Shaping the Vote Decision and the Outcome?
The British Conservative Party's 2015 Campaign on the Economy

Jane Green, Will Jennings, Jon Mellon
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“It was logical, it built on our strengths of economic competence and strong leadership and so we stuck to it.”

(Peter Dominiczak, Telegraph, 15 May 2015)
Data

• Daily data on the campaign statements of the major parties – manually coded to issue categories.

• Daily data on media content analysis (front pages).

• Daily BES data on party issue handling, important issues, and vote choices (N ≈ 1000 per day, for each day of the short campaign).
Labour's plan to give generation rent a better

The next Labour government will introduce legislation in its first Queen's Speech to

Labour today issues a fresh challenge over tuition fees rise

Labour issues new challenge to Cameron and Clegg over tuition fees rise

Ed Miliband tomorrow (Sunday) announces Labour's plan to help working people who rent privately.

Labour's plan to give generation rent a better

and more secure future

Lib Dems broke their promise not to raise VAT on families and pensioners and backed the Tory tax cut for millionaires.

Lib Dem claims over

Chris Leslie, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, responding to Lib Dem claims over
Labour Issue Agenda

Issues in Labour Press Releases
- Economy
- Election outcome
- NHS
- All other
THE ONLY WAY ED MILIBAND CAN GET INTO POWER

VOTE CONSERVATIVE FOR A STABLE GOVERNMENT AND A STRONG ECONOMY

Clegg opens the door to Miliband government backed by SNP

You can’t vote Lib Dem this time and expect to get David Cameron as PM.

Just 23 more seats for the Conservatives will deliver a stable Government and a strong economy - with David Cameron as your Prime Minister.

But Labour wrecking our economy is no laughing matter. Vote Conservative.
Conservative Issue Agenda

Issues in Conservative press releases
- Economy
- Election outcome
- NHS
- All other

Number of releases

Date
26mar2015 09apr2015 23apr2015 07may2015
Media (front pages) issue agenda

Date

Economy
Election outcome
NHS
All other
As far as you’re concerned, what is the SINGLE MOST important issue facing the country at the present time?

- (Please write in)
- None
- Don’t know

- Machine learning algorithm (SVM) fitted to 46,758 manually coded examples from the 2010 BES
- Supplemented with manual coding of the 100 most common new text examples
- Applied to 133,917 new MII responses from the six waves of the BES
Expressed issue salience

![Graph showing expressed issue salience over time with various topics including Economy, Immigration, NHS, Election outcome, and Social Inequalities.](image-url)
Issue handling

Earlier you said that the single most important issue facing the country was the economy. How well do you think that each of the parties is able to handle that issue?
Ratings of Conservatives and Labour if most important issue = economy

Conservative Party
Labour Party
Examining the relationship between economic handling and vote choice

• Run a logistic regression predicting Conservative vote choice on each day of the campaign

• Key predictors:
  – Most important issue is economy
  – Rating of Conservatives on MII
  – Rating of Conservatives on MII * MII economy

• Compare marginal effect of Con rating on MII for voters who see the economy as MII versus seeing other issues as MII
Marginal Effect of Economic v Other issues on Conservative vote choice
Marginal Effect of Economic v Other issues on Labour vote choice
Preliminary Conclusions

• Lack of support for a salience effect, a handling effect, or a priming/framing effect.

• If salience/issue ownership (selective emphasis) strategies work, they may do so in ways thus far unspecified.

• If there are direct campaign effects on issues, they didn’t happen in the short campaign.

• Possibility that Conservatives won the election and made their vote choice about the economy long before the short campaign.
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Vote intention trends

Vote intention

Conservative Party
Labour Party
Issue Campaign Effects?

Party campaigns

Media mentions

Exogenous events

Pre-campaign effects
Issue Campaign Effects?

- Party campaigns
- Media mentions
- Exogenous events

Expressed salience

Issue rating

Pre-campaign effects
Issue Campaign Effects?

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Issue rating
Issue Campaign Effects?

- Party campaigns
- Media mentions
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- Expressed salience

Pre-campaign effects
Issue rating
Observed importance
Issue Campaign Effects?

- Party campaigns
  - Media mentions
    - Exogenous events
      - Pre-campaign effects
        - Issue rating
          - Observed importance
            - Expressed salience
              - Media mentions
                - Party campaigns
Issue Campaign Effects?

- Party campaigns
- Media mentions
- Exogenous events

Priming/Framing

Expressed salience

Pre-campaign effects

Issue rating

Observed importance
Leader effects
Effect of issues on switching from UKIP to Conservatives (June 2014-May)