

Learning and Voting in Britain: Insights from the Deliberative Poll*

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The Deliberative Polling project headquartered at the University of Texas explores what random samples of ordinary citizens would think and do about politics if they learned, thought, and deliberated more about the issues and choices involved. There have so far been five national Deliberative Polls in Britain, as well as one national one and six regional ones in the U.S. (see Fishkin xxxx, xxxx; Fishkin and Luskin 1998; Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell 1997; Luskin and Fishkin 1997).

The original idea was to influence the American presidential nomination process by providing a more deliberative and representative starting-point than the New Hampshire primary or Iowa caucuses. The country in microcosm would recommend candidates to the country at large, based on more information than voters customarily enjoy and more reflection and discussion than they customarily engage in (Fishkin xxxx). The one national Deliberative Poll in the U.S. to date, the National Issues Convention (NIC) of January, 1996, captured part of this intent by focusing on campaign issues but did not specifically address or measure voting intention. The aspiration of gauging the effects of greater information, thought, and discussion on votes as well as opinions thus remained unfulfilled.

A little over a year later, however, we did finally mount a Deliberative Poll centering on electoral choice, this in connection with the British General Election of May 1, 1997. The weekend before the election, a random sample of the British electorate was gathered to the Granada Television Studio in Manchester, given a chance to consider some of the key economic issues in the General Election campaign then entering its final days, and, at the end, polled on voting intention. The results were broadcast by Channel Four television in a two-hour programme Sunday, April 28.

Although other Deliberative Polls had produced notable shifts in policy preferences, we wondered whether this Deliberative Poll would alter many intended votes. Quite plausibly party identification or reactions to the Prime Ministerial candidates as people would root many participants to their choices. We need not have fretted. As will be seen, the deliberative experience produced sizable shifts in vote intentions—and, apparently, votes—as well as in many of the perceptions and opinions behind them.

Design

Deliberative Polling is not only an effort to improve the public dialogue but also a quasi-experiment capable of shedding light on the effects of political information, thought, and discussion on political views and behaviors. We draw a probability sample, gauge their opinions by some combination of interview and questionnaire, invite them to attend the on-site deliberations, send them carefully balanced briefing materials, and ask those who attend the same questions as at the outset.

In the General Election Deliberative Poll, we began with an area probability sample drawn and interviewed by National Centre for Social Research (SCPR), the independent research institute responsible for the British Election Studies. The sample consisted of 1,891 named respondents randomly drawn from the electoral registers for ninety randomly drawn constituencies in England, Scotland, and Wales. Of these 1,891, 1,210 were interviewed, for an initial response or interview rate of roughly 64%.

The interview sandwiched a self-completion questionnaire, completed with the interviewer still present, both to ensure completion and to answer questions. At the end, all interviewees were invited to Manchester for the on-site deliberations, planned for the weekend before the General Election. They were offered an honorarium of fifty pounds, plus all expenses, including transportation, hotel, and meals.

We hit one fairly literal roadblock when terrorist threats reportedly aimed at disrupting the campaign shut the motorways on the Friday of the deliberative weekend, just when the participants were traveling—by coach—to Manchester. After an anxious interval awaiting the coaches, we were relieved to count 276 participants, making for a participation rate of $276/1,210 = 22.8\%$ and thus an overall response rate of 14.6%.

These rates are noticeably lower than for previous Deliberative Polls (though not than many comparably calculated response rates for media polls). The overall response rate for the NIC was in the mid-thirties; those for other British national Deliberative Polls have been in the low-to-mid-twenties (see Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell 1997; Luskin and Fishkin 1998). One reason we wound up with a lower than usual percentage of the named respondents was that SCPR's initial response rate was lower than its usual low-to-mid-seventies level, although this observation merely pushes part of the question back a stage. Another reason was probably the longer than usual delay between the initial interview and recruitment (in January) and the deliberative weekend (April 26-28). We had little choice about this, as we needed to be ready to stage the deliberations just before an election that could have been called any time during that period.

The participants arrived in time for dinner Friday evening and left just after lunch on Sunday. The bulk of the deliberations took place in 15 randomly assigned small groups of 12-15 participants apiece. The groups were moderated by experienced focus group leaders specially trained for the event.

The remainder of the business portion of the weekend was mainly given over to plenary question-and-answer sessions with two panels of prominent economic policy experts and one panel consisting of the three candidates for Chancellor of the Exchequer: Kenneth Clarke (Conservative), Gordon Brown (Labour) and Malcolm Bruce (Liberal Democrat). The two expert panels each consisted of one expert associated with each of the three main parties plus one independent expert.

Considered as quasi-experiment, this General Election Deliberative Poll was one of the strongest designs in the series so far. For the most central dependent variables, vote intention and vote, a host of media polls and the election returns afford natural control groups (of a separate time 1-time 2 sort). In addition, we placed a handful of our questions about underlying attitudinal variables on Gallup polls (with RDD samples) in January and just after the deliberations in April.

