences, this absence of a generalised experimental effect clearly requires

some explanation. Although we are able only to speculate in this regard, we consider it likely that five main factors contributed to this lack of an overall effect. First, the experimental stimuli that we provided, although they replicated the PEBs exactly as they were shown on television, were of a relatively limited duration. It is entirely possible that PEB messages in general require several repetitions before they can significantly affect the perceptions of all groups of voters. Second, as anticipated in Hypothesis H2, the PEB messages to which we subjected our respondents were delivered after a 'long campaign' stretching back to the 1997 general election in which similar messages had already been repeatedly presented. Hypothesis H2 suggested that the familiarity thus engendered was likely to render advocacy PEBs ineffective for the two major parties but not for the Liberal Democrats. Our results suggest that even the Liberal Democrats failed to generate a more favourable party image in response to their advocacy broadcast. Perhaps they, too, suffered from being too familiar with voters – with the attendant indifference to their messages thus implied.

A third possible reason for the overall lack of general PEB exposure effects relates to partisanship. Partisanship is well known to act as an 'affective filter', which strongly colours the way in which new information is interpreted (Clarke et al, 2004). In these circumstances, it seems likely that our participants' prior partisan orientations affected the way in which they responded to our experimental stimuli. Indeed, the terms for Conservative and Labour partisanship are highly significant, and in the expected directions, in all three of the equations reported in Table 4. In short, when prior partisanship is controlled for, the party-images of voters in general are unlikely to be affected by exposure to PEBs. A fourth reason for the lack of general PEB exposure effects concerns the relatively low levels of trust in the reliability of PEBs as

sources of political information. We asked our respondents to rate the trustworthiness of several information sources on a 0-10 scale. Unsurprisingly, our respondents rated PEBs (mean score = 3.4) as being the least trustworthy source after television news (mean = 6.8), newspapers (4.8) and the internet (3.8). In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that respondents typically appeared to discount the information that they received in our PEB exposures. When considered in conjunction with the filtering effects of partisanship, it is easy to appreciate how mistrust of PEBs could reduce PEBs' effectiveness as tools of general persuasion. Finally, it is possible that the PEBs the parties chose to broadcast in 2001 were themselves simply ineffective vehicles for getting the respective parties positions across.

Any or all of these reasons could help to explain why the models reported in Table 4 produced such a dearth of generalised exposure effects in 2001. Collectively, they seem to us to provide a plausible account of the overall absence of systematic, 'simple' exposure effects. Nonetheless, the results shown in Table 4 also indicate that there were two 'partial' effects that merit emphasis. First, the Conservative 'attack' PEB significantly damaged the Conservatives in their race against Labour. Similarly, the Labour 'attack' PEB damaged Labour in its race against the Conservatives – though the effect was at the margins (p=.06) of statistical significance. These two effects are clearly consistent with Hypothesis H3, which suggests that attack PEBs can have counterproductive consequences for the attacking party. There is no evidence that these effects extended to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat or Labour-Liberal Democrat races. However, given that Labour and the Conservatives were attacking each other in their respective PEBs, there is no obvious reason why the Liberal Democrats should have been affected by the attacks one way or the other. Indeed, the empirical results reported in Table 4 (see the null effects for all the H1-3

terms in the both the ConLib and the LabLib columns of the table) indicate that they were not thus affected.

The second partial effect that bears emphasis concerns partisans' reactions to exposure to their 'own' party's PEBs. H4 anticipated that such exposures are likely to reinforce partisans' relative dislike of the opposing party. The Conservatives' attack PEB certainly seems to have had a less damaging effect among its own partisans than it had among non-identifiers and other partisans. However, exposure to the Conservatives' advocacy PEB also lead to its partisans downgrading their image of the Conservatives vis-à-vis the Liberal Democrats. This important ambiguity in the pattern of results reported here suggests that both attack and advocacy advertising in the 2001 UK general election, in certain restricted contexts, had the opposite effects to those that were intended.

