Do Self-Identified Tactical Voters Actually Vote Tactically?
What Tactical Voting Meant (and Didn’t Mean)
To British Voters in the 2010 Election

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Britain’s electoral landscape is unique. Duverger’s Law asserts that in countries with single-member plurality districts, only two parties will receive substantial support under the equilibrium election outcome (1954, 205). Britain has single-member plurality districts, but unlike virtually every other jurisdiction with first-past-the-post elections, it has had three major party players - Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats - at the national level in every recent general election. Nonetheless, in most local constituencies, there are only two competitive parties. As Duverger implies, voters who prefer candidates from smaller parties at the constituency level will abandon their first preference party and vote for another party (1990, 288). In other words, voters are willing to sacrifice ideological proximity for a better chance of winning and an opportunity to influence policy. This kind of behavior - commonly known as tactical voting - has been the preserve of intense media and voter speculation since the mid-1980s (Butler and Kavanagh 1988; Fieldhouse, Pattie and Johnston 1996; Kim and Fording 1997).

Interest in tactical voting has mushroomed ever since. As the BBC noted just prior to the 2005 election, “there is a strong interest among British voters in tactical voting” (Matthews 2005). All indications suggest that tactical voting was just as much on the minds of British voters in the May 2010 election. In the weeks leading up to the election, full-page advertisements in the
country’s leading newspapers identified constituencies in which voters should consider voting tactically. On May 4, two days before the election, the Labour-leaning *Daily Mirror* ran on its front page an advertisement entitled, “Don’t get conned!” The advertisement listed close constituency races with the captions “Lib Dems Vote Labour Here” and “Labour Vote Lib Dem Here.” The interest in tactical voting also led to the proliferation of vote-swapping websites, like tacticalvoting.org. Using these online forums, voter A, who supports party X but lives in a constituency where party Y stands the best chance of defeating the candidate from party Z, can agree to vote tactically for party Y’s candidate in exchange for a promise from voter B, who supports party Y but who lives in a constituency where party X stands the best chance of defeating party Z’s candidate, to vote tactically for party X’s candidate.¹

Party leaders also took a strong interest in tactical voting in the weeks before election day. Two days before the 2010 election, Labour politician and Schools Secretary Ed Balls said that Labour supporters in Conservative-Liberal Democrat marginal seats should strongly consider voting tactically for Liberal Democrat candidates. Other party leaders responded quickly. David Cameron, Conservative leader, said that Balls’ statement was proof that voting tactically for the Liberal Democrats could help keep Gordon Brown, the Labour leader, in office. Nick Clegg, Liberal Democrat leader, said that Balls’ statement signalled Labour’s “utter desperation.” This furor two days before the election forced Prime Minister Gordon Brown to address the issue publicly. Brown denied that the Labour party would campaign to encourage tactical voting and said that people should simply “vote Labour” (“Election” 2010).

¹Voters’ enthusiasm for tactical voting has purportedly had a large influence on election outcomes. While estimates are not widely available for the past several election, the influence of tactical voting on election outcomes was the subject of a wide-ranging academic debate after the 1997 election. Scholars estimated that the Conservatives lost between 24 and 50 seats because of tactical voting in 1997 (Kim and Fording 1997; Curtice and Steed 1997; Norris 1998; Myatt 2004).
We know that British voters and parties were thinking hard about tactical voting as election day approached. We also know that, as in every other recent British election, tactical voting will almost certainly capture political scientists' attention in the coming months. But we do not know, for this or any previous British election, whether voters and political scientists think about the same thing when they speak of “tactical voting.” Every previous study of modern British tactical voting has assumed that voters think about tactical voting in the same way that political scientists do. But this is hardly obvious. If political scientists and voters conceptualize tactical voting in even slightly different ways, the academic discussion of tactical voting may have to go back to the proverbial drawing board. At very least, such a finding would call into question the foundational assumptions based upon which all academic studies of modern British tactical voting have proceeded.

This thesis will ask an important question: do voters and political scientists think about the same thing when they use the phrase “tactical voting”? The answer is startling: about half of all voters who self-identify tactical motivations for their vote choice clearly do not fit the standard political science definition of tactical voting.

**Outline of What Follows**

Chapter 2 will review the political science literature on British tactical voting. I begin by more rigorously defining tactical voting. The chapter identifies three criteria that voters must fulfill in order to be considered tactical voters:

- They must vote for a party other than their preferred party.
- They must expect their preferred party to finish third or worse in the constituency.
• They must expect the party for which they vote to perform better in the constituency than their preferred party.

I will then identify current trends in the measurement of tactical voting before concluding with a brief overview of the analyses in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 analyzes voter survey responses from the British Election Study (BES). The chapter attempts to predict *ex ante*, using voter responses from before the campaign period began, which voters were tactical voters, based on the political science definition of tactical voting. I apply a novel method of estimating voter party preferences and of quantifying the uncertainty associated with those preference estimates. After predicting who voted tactically, I compare my predicted set of tactical voters with the set of voters who self-identify tactical motivations. The chapter finds that convergence between these two sets is remarkably low, hinting at the possibility that voters and political scientists think about tactical voting differently.