It is worth noting explicitly that the “treatment” in the Deliberative Poll as quasi-experiment is not confined to the deliberative weekend. It begins with the invitation to participate at the end of the initial interview. From that moment, those who accept know they will be attending a nationally televised weekend of discussions about the election and economic issues involved in it. Many begin learning, thinking, and deliberating with friends, family, and coworkers long before the weekend, just off-site (and out of sight). Causally as well as observationally, therefore, “time 1” here is the initial interview.

Representativeness

Note: There will be some analysis of the weekend sample’s representativeness (the first rushes on which looked good at the time).

Vote Intentions and Votes

Coming into the 1997 General Elections, the Conservative party had governed for sixteen years. The latter portions of that long reign had been marked by economic downturn, a string of financial and sexual scandals, and a general public longing for change. In the very last year or so, the economy had begun climbing back up, according to the statistics, but much as in the U.S. during the last days of George Bush, not many voters had yet got much sense of improvement. Accordingly, the polls had for quite some time been forecasting a Labour victory in the next election.

In the event, the election was a parliamentary landslide, with Labour winning xx of xx seats. The Liberal Democrats carried xx seats, more than double their number in the previous Parliament and their largest representation since the time of Lloyd George. The Conservatives were left with only xx. The distribution of popular votes was 44.3% for Labour, 31.5% for the Conservatives, and 17.2% for the Liberal Democrats. For the Tories, this was their lowest share of the vote in this century. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, showed impressive gains, achieving increases of 20 percent in seats where they were competitive and thus made a serious effort. (They focused on only about 50 seats.)

Among our participants, the January distribution of vote intentions was quite similar both to contemporaneous poll results and to the May 1 election returns. Of those who had some intention of voting for a particular party in both January and April, the January percentages intending to vote Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat were roughly 29%, 52%, and 13%, respectively, as shown in the column margins of Table 1a. Post-deliberation, however, those percentages had changed substantially, as can be seen from the column margins of Table 1b. The percentages intending to vote Conservative and Labour had both fallen by about 8%, from 29% to 21% from 52% to 44%, respectively.

(Table 1 about here)

The percentage intending to vote Liberal Democrat, on the other hand, had zoomed from 13% to 33%. If the franchise had been confined to participants in the Deliberative Poll, the Liberal Democrats would have come in a relatively close second to Labour in the distribution of votes.

The interiors of Tables 1a and 1b give more detail about the traffic of voters among parties. Essentially every one intending to vote Liberal Democrat at time 1 still intended doing so at time 2. but the Tories held on to only about two-thirds of their time 1 vote intentions, losing about 9% to Labour and about 23% to the Liberal Democrats, while Labour held on to only three-quarters of theirs, with almost all of the defectors going over to the Liberal Democrats.

One may reasonably wonder how far the vote intentions expressed at the end of the deliberative weekend resemble those expressed in ordinary polls, which at least in the aggregate, and sufficiently close to the election, do usually seem to resemble the actual distribution of votes quite closely (the 1992 British polling debacle aside).¹ Perhaps in the intensity of the moment, our participants lose sight of strategic considerations that would influence their actual votes. Perhaps, therefore, the Liberal Democratic gains would melt away in the voting booth. So far as we can tell this did not happen. Indeed, slightly the reverse. Immediately after the election, we recontacted our participants and asked them whether and how they had in fact voted. The results, crossed with post-deliberation vote intention, are shown in Table 1b. Not only did the Liberal Democrats hold on to their gains as of the end of the deliberative weekend, they shaved another few net percent away from each of the other two major parties. In actual (self-reported) vote, the Liberal Democrats trailed Labour by only 42% to 37%, while more than doubling the Tories' 18%.

Feelings toward the Parties

These are very striking results. Why did our participants move so strongly toward the Liberal Democrats? A very proximate explanation—too proximate to be very satisfying—is that they came to like them better. Better than they had, better even than the other parties, as revealed by a series of questions about how the respondents felt

about each party on a five-point scale from “strongly in favour” (= 5) to “strongly against” (= 1).

As Table 2 shows, the mean rating of the Conservatives slipped from an already chilly 2.53 to a still slightly chillier 2.40. The deliberations seemed to remind participants of

(Table 2 about here)

their global disaffection with the Tories' long innings. Labour's mean rating showed no significant change, starting and ending roughly at a quite a warm 3.4.² Most strikingly, however, the Liberal Democrats' mean rating shot up from near-perfect neutrality at 2.94 to great warmth at 3.78. By the end of the deliberative weekend, in fact, they had moved ahead of Labour in voters' affections, if not quite their intended votes.³

Policy Attitudes

A more interesting explanation lies in the participants' perceptions of their distances from the parties in a policy space. Their own attitudes may have moved toward their perceptions of the Liberal Democrats' positions, or vice versa.