Conclusions

Experimental evidence from the United States, where political advertising on television is ubiquitous, suggests that TV ads can have quite profound effects on voters' orientations towards politics and political parties. The Iyengar and Ansolabehere studies in the US, and the subsequent analyses that their seminal work has stimulated, are based on identical formats in which, for example, only the tone of the ad (positive or negative) is varied as the experimental stimulus. This enables the researchers to specify very precisely what produces any difference in response that might be observed across test/control groups. The research design that we have employed to study the effect of PEBs in the UK is much more restricted that employed in the most well known US studies. In the analysis reported here, our

critical experimental stimuli were the actual broadcasts produced by the parties themselves, in a situation – the 2001 UK general election – where political advertising on television is severely restricted. This enables us to draw fairly strong inferences about the effects that the various PEBs had, on various subgroups of the population, in the UK in 2001. However, it also means that we can less clear as to precisely what it was about the parties' various broadcasts that lead them to have the distinctive set of effects that we have described. In this sense, our analysis is important only to the extent that it shows how different sorts of PEB are capable of producing different sorts of exposure effects in a specific context. We cannot be certain that it was precisely the attack or advocacy character of a given PEB that produced this or that effect. However, we can legitimately claim to have provided preliminary evidence for the idea that advocacy and attack advertising may have had differential effects on UK voters' political perceptions in 2001.

Our overall findings can be summarised very simply. First, the PEBs shown on British television in 2001 had very little direct effect on voters' images of the three main political parties. The likely reasons for this derive, *inter alia*, from the filtering effects of partisanship and from the low levels of trust that most UK voters place in the information provided by PEBs. Second, attack PEBs in the UK can have the counterproductive of increasing relative support for the target of the attack. Our speculation is that this reflects widespread public disillusion in the UK with the sort of confrontational politics that characterises much of the broadcast proceedings of the House of Commons. This mechanism did not operate uniformly in 2001 but it clearly applied to the Conservatives' attack PEB and, rather less decisively, to Labour's attack PEB. Third, even advocacy PEBs can have damaging for a party's support among sub-groups of the population – witness the downgrading of the Conservatives'

image *vis-a-vis* the Liberal Democrats among Conservative partisans who were

exposed to the Tories' advocacy PEB. Given the general failure of any of the parties'

2001 PEBs to produce the image-enhancing results that the parties themselves

undoubtedly hoped for, party mangers in 2005/06 might consider foregoing the

dubious benefits that appear to be associated with the right to broadcast PEBs.

Further research, probably along the lines adopted by Iyengar and his colleagues in

the US, is clearly necessary in order to determine the precise extent to which negative

versus positive messages, as opposed to differential personality and issue-emphases,

'really' affect voters' political perceptions in future UK elections.

Table 1: Hypotheses Tested and Empirical Expectations for the Data

Hypothesis	Empirical Expectations
Simple Persuasion 'Symmetric Effects' Hypothesis H_{1a}: Advocacy PEBs directly increase Party X's support and therefore indirectly reduce support for X's opponents. H_{1b}: Attack PEBs directly reduce support for Party X's opponents and therefore indirectly increase X's support.	Exposure to Labour Advocacy or Attack PEB increases LabCon and LabLib scores Exposure to Conservative Advocacy or Attack PEB reduces LabCon and increase ConLib scores Exposure to Liberal Democrat Advocacy PEB reduces ConLib and LabLib scores
Asymmetric Effects of Advocacy PEBs for Major vs Minor Parties Hypothesis H_2: In conditions of continuous campaigning, advocacy messages by major parties pass unnoticed; only minor parties benefit from advocacy exposure.	Exposure to Labour or Conservative Advocacy PEBs has no effect on LabCon scores Exposure to Liberal Democrat Advocacy PEB reduces ConLib and LabLib scores
Counter-Productive Character of Attack PEBs Hypothesis H_3: In conditions of endemic confrontational party politics, negative advertising is likely to be counterproductive. By irritating neutral voters and partisans of other parties, it leads them to take a more critical view of the sponsoring party and to view the target of the attack more favourably.	Among non-identifiers and Conservative and Liberal-Democrat identifiers, exposure to Labour attack PEBs decreases LabCon and LabLib scores Among non-identifiers and Labour and Liberal-Democrat identifiers, exposure to Conservative attack PEBs increases LabCon and reduces ConLib scores
Exposure/Partisanship Interaction Hypothesis H_4 Party X identifiers who are exposed to Party X's Attack PEB will be reinforced in their dislike of opposing parties	Labour identifiers exposed to Labour Attack PEB will increase their LabCon scores Conservative identifiers exposed to Conservative Attack PEB will reduce their LabCon scores Same expectations for non-identifiers and partisans of other parties as predicted by H3.