Chapter 4 tries to improve convergence by identifying tactical voters *ex post*, based on actual election results, voter responses after the election, and the political science definition of tactical voting. The chapter is guided by the intuition that identifying who looks like a tactical voter after the election might improve convergence with the self-identification of tactical motivations that voters express after the election. I find, though, that identifying tactical voters *ex post* does not improve convergence with voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations.

Chapter 5 considers possible explanations for low convergence between the political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical voting. Even after accounting for changes in voters’ expectations of party performance between the pre-campaign and post-election periods, for inaccuracies in voters’ expectations, and for possible shortcomings in my es-
timation strategy, low convergence persists. The chapter concludes with an important discovery - many voters who explicitly said they vote tactically actually voted for their own preferred party, and many voters who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party had no chance in the constituency actually believed that their preferred party was running first in the constituency. The analyses suggest that about one-half of voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not fit the political science definition of tactical voting. This calls into question previous estimates of the aggregate level of tactical voting in Britain made by Heath et al. (1991), Evans (1994), Cox (1997), Fisher (2004), Clarke et al. (2004), and Blais et al. (2006).

Chapter 6 examines the implications of the preceding results for party campaigns. The chapter argues that parties have not successfully targeted tactical voters and that this is because parties and voters are thinking about different things when they speak about tactical voting. The chapter concludes by noting that while parties have difficulty getting information about tactical voting to voters, there is some evidence that party contact by one of the two most competitive parties in the constituency increases the probability that the voter and the party are on the same page about what tactical voting means.

Along the way, I add useful nuggets about other general political science topics like voter information and campaign behavior. What follows in subsequent chapters, though, focuses primarily on parsing the practical implications of my results for political scientists, voters and parties alike.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
and Overview of Methodology

In their classic 1969 study of British electoral politics, Butler and Stokes find that voting in Britain occurs largely along class lines - a majority of the working class supported Labour, and a similarly large proportion of the middle class supported the Conservatives (1969, 4). British electoral politics have changed since then. In *Political Choice in Britain*, Clarke et al. note that there has recently been “considerable individual-level instability in party identification in Britain” (2004, 14). Naturally, the instability in party identification has made tactical voting more relevant, as voters are now less reluctant to vote for parties other than the one they prefer. Accompanying the increase in electoral relevance has been a proliferation of research on tactical voting in Britain.

This chapter will offer an overview of existing research on tactical voting. To determine whether voters’ conception of tactical voting aligns with the traditional political science definition of tactical voting, as this thesis seeks to do, I must first define “tactical voting” more robustly. This chapter begins by parsing the accepted political science definition of tactical voting. I then examine past approaches to measuring tactical voting. The chapter also discusses the literature on party efforts at within-constituency targeting of voters, which will ground later discussion about the implications of voter self-
identification of tactical motivations for party strategy. Finally, I will provide
a brief overview of the analyses that follow in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

A Political Science Definition of Tactical Voting

In his seminal 1957 work on voter behavior, Anthony Downs asserts that ra-
tional voters do not vote for their most preferred candidate when they think
that candidate is not likely to win. The rational voter “decides what party
he believes will benefit him most; then he tries to estimate whether this party
has any chance of winning.”

Of course, in determining which parties are un-
likely to win, the voter must necessarily predict “how other citizens will vote
by estimating their preferences” (Downs 1957, 48). By doing this, voters can
avoid “wasting” their votes on a party that they believe is unlikely to win.

Franklin, Niemi and Whitten have since followed suit in characterizing tacti-
cal voting as an act motivated by a desire to avoid a wasted vote (1994, 549).
This clarification appropriately defined tactical voting as more than just “any
case where the voter is aiming to reduce the chances of a disliked party”, as
Heath and Evans asserted (1994, 558). Voters need not cast their votes with
the intention of hurting another party in order to be considered tactical voters.
They simply need to be voting with the intention of making their vote count
in deciding who wins the election.

Duch and Palmer distill Downs’ model down to what they perceive to be
the two constituent elements of any tactical voting decision. First, the voter
must recognize that he or she faces a “wasted vote’ situation.” Second, the
voter must act strategically – defined as “voting against his or her myopic pref-
erences” - in response to that situation. Duch and Palmer model the tactical

1Virtually all scholarly attempts to describe tactical voting start with the rational choice
framework. That framework is the only major theory of voting behavior that can clearly
account for tactical voting (Fisher 2004, 153).
voting decision using the following probability equation:

\[ P(\text{Tactical Vote}) = P(\text{Recognition}) \times P(\text{Action | Recognition}) \]

In other words, the probability of a voter casting a tactical vote is equal to the product of the probability that the voter recognizes the opportunity to vote tactically and the probability that the voter acts strategically given his or her recognition of that opportunity (Duch and Palmer 2002, 67).