One set of items is particularly relevant. On four issues, we asked our respondents to locate themselves and each of the three major parties on ANES-style bipolar seven-point scales. These concerned redistribution (the government's doing nothing vs. trying much harder to make incomes more equal), taxes and services (spending less on services to cut taxes vs. spending more on services even if it means putting up taxes), the minimum wage (definitely no vs. definitely yes), and the Britain's stance toward the EU (keep distance vs. unite fully). In each case, the scale is 1-7, with 1 corresponding to the first-mentioned pole.

We also have measures of the participants' attitudes on several other policy items, in other formats. Table 3 displays the lot. In all cases, the scoring is in the direction of agreement with the proposition in the variable label. In other Deliberative Polls we have

(Table 3 about here)

found the deliberative experience to produce statistically and substantively significant net attitude change on substantial proportions of our policy items. This General Election Deliberative Poll is no exception. Here deliberative experience produced statistically significant change on 7 of 9 policy items.

In particular, the participants came to agree more strongly that “Government should try much harder to make incomes in Britain more equal,” that “Britain should do more to unite fully with European Union,” and that people earning around 50,000 pounds a year more should pay higher income tax. They came to disagree more strongly that “Government should definitely introduce a minimum wage,” that Britain is overtaxed compared to the rest of the E.U., that “compared with other countries in the E.U., the

British government spends too little on public services like health education,” and that Britain would “lose too much control over its own economic policy” by giving up its own currency.⁴ The largest movements occurred on the items concerning Britain’s role in the E.U.

With a couple of exceptions, these changes are in the direction of the Liberal Democrats’ positions. The Liberal Democrats have very clearly favored redistribution, a minimum wage, higher taxes to pay for equal or greater services (while avoiding deficits), and greater integration with Europe. The two shifts away from these positions were the increased disagreement with the proposal that Government introduce a minimum wage and the claim that the British government spends too little on public services.

Of course the Liberal Democratic positions toward which the participants were moving were also Labour positions, so these changes of attitude are undoubtedly not the whole story. Yet it should also be noted that the Liberal Democratic positions and taxes versus spending and on full unity with the E.U. have lately been much stronger—further out from the center—than Labour’s, and again that the largest attitude changes concerned Britain’s role in the E.U. In all, it seems reasonable, therefore, to infer that these changes in policy attitude account for some of the movement toward the Liberal Democrats.

Perceptions of the Parties’ Positions

The rest of the story (at this level) undoubtedly has to do with perceptions. To some considerable extent, the movement toward the Liberal Democrats seems to have been driven by learning. By the end of the deliberative weekend, the participants knew much more about where the Liberal Democrats stood on policy issues (and plainly liked what they saw). One sign of this lies in the proportions who confessed they didn’t know where to put them on our four seven-point issue scales. These percentages are quite low and unchanging for both Labour and the Conservatives. Both before and after deliberation they run roughly 4-6% on three of the issues, roughly 10-12% on the fourth (full unity with the E.U.). The Liberal Democrats are another story. The pre-deliberation don’t-know percentages range from 16 to 22% (with the E.U. item again the highest, but here
(Table 4 about here)

only marginally so). Post-deliberation, they decline to 6-10%, scarcely higher than those for Labour and the Conservatives. In every case, the $t_2 - t_1$ decline is massively significant. These results are displayed in Table 4.

Another, more indirect bit of evidence lies in the proportions of respondents placing the parties at the midpoints of these same issue scales. To some extent these represent genuine (and in some cases accurate) perceptions of centrality; in others, however, the midpoint is merely a refuge for those who might more candidly have admitted that they didn’t know (Converse xxxx; Luskin xxxx). In every case, the fraction of the participant

sample placing the Liberal Democrats at the midpoint drops sharply and significantly, by 9-12%. The only other significant change of this sort involves Labour, who are placed significantly *more* often at the midpoint following deliberation, which was probably also a reflection of learning, in this case on the part of participants who had not previously twigged to Labour's newfound moderation under Blair.

Perhaps the most impressive evidence, however, comes from the mean locations attributed to the Liberal Democrats on these scales. In the aggregate, the participants have all three parties on what would conventionally be regarded as the correct bandwidth, even at time 1. The Conservatives were seen as opposing redistribution and the minimum wage and roughly neutral on taxing and spending and full unity with the E.U. (which was in the last case undoubtedly accurate averaging across the party, even though there was a distinctly bimodal distribution within it.) Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats were seen as favoring redistribution, greater services over lower taxes, the minimum wage, and (mildly) full unity with the E.U. At this very broad level—support versus neutrality versus opposition—there was no real change in the views attributed to any of the parties.