(Table 1 continued) Hypothesis	Empirical Expectations
Exposure/Trust in PEBs Interaction Hypothesis H_6: To the extent that voters trust PEBs, they are more likely to be influenced by exposure to them	To the extent that voters trust PEBs, exposure to a Labour PEB increases LabCon and LabLib scores To the extent that voters trust PEBs, exposure to a Conservative PEB reduces LabCon and increase ConLib scores To the extent that voters trust PEBs, exposure to a Liberal Democrat PEB reduces ConLib and LabLib scores

LabCon refers to a 21-point Labour versus Conservatives 'party image' scale derived from separate 10-point Labour and Conservative 'party image' scales. The scale varies from +10 (very positive Labour image) to –10 (very positive Conservative image). **ConLib** refers to the equivalent scale for Conservative versus Liberal Democrat scores. The scale varies from +10 (very positive Conservative image) to –10 (very positive Liberal Democrat image). **LabLib** refers to the equivalent scale for Labour versus Liberal Democrat scores. The scale varies from +10 (very positive Labour image) to –10 (very positive Liberal Democrat image).

Table 2: Comparison between Core Experimental Measures and Equivalent Measures in the BES 2001 Campaign Panel

	BES Data		Experiments	
Continuous Variables	**Range**	**Mean**	**Range**	**Mean**
Pre-exposure liking for Conservative leader	0 to 10	3.99	0 to 10	3.69
Pre-exposure liking for Conservative Party	0 to 10	3.90	0 to 10	3.92
Pre-exposure probability of voting Conservative			0 to 10	3.74
Pre-exposure Conservative Party Image Score	0 to 10	3.96	0 to 10	3.79
Pre-exposure liking for Labour leader	0 to 10	5.49	0 to 10	5.24
Pre-exposure liking for Labour Party	0 to 10	5.27	0 to 10	5.37
Pre-exposure probability of voting Labour			0 to 10	5.39
Pre-exposure Labour Party Image Score	0 to 10	5.39	0 to 10	5.35
Pre-exposure liking for Lib Democrat leader	0 to 10	4.81	0 to 10	4.60
Pre-exposure liking for Liberal Democrat Party	0 to 10	4.97	0 to 10	4.30
Pre-exposure probability of voting Lib-Dem			0 to 10	3.57
Pre-exposure Lib-Dem Party Image Score	0 to 10	4.93	0 to 10	4.17
Dichotomous Variables	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Conservative Partisan	24.4	561	25.1	233
Labour Partisan	42.6	980	39.2	364
Liberal Democrat Partisan	9.2	213	9.5	88
Gender: Male	47.5	1095	54.1	503
Class: Middle Class (ABC1)	54.8	1262	56.9	529
Ethnicity: White	94.2	2169	79.5	739
Education: University graduate	15.9	367	21.4	199

Notes: British Election Study data N=2303; Experiments N=919

Table 3: Number of Participants in each Experimental Group

Experimental Group	Number of Participants
Campaign Learning Groups[a]	
Watch Television News	100
Read Broadsheet Newspapers	139
Read Tabloid Newspapers	73
Surf Party Websites	77
Party Election Broadcast Groups[b]	
Conservative Advocacy Broadcast	49
Conservative Attack Broadcast	47
Labour Advocacy Broadcast	46
Labour Attack Broadcast	46
Liberal Democrat Advocacy Broadcast	51
Positive/Negative Television News Groups	
Positive Conservative News	50
Negative Conservative News	50
Positive Labour News	50
Negative Labour News	50
Explicit Control Group – shown sport video	91
Total	919

[a] Each Learning Group was given a compiled set of stimuli containing the same factual information about the election campaign. For details, see Norris and Sanders, 2003 and www.pippanorris.com.