The model altered what had been the prevailing thinking about tactical voting ever since Downs articulated his theory. For instance, Niemi, Franklin and Whitten suggested that recognition of a tactical voting situation was a necessary and sufficient condition for casting a tactical vote, offering support for that notion by presenting statistical relationships that showed that in the 1987 British general election, the probability of tactical voting increased as the probability that the voter’s sincere first choice would not win increased (1992, 229). Blais and Nadeau make the same claim, suggesting that knowledge that the second preference is more likely to win than the first preference is a sufficient reason for casting a tactical vote (1996, 39). The Duch-Palmer model differed from many previous micromodels because it suggested that recognition of a “wasted vote situation” does not guarantee that a voter will vote tactically. Even after that recognition, voters still have a choice to make about whether or not they want to vote tactically (Duch and Palmer 2002, 67).

The Duch-Palmer model offers a crucial insight: in order to identify tactical voters, it is not enough to know whether voters recognized the wasted vote situation in their constituency. I must also know whether voters acted on that knowledge by voting for a party other than their preferred party.

Steve Fisher has since revisited the rational voter model’s conceptualization of tactical voting. Based on the rational voter model, Fisher re-defines a tactical voter as “someone who votes for a party they believe is more likely to
win than their preferred party, to best influence who wins in the constituency” (2004, 157). The first part of Fisher’s definition has two fairly clear implications - tactical voters must vote for a party other than their preferred party, and they must vote for a party that they believe is more likely to win than their preferred party.\(^2\)

The second part of that definition - “to best influence who wins in the constituency” - is more problematic. Fisher says that it is not always the case that “best influencing” who wins in the constituency means trying to avoid a “wasted vote.” In other words, Fisher says that “best influencing” who wins means that there are some theoretical circumstances in which voters may be voting tactically even when they believe that their preferred party is running second in the constituency. Fisher argues that voters might decide to vote tactically for the party they believe to be running first in the constituency when they think that the probability that the expected third place party will finish nearly tied in first with the expected first place party is higher than the probability that the expected third place party will finish nearly tied in first with the expected second place party (2004, 156).

But practically speaking, if voters think that their preferred party will finish second in the constituency, then they will think that the probability that their preferred party will finish nearly tied for first with the expected first place party is far higher than the probability that the expected third place party will finish nearly tied in first with either the expected second place party or the expected first place party. Fisher notes that voters who expect their preferred

\(^2\)This implies that the voter does not have to vote for the expected first or second place party in the constituency in order to be considered a tactical voter. This is because voters may be attempting to influence who wins in the constituency with their vote as long as they are supporting a party they think has some chance of winning. For reasons Fisher (2004) describes in detail, the implication here is an improvement on the notion, expressed by Niemi, Whitten and Franklin, that the tactical voter must vote for the expected first or second place party (1993, 550-1).
party to finish second will vote tactically for the expected first place party only when they are virtually indifferent between the expected first and second place parties. As a practical matter, it probably would not be possible to distinguish the first preference of respondents who vote the way Fisher describes. While these voters might technically fit the math of the rational voter model, they can hardly be considered tactical voters as a practical matter since it would be nearly impossible to suggest that they are clearly voting for a party different from their preferred party.\

Based on the discussion in the literature, then, it is possible to define tactical voting in Britain using three practical criteria. First, the voter must vote for a party other than his or her preferred party. Second, the voter must believe that his or her preferred party is running third or worse in the constituency. Third, the voter must believe that the party for which he or she votes will fare better than the party that he or she prefers.

This is a more accessible restatement of the three tactical voting criteria that Fisher identifies - a) “a tactical voter has short-term instrumental motivations for their vote choice”; b) “a tactical vote is a vote for a party other than the first preference”; and c) “the vote choice should be consistent with the expectations of the constituency result, the utilities for the parties and the principal of utility maximization” (2004, 153). My second and third criteria translate “short-term instrumental motivations” (Fisher’s first criterion) and “expectations of the constituency result” (from Fisher’s third criterion) into practical terms. My first criterion matches Fisher’s second criterion exactly.

My criteria offer a clear, practical definition of what a tactical vote should look like. Though fulfilling my three criteria is co-terminous with casting a

\[\text{As Fisher notes, there have been extremely few cases of what he identifies as non-Duvergerian tactical voting. Accordingly, even if Fisher’s argument were practically relevant, it would be of very little consequence for my tactical voter identification attempts.}\]
tactical vote under the Fisher criteria in most cases, my criteria do not wade into the murky waters of identifying whether voters had “short-term instrumental motivations” or of determining the utilities voters assigned to each party. Therefore, my criteria are necessary but not sufficient for a tactical vote. The purpose they serve, though, is to provide a practical definition of the features a vote itself must have if it is to be considered a tactical one.

**Measuring Tactical Voting**

Even though my three tactical voting criteria are fairly clear, the literature showcases a variety of very different methods for measuring individual-level tactical voting. Here, I discuss these methods, focusing on how other scholars studying tactical voting have measured voters’ party preference and voters’ expectations of constituency election outcomes.

**Measuring Voter Party Preference**

Some scholars have tried to determine voters’ party preference ordering using logistic regression models (Blais and Nadeau 1996; Alvarez and Nagler 2000). These models predict whether a respondent’s party preference is the same as his or her vote choice. As Fisher notes, this approach presents a number of problems (2004, 159). It requires researchers to make inferences about