In terms of actual mean locations, however, there were some very large changes, mostly involving the Liberal Democrats. Perceptions of the Conservatives changed significantly only on the minimum wage, where they came to be seen as still more opposed; those of Labour only on full unity with the E.U., where they came to be seen as still more favorable. The views attributed to the Liberal Democrats, in contrast, changed significantly on three of the four issues (and didn't miss doing so by all that much on the fourth). They came to be seen as much more in favor of redistribution, greater services over lower taxes, and full unity with the E.U. These changes narrowed the gap between their mean perceived position and Labour's on redistribution and widened it on full unity with the E.U. On taxes and spending, the mean position attributed to the Liberal Democrats leapfrogged that attributed to Labour, which was to the greater services side of the Liberal Democrats' position at time 1 but to the lower taxes side of it at time 2.

Since all these changes in perceptions of the Liberal Democrats' positions vis-à-vis Labour's were in keeping with the consensus of informed opinion, we take them as strong evidence that many of our participants were learning something about the Liberal Democrats' positions. The attitudinal data in preceding section suggest they must have largely liked what they saw.

Policy Distances

The respondent's own policy positions and his or her perceptions of the parties' positions may be and customarily are combined in proximity measures, both issue-by-issue and overall. Table 5 presents the mean absolute differences between the respondent's

(Table 5 about here)

position and his or her perception of each parties' position on each of the four issues on which we have this information, followed by the mean Euclidean distance from each party in the four-dimensional policy space.

Even at time 1, the Conservatives were substantially more distant, both issue by issue and overall, from the average voter than was either of the other two parties. This was slightly less true of full unity with the E.U., where the Conservatives were only about one-and-a-third times as distant from the average voter as was Labour or the Liberal Democrats, than of the other three issues, where they were roughly twice as distant, but was true even there.

Over the course of the deliberative period, the average respondent came to see himself as significantly closer to the Liberal Democrats on redistribution, to Labour on taxing versus spending, and to all three parties (!) on full unity with the E.U. (Compare Table 3: there was massive movement toward the full unity position, with the mean respondent's position crossing from distinct opposition to distinct support.) Overall, too, the mean Euclidean distances from all three parties declined. The convergence with the Liberal Democrats, slightly the greatest, was significant at the .05 level.

Retrospective Judgments

Impressionistically, the public's view of "the nature of the times," in Campbell et al.'s (1960) phrase, heading into the 1997 elections was pretty sour. But the Conservatives' decline in the participants' affections and voting intentions does not seem to have stemmed heavily from increases in any specific discontent of this sort that we measured because there wasn't much increase.⁵

We posed six retrospective items, all on five point scales. The first asked about the trend British economy since the last general election in 1992, offering responses ranging from its having got a lot stronger to its having got a lot weaker. The remaining five asked about the rate of inflation, the level of unemployment, the overall level of taxes, the quality of the National Health Service, and the standard of education, offering responses ranging from their having gone up a lot to their having gone down a lot.

As Table 6 shows, three of the changes in mean assessment over the deliberative interval were statistically significant, but two of these three were changes that ought to

(Table 6 about here)

have benefited the Tories as the party in power. The participants emerged seeing the standard of education as having declined more but the economy as having improved more and inflation as having declined further than they did at the outset. We may speculate that by this point, the participants, like voters outside our experiment, were so sick of the

Tories that they were disinclined to give them much credit for good or improving conditions.

Forecasts of Party Performance

We also asked for the corresponding prospective assessments—of the strength of the economy, of the inflation unemployment, and tax rates, and of the states of education and health care—conditional first on a Labour victory, then on a Conservative victory. In several respects, the participants' forecasts given a Labour victory grew more pleasing. The mean forecast of the strength of the economy under Labour improved (crossing from the negative to the positive side of the scale). The mean perceived likelihood that a Labour government would raise taxes, already to the unlikely side of the midpoint, became more unlikely. The forecast quality of health care, to the negative side of the midpoint at time 1 moves closer to (though not beyond) it at time 2. See Table 2.

Clearly, if we had anticipated the magnitude of the shifts in votes and affection toward the Liberal Democrats, we should have posed these items about them as well. Perhaps the most interesting result in this portion of Table 2, however, is concerns the one item, that was asked, in slightly different form, about the Liberal Democrats. Concerned with the economy's performance if the Liberal Democrats formed part of the next government, it showed the largest time1-time 2 change of all, with the participants becoming significantly more likely to think that the economy would be much better off with the Liberal Democrats sharing power.

Information

We asked three pure factual items, all in true-false form, scored 1 for correct response and 0 otherwise. All were geared to the economic thrust of the discussion (and the rest of the questionnaire). The true-false statements were that “prices have been rising by less than five percent a year over the past few years” (true), that “interest rates are decided by the Bank of England” (false), and that “unemployment in Britain is higher than in Germany” (false).