[b] The Conservative Party broadcast only 'attack' PEBs during the 2001 campaign. To simulate the effects of an 'advocacy' PEB, we used a Channel 4 Comment broadcast on Conservative education policy presented by Teresa May, the party's then Shadow Education Secretary, in March 2001. The Conservative 'attack' PEB focused on crime and fuel tax. Labour's 'advocacy' PEB described the Blair government's record on a range of key issues including the economy and public services. Labour's 'attack' PEB concentrated on the Conservatives' past economic record and warned of the risks to prosperity of their re-election. The Liberal Democrats' 'advocacy' PEB focused on the party's leader, Charles Kennedy. Transcripts of the PEBs are available at www.pippanorris.com.

Table 4: Models of Post-Test LabCon, ConLib and LabLib Choice-Set Scores

	LabCon		ConLib		LabLib	
	Coeff	*Std*	*Coeff*	*Std*	*Coeff*	*Std*
Pre-test LabCon score	**.90****	.11				
Pre-test ConLib score			**.94****	.02		
Pre-test LabLib score					**.90****	.02
Labour Partisan/not	**.47****	.18			**.38***	.18
Conservative Partisan/not	**-.90****	.20	**.78****	.19		
Liberal Democrat Partisan/not			.04	.22	-.16	.25
H_{1-3} Con Advocacy Exposure	-.10	.50	.36	.48		
Con Attack Exposure	**2.02****	.58	-.87	.56		
Lab Advocacy Exposure	.05	.41			-.19	.44
Lab Attack Exposure	-.74	.39			.69	.42
Lib Advocacy Exposure			-.39	.40	.47	.44
H_4 ConPartisan*Con Advocacy	.28	.49	**-1.01***	.48		
ConPartisan*Con Attack	**-1.36***	.61	.49	.59		
LabPartisan*Lab Advocacy	.11	.56			.48	.62
LabPartisan*Lab Attack	-.17	.55			.08	.59
LibPartisan* Lib Advocacy			-.66	.92	-.77	.99
H_5 Con Advocacy*Trust in PEBs	.06	.12	-.00	.11		
Con Attack*Trust in PEBs	**-.48****	.13	**.27***	.12		
Lab Advocacy*Trust in PEBs	.01	.10			.07	.11
Lab Attack*Trust in PEBs	.14	.10			**.29****	.11
Lib Advocacy*Trust in PEBs			-.07	.10	.08	.11
Constant	.06	.11	-.22**	.08	-.19	.10
Adjusted R2	.92		.88		.83	
St error of estimate	1.52		1.46		1.61	
N of cases	614		602		603	

* significant at .05; ** significant at .01 or better; significant coefficients in bold.

References

Ansolabehere, Stephen and Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarise the Electorate.* N.Y.: Free Press.

Blumler, Jay G. and Denis McQuail. 1968. *Television in Politics: Its Uses and Influence.* London: Faber & Faber.

David Butler and Donald Stokes. 1974. *Political Change in Britain: The Evolution of Electoral Choice* (2nd edition) London: Macmillan.

Butler, David and Dennis Kavanagh. 2001. *The British General Election of 2001.* London: Palgrave.

Election Commission. 2001. *Party Political Broadcasting Review 2001-2: Discussion Paper*. London: The Election Commission.

Harrison, Martin. 2001. 'Politics on the air.' In *The British General Election of 2001.* David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh. 2001. London: Palgrave.

Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice. 1985. *How Britain Votes*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, John Curtice. 1991. *Understanding Political Change: The British Voter 1964-1987.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, John Curtice with Bridget Taylor (eds). 1994. *Labour's Last Chance: The 1992 Election and Beyond.* Aldershot: Dartmouth.

Hodess, Robin, John C. Tedesco and Lynda Lee Kaid. 2000. 'British party election broadcasts: A Comparison of 1992 and 1997.' *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 5(4): 55-70.

Hovland, Carl I. 1959. 'Reconciling conflicting results from experimental and survey studies of attitude change.' *American Psychologist*. 14:10-23.

ITC .2001. *Election 2001: Viewers' Response to the Television Coverage.* London: Independent Television Commission.

Iyengar, Shanto and Adam F. Simon. 2000. 'New perspectives and evidence on political communication and campaign effects.' *Annual Review of Psychology*. 51: 149-169.

Kaid, Lynda Lee and Anne Johnston. 2001. *Videostyle in Presidential Campaigns: Style and Content of Televised Political Advertising.* Westport, CT: Praeger/Greenwood.

Klapper, Joseph. 1960. *The Effects of Mass Communication.* Glencoe, Ill. Free Press.

Lau, Richard R. and Lee Sigelman. 2000. 'Effectiveness of Political Advertising'. In *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*. Eds, James A.Thurber, Candice J. Nelson and David A Dulio. Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press.

Lau, Richard R. and Gerald Pomper. 2002. 'Effectiveness of negative campaigning in US senate elections.' *American Journal of Political Science,* 46 (1): 47-66

Lazarsfeld, Paul, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet. 1948. *The People's Choice. How the Voter Makes up his Mind in a Presidential Campaign.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Miller, William L. 1991. *Media and Voters: the Audience, Content, and Influence of Press and Television at the 1987 General Election.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

MORI (2001) *Attitudes to Voting and the Political Process (Phase 1, May 2001 and Phase 2, June 2001).* London: Electoral Commission.

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

Norris, Pippa and David Sanders. 2003. Message or Medium? Campaign Learning During the 2001 British General Election. *Political Communication.* 20: 233-262.

Pipkin, Robert. 2001. '*The Party Election Broadcasts: A sleeping giant or an old pair of shoes?'* Paper for the Annual Meeting of the PSA Elections, Public Opinion and Parties specialist group, Sussex.

Pfau, Michael and Henry C. Kinski. 1990. *Attack politics: strategy and defense*. New York: Praeger.

Sarlvik, Bo and Ivor Crewe. 1983. Decade of Dealignment. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Sanders, David and Pippa Norris. 1998. 'Does Negative News Matter? The Effects of Television News on Party Images in the 1997 British General Election.' *British Elections and Parties Yearbook*, 1998. Eds. Charles Pattie et al. London: Frank Cass.

Scammell, Margaret and Holli A. Semetko. 1995. 'Political Advertising on Television: The British Experience.' In *Political Advertising in Western Democracies*. Eds. Lynda Lee Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scammell, Margaret. 1995. *Designer Politics: How Elections are Won*. London: Macmillan.

Seymour-Ure, Colin. 1996. *The British Press and Broadcasting Since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tedesco, John. 2000. 'The Party Election Broadcast in Britain.' *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 5(4).

Thurber, James. (Ed). 2000. *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections.* Washington DC: Brookings Institute.

Trenaman, Joseph and Dennis McQuail. 1961. *Television and the Political Image*. London: Methuen.

West, Darrell M. 2001. *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2000.* Washington DC: CQ Press.

Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd. 1998. The dynamics of party activism in Britain. *British Journal of Political Science* 28: 113-38.