All three items show information gains. By the end of the weekend, 7% more of the participants knew that prices *had* been rising by less than five percent a year over the past few years, 15% more knew that unemployment in Britain was *not* higher than in Germany, and 21% more knew that interest rates are *not* decided by the Bank of England. The average information gain, across the three items, was 14%. By a one-tailed test, appropriate here, given the expectation that any net change will be positive, the gains on all three items are significant at the .05 level, as is the 14% gain on the summary index counting the proportion of items answered correctly.

Other information items can be crafted from the respondent's placements of the parties on our four seven-point issue scales (as in Luskin 1987 and Zaller 1991). As we have argued elsewhere, this is particularly vital information. Democratic citizens may be able to perform their citizenly duties quite adequately without knowing much about how interest rates are set but can hardly do so without knowing where the major parties stand on the issues of the day (Fishkin and Luskin 1996, Luskin 1998).

It is difficult to say precisely what positions the parties actually occupy but much easier to say where they stand relative to one another. Our a priori sense was that Labour was most in favor of redistribution and introducing a minimum wage, followed in both cases by the Liberal Democrats, while the Liberal Democrats were most in favor of trading off lower taxes for greater services and for uniting fully with the E.U., followed in both cases by Labour.⁶

As it turns out, these judgments are seconded in absolutely every respect by the mean time 1 placements by the 44 participants with perfect scores on the three purely factual items at time 1. Table 7 shows the mean placements by these relatively well informed
(Table 7 about here)
respondents. Not only do the means confirm our a priori ordering, but every difference is statistically significant at the .05 level (by a one-tailed test).

For each item, then, there is what may be taken as a single correct ordering of the parties, one on which most informed observers would agree. If we denote Labour's position by L, the Conservatives' by C, the Liberal Democrats' by D, and the order of agreement with given propositions by inequality signs, we have $D > L > C$ for taxing versus spending and full unity with the E.U. and $L > D > C$ for redistribution and introducing a minimum wage. A given respondent's party placements can then be cast as three ordered pairs, all, two, one, or none of which may be correctly ordered.⁷

Table 8 shows the mean proportion of correctly ordered party-pairs for each item and the overall mean proportion of correctly ordered party-pairs across the four items, both
(Table 8 about here)
before and after deliberation. On all four issues but redistribution, the participants increased their knowledge of the parties' positions significantly in both statistical substantive senses. The increases were 6% for the minimum wage and full unity with the E.U. and 17% for taxes versus spending. Averaging across items, the percentage of party-pairs ordered correctly rose by 7%.

Civic Attitudes and Participation

Finally, we may consider how far the deliberative experience made the participants into better citizens in other ways: how far it made them more interested, efficacious, tolerant, participatory. We asked them whether they had political opinions worth listening to, how interested they were in politics generally, how far they agreed that democracy works in Britain, what their likelihood of voting in the impending election was (on a seven-point scale from “definitely will” to “definitely will not”), and how far they “feared for the future” if Labour or the Conservatives won. This last pair of items was intended to gauge something like respect for the opposition.

Table 9 shows some but limited effects in this domain. The percentage fearing for the future if the Conservatives win actually went *up*, not what we expected in composing this (Table 9 about here) question. The mean likelihood of voting and sense of having political opinions worth listening to also increased.

Regarding turnout, it may be interesting to focus on those who said they would definitely vote. At the time the initial interview, 72.8% of our participants indicated they would definitely vote. By the end of the deliberative weekend, that percentage had risen to 85.8%. In the event, moreover, nearly everyone voted (to go by self-reports). When we called just after the election, 95.3% of our participants reported having done so.

Conclusions

Despite *ex ante* doubts on our and others’ parts, the General Election Deliberative Poll produced sizable shifts in vote intentions, and, apparently, in votes. Labour “won” the Poll decisively while still losing some support. The Conservatives also lost support, from a much lower initial level. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, gained dramatically.

The foregoing account is still largely descriptive. We have not yet had much to say about the mechanisms driving this change. It certainly seems relevant, however, that the participants increased their support for Liberal Democratic policy positions, that they learned much more about where the Liberal Democrats stood (and discovered it was not so far from their own preferences, especially as the latter also evolved), and that they learned more about the issues and the parties positions on them generally.

In part, and in sufficiently broad terms, our participants’ vote intentions anticipated what happened in the election itself. Labour won, the Tories lost badly, the Liberal Democrats drew surprising support. But at a more detailed level this similarity breaks down. The Liberal Democrats did much better and the Tories much worse in the Deliberative Poll than either did the actual vote totals.

This is untroubling because the Deliberative Poll is designed to offer only conditional predictions—for conditions that will never in fact obtain very far in the real world. Yet, to the extent that some small corner of the real world ever inches toward the conditions of the ideal citizenship the Deliberative Poll aims to promote for its participants—as when some issue receives unusually heavy attention during a campaign, the Deliberative Poll may have some very limited real-world predictive value.

In this light, our results here suggest that Chancellor Kenneth Clarke was mistaken when claimed on election night that the Tories might have won if only there had been more discussion of the economy and less discussion of other issues. Our participants spent a weekend discussing economic issues (and a period of months anticipating taking part in the weekend discussions). The results above show no movement toward the Tories, but rather some movement away.

According to the statistics, the economy had in fact turned up again some time before the campaign got underway. But in the first place there is some question about the way Britain's unemployment numbers are calculated. By standard international criteria, Britain's unemployment rate may be nearly twice what was commonly stated in the campaign.⁸ More importantly, the boom was not yet something people could feel. The small groups expressed much anxiety about corporate downsizing, job insecurity, and wages' keeping up with the costs of living. There would seem to be a strong resemblance to the reactions of the American electorate to the increasingly upbeat economic statistics emerging during George Bush's unsuccessful bid for re-election in 1992.

Others in the Conservative party lamented the party's not having struck an unmixedly Eurosceptical position toward the E.U. That, they contended, would have been a vote-winner. Probably not so, according to our results. The more they thought and learned about the issue, the Euro-friendlier our participants became.

Table 1
Informed Party Placements (Time 1)*

Issue	Scale	Party	Mean	Std Error
Income Redistribution	1-7	Conservative	3.09	0.240
	1-7	Labour	5.37	0.216
	1-7	Liberal Democrat	4.79	0.249

1 = "Government should do nothing to make incomes in Britain more equal."

7 = "Government should try much harder to make incomes in Britain more equal."

Taxes vs. Spending	1-7	Conservative	4.07	0.248
	1-7	Labour	5.48	0.188
	1-7	Liberal Democrat	5.86	0.171

1=Government should spend much less on services like education and health to cut taxes a lot.

7=Government should spend a lot more on services, even if it means putting up taxes a lot.

Minimum Wage	1-7	Conservative	2.86	0.340
	1-7	Labour	6.23	0.195
	1-7	Liberal Democrat	5.26	0.251

1=Definitely not introduce a minimum wage because low paid workers would then lose their jobs.

7=Definitely introduce a minimum wage so that no employer can pay their workers too little.

Full Unity with E.U.	1-7	Conservative	3.86	0.242
	1-7	Labour	5.00	0.248
	1-7	Liberal Democrat	5.23	0.244

1="Britain should do much more to keep its distance from the European Union."

7="Britain should do much more to unite fully with the European Union."

*Entries are mean locations attributed to the parties before deliberation by the 44 participants with perfect scores on the factual knowledge items before deliberation.

Table 2
Information Gains

Factual Knowledge	Scale	Proportion Correct t1	Proportion Correct t2	Diff	Prob.
Inflation Rate	0-1	0.58	0.65	0.07	.055
Interest Rate	0-1	0.38	0.59	0.21	.001
Unemployment Rate	0-1	0.45	0.60	0.15	.001
Mean Knowledge Score	0-1	0.47	0.61	0.14	.001

Party Placements	Scale	Proportion Correct t1	Proportion Correct t2	Diff	Prob.
Redistribution	0-1	0.51	0.49	-0.02	.481
Taxes vs. Spending	0-1	0.38	0.55	0.17	.001
Minimum Wage	0-1	0.49	0.55	0.06	.028
Full Unity with E.U.	0-1	0.27	0.33	0.06	.012
Correct Party Placements	0-1	0.41	0.48	0.07	.001

Table 3
Net Change in Policy Attitudes

Issue	Scale	Mean T1	Mean T2	Difference	Prob
Income Redistribution	1-7	5.15	5.46	0.31	.002
Taxes vs. Spending	1-7	5.86	5.81	-0.05	.773
Minimum Wage	1-7	5.76	5.41	-0.35	.003
Full Unity with E.U.	1-7	3.78	4.57	0.79	.001
Britain is Overtaxed	1-5	3.43	3.10	-0.33	.001
Too Little Spent on Services	1-5	3.92	3.71	-0.21	.001
Britain Must Keep Pound	1-5	3.95	3.41	-0.54	.001
Fairness of Tax System	1-4	2.20	2.15	-0.06	.201
Wealthy Pay More Taxes	1-5	3.75	4.07	0.32	.001