Table A1: Demographic Profile and 1997 Vote of Participants

	Experimental Participants June 2001	Greater London population 1991	Difference
GENDER			
Men	55.1		
Women	44.9		
TENURE			
Owner occupiers	60.9	58.2	+2.7
Rent privately	21.2	11.4	+9.8
Rent Housing Association	5.2	5.2	0
Rent LA/New Town	12.7	23.5	-10.8
ETHNICITY			
White	79.5	80.6	+0.2
Black	8.3	7.8	+0.5
Asian	8.5	7.4	+1.1
Other	1.4	4.1	-1.7
SOCIAL CLASS			
Middle class (ABC1)	58.1	59.1	-1.0
Working class (C2DE)	41.9	40.9	+1.0
1997 VOTE			
Lab 1997	54.8	53.1	+1.7
Con 1997	31.3	31.4	-0.1
LibDem 1997	13.7	15.0	-1.3

Note: Information about the Greater London population is derived from the 1991 Census. This limits strict comparability, for example with the growth of council house sales during the last decade. The 1997 vote for the three major parties is based on analysis of British Parliamentary Constituencies compared with recalled vote in the previous election, excluding non-voters and others. Quotas were employed by the fieldwork company in the initial selection of participants to match their background against the characteristics of Greater London population.

Table A2: Reduced Form Models of Post-Test LabCon, ConLib and LabLib Choice-Set Scores; Significant Predictors from Table 4 Only

		LabCon		ConLib		LabLib	
		Coeff	*Std*	*Coeff*	*Std*	*Coeff*	*Std*
	Pre-test LabCon score	**.90****	.02				
	Pre-test ConLib score			**.94****	.02		
	Pre-test LabLib score					**.91****	.02
	Labour Partisan/not	**.50****	.17			**.42***	.18
	Conservative Partisan/not	**-.84****	.20	**.74****	.18		
H_{1-3}	Con Attack Exposure	**2.03****	.58				
H_4	ConPartisan*Con Advocacy			-.63[a]	.34		
	ConPartisan*Con Attack	**-1.41***	.61				
H_5	Con Attack*Trust in PEBs	**-.48****	.13	**.13***	.06		
	Lab Attack*Trust in PEBs					**.17****	.06
	Constant	.04	.10	-.24**	.08	-.25*	.09
	Adjusted R2	.92		.88		.83	
	St error of estimate	1.51		1.46		1.61	
	N of cases	615		603		603	

* significant at .05; ** significant at .01 or better; [a] significant at .07; conventionally significant coefficients in bold.

Endnotes

[1] The statistical results that result from using only the N=91explicit control group are similar to those reported here. However, with less degrees of freedom involved in the statistical estimation, the results are not as robust as with those with the larger N=389 control group used here. We *exclude* the 'positive/negative television news' group shown in Table 3 from our analysis here, since these respondents were given information that explicitly presented the various parties in either a favourable or an unfavourable light. To have included these groups in our analysis here would clearly have risked contaminating our control group with precisely the sort of effects that we were explicitly trying to assess in our PEB test groups.

[2] The specific expectations that we have for the effects of partisanship are as follows:
Pre-test Labour Partisan/not: Increases LabCon and LabLib scores;
Pre-test Conservative Partisan/not: Increases ConLib score; reduces LabCon score;
Pre-test Liberal Democrat Partisan/not: Reduces ConLib and LabLib scores.
In order to avoid burdening the reader with an unnecessary number of null hypotheses and null effects we do not report here the effects of controlling for respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, class, ethnicity and education), levels of political interest, and television-watching habits. Adding terms for these variables to the reported equations makes no substantial difference to the results reported here. Age, gender, ethnicity, class and education have all been associated, to varying degrees, with patterns of party support in previous studies of UK voting (Butler and Stokes, 1974; Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983; Heath et al, 1985, 1991 and 1994). However, there is no reason to suppose that these variables should be systematically linked to changes in party image scores simply as a result of our respondents' participation in our experiments. We include them as controls simply to ensure that our results are not biased by their omission.

[3] Strictly, of course, as discussed below, even this is not a 'simple exposure' effect. The inclusion of interaction terms in the specification means that this coefficient refers to the 'baseline' group of respondents whose reactions are not specifically modelled in the interaction terms.