Table 4
Proportions of "Don't Knows" and Midpoints for Party Placements

Issue	Don't Know				Midpoint			
	t1	t2	diff	prob	t1	t2	diff	prob
Income Redistribution								
Conservative	0.06	0.06	0.00	.842	0.17	0.12	-0.05	.146
Labour	0.06	0.06	0.00	.835	0.13	0.12	-0.01	.485
Liberal Democrats	0.18	0.09	-0.09	.001	0.24	0.12	-0.11	.012
Taxes and Spending								
Conservative	0.05	0.04	-0.01	.684	0.18	0.23	0.05	.085
Labour	0.03	0.04	0.01	.468	0.12	0.19	0.07	.022
Liberal Democrats	0.16	0.06	-0.10	.000	0.18	0.06	-0.12	.001
Minimum Wage								
Conservative	0.04	0.05	0.01	.656	0.10	0.09	-0.01	.758
Labour	0.04	0.05	0.01	.656	0.05	0.07	0.01	.533
Liberal Democrats	0.21	0.07	-0.14	.000	0.21	0.12	-0.09	.026
Full Unity With E.U.								
Conservative	0.11	0.11	0.00	1.00	0.23	0.22	-0.01	.723
Labour	0.12	0.10	-0.02	.304	0.21	0.16	-0.05	.160
Liberal Democrats	0.22	0.10	-0.12	.000	0.23	0.11	-0.12	.001

Table 5
Distances From the Parties

Issue	Scale	Dist t1	Dist t2	Diff.	Prob.
Income Redistribution					
Conservative	0-6	2.14	2.10	-0.04	.841
Labour	0-6	1.25	1.03	-0.22	.841
Liberal Democrat	0-6	1.25	0.83	-0.43	.001
Taxes and Spending					
Conservative	0-6	2.01	2.04	0.03	.949
Labour	0-6	0.91	1.14	0.23	.025
Liberal Democrat	0-6	1.07	1.00	-0.08	.503
Minimum Wage					
Conservative	0-6	2.67	2.65	-0.02	.785
Labour	0-6	1.04	1.20	0.16	.136
Liberal Democrat	0-6	1.21	1.20	-0.01	.570
Full Unity with E. U.					
Conservative	0-6	1.98	1.50	-0.48	.001
Labour	0-6	1.58	1.16	-0.42	.002
Liberal Democrat	0-6	1.53	1.22	-0.31	.002
Euclidean Distance (All Issues)					
Conservative	0-6	4.86	4.57	-0.29	.114
Labour	0-6	2.96	2.80	-0.16	.202
Liberal Democrat	0-6	2.92	2.59	-0.33	.019

Table 6
Perceived Consequences for Economic Groups of a Conservative/Labour Victory

High Income	Scale	Mean T1	Mean T2	Diff	Prob
If Conservative Victory	1-5	4.30	4.37	0.07	.167
If Labour Victory	1-5	2.44	2.54	0.10	.122
Low Income					
If Conservative Victory	1-5	2.37	2.19	-0.18	.004
If Labour Victory	1-5	3.64	3.73	0.09	.170
People on Benefits					
If Conservative Victory	1-5	2.08	2.14	0.06	.380
If Labour Victory	1-5	3.50	3.54	0.04	.448
Pensioners					
If Conservative Victory	1-5	2.24	2.09	-0.14	.032
If Labour victory	1-5	3.57	3.58	0.02	1.000

Table 1
Changes in Vote Intentions and Votes

a. Pre- and Post-Deliberation Vote Intention*

		Pre-Deliberation (t₁)				
		Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Other Party	Total
Post-Deliberation Vote	Conservative		1.72	0.00	8.33	21%
	Labour	75.00		3.45	25.00	44%
	Liberal Democrat	23.28	96.55		25.00	33%
	Other Party	0.00	0.00	41.67		2%
	Total	52 (116)	13 (29)	5 (12)		

b. Post-Deliberation Vote Intention & Self Reported Vote* n=22

		Vote Intention (t₂)				
		Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Other Party	Total
Self-Reported Vote	Conservative		1.03	0.00	0.00	18%
	Labour	88.60		10.96	0.00	42%
	Liberal Democrat	11.34	87.67		20.00	37%
	Other Party	1.03	1.37	80.00		3%
	Total	44 (97)	33 (73)	2 (5)		

Total n=22

*Don't knows, nonresponses, and those who did not plan on voting or who reported not voting excluded.

Table 8
Civic Attitudes and Participation

Variable	Scale Prob	Mean t1	Mean t2	Diff.
Democracy Works in Britain	1-4 .554	2.75	2.79	0.04
Fear for Future if Conservative Victory	1-5 .002	3.29	3.54	0.24
Fear for Future if Labour Victory	1-5 .815	2.76	2.79	0.02
Political Opinions are Worth Listening To	1-5 .002	3.38	3.58	0.20
Interest in Politics Generally	1-5 .724	3.49	3.49	0.01
Likelihood of Voting	1-7 .005	6.56	6.76	0.20

Table 9
Perceptions of the Parties on Policy Issues

Issue	Scale Prob	Mean T1	Mean T2	Diff
Income Redistribution				
Conservative	1-7 .061	3.36	3.63	0.28
Labour	1-7 .144	5.47	5.67	0.20
Liberal Democrat	1-7 .000	4.91	5.54	0.63
Taxes vs. Spending				
Conservative	1-7 .705	4.15	4.12	-0.03
Labour	1-7 .237	5.51	5.41	-0.11
Liberal Democrat	1-7 .000	5.37	5.98	0.62
Minimum Wage				
Conservative	1-7 .016	3.39	3.02	-0.37
Labour	1-7 .878	6.13	6.13	0.00
Liberal Democrat	1-7 .116	5.43	5.61	0.18
Full Unity with E.U.				
Conservative	1-7 .713	4.35	4.39	0.04
Labour	1-7 .000	4.63	5.19	0.56
Liberal Democrat	1-7 .000	4.75	5.49	0.74

Table 10
Assessments of the Parties

	Scale	Mean t2	Mean t2	Diff	Prob
Overall Feelings					
Conservative	1-5	2.53	2.40	-0.14	.038
Labour	1-5	3.42	3.41	-0.01	.385
Liberal Democrat	1-5	2.94	3.78	0.84	.000
Forecast Performance					
Strength of Economy					
Conservative	1-5	2.88	2.84	-0.05	.331
Labour	1-5	2.94	3.13	0.19	.003
Liberal Democrat*	1-5	2.86	3.30	0.43	.000
Rate of Inflation					
Conservative	1-5	3.70	3.59	-0.12	.144
Labour	1-5	2.29	2.39	0.09	.109
Level of Unemployment					
Conservative	1-5	3.42	3.34	-0.08	.375
Labour	1-5	2.79	2.68	-0.11	.142
Overall Level of Taxes					
Conservative	1-5	3.88	3.78	-0.11	.127
Labour	1-5	3.55	3.44	-0.11	.037
Quality of National Health Service					
Conservative	1-5	2.05	2.15	0.10	.101
Labour	1-5	3.43	3.62	0.19	.005
Standard of Education					
Conservative	1-5	2.40	2.35	-0.05	.581
Labour	1-5	3.41	3.56	0.15	.031
Personal Economic Situation					
Conservative vs. Labour	1-5	3.11	3.20	0.09	.115

*The item for the Liberal Democrats is slightly different from those for the Conservatives and labour. It reads: “Britain’s economy would be much better off if the Liberal Democrats formed part of the next government.”

Table 11
Retrospective Evaluations

	Scale	Mean t1	Mean t2	Diff
	Prob			
Retrospective				
Strength of Economy	1-5 .037	3.07	3.21	0.14
Rate of Inflation	1-5 .001	3.10	2.68	-0.42
Level of Unemployment	1-5 .651	3.10	3.11	0.01
Overall Level of Taxes	1-5 .655	3.91	3.87	-0.04
Quality of National Health Service	1-5 .530	1.76	1.72	-0.05
Standard of Education	1-5 .004	2.02	1.82	-0.20

*Previous versions of this paper were presented at the annual meetings of the International Society of Political Psychology, Montreal, Canada, July 12-15, 1998 and of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, September 2-5, 1999. Deliberative Polling is a registered trademark. The Center for Deliberative Polling at the University of Texas at Austin, of which Fishkin is Director and Luskin Research Director, receives fees from the trademark to fund research. We are grateful to Dennis Plane, Jeffrey Ladewig, and Nedim Ogelman for research assistance and to the Public Policy Clinic, also of the University of Texas at Austin, for support.

¹See Jowell et al. (xxxx).

²All references to “significance” without further qualification will mean statistical as distinct from substantive significance, and at the conventional .05 level, by a two-tailed test.

³The Referendum party's mean rating also rose significantly, from 3.63 to 3.78.

⁴It may be noted in passing that the last three items in this list of items showing increased disagreement are *empirical premises* rather than policy proposals, questions, on and in part beneath the surface, of “is” rather than “ought” occupying the large no-man’s land between attitudes and information. For a little more on this distinction, see Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell (1997).

⁵Although it is possible that some other change made unchangingly negative perceptions of the nature of the times more relevant.

⁶Traditionally, the Liberal Democrats have been to the Conservative side of Labour on the tradeoff between lower taxes and greater services, but the reverse was true in 1997. It may also be worth noting that the Conservatives were deeply riven over issues relating to the E.U. Averaged over the party, however, their position was clearly to the anti-Europe side of Labour's, not to mention the Liberal Democrats'.

⁷When the correct order is $L > D > C$, for example, respondents whose placements fall in that order have all three ordered pairs correct; respondents whose placements come out either $L > C > D$ or $D > L > C$ have only two ordered pairs correct ($L > C$ and $L > D$ but not $D > C$ in the first case and $D > C$ and $L > C$ but not $L > D$ in the second); respondents whose placements come out either $C > L > D$ or $D > C > L$ have only one ordered pair correct ($L > D$ but not $D > C$ or $L > C$ in the first case and $D > C$ but not $L > C$ or $L > D$ in the second); and respondents whose placements come out $C > D > L$ have no ordered pairs correct.

⁸Youssef M. Ibrahim "Britain '97: Rich, Poor and a Little in Between" New York Times, April 29, 1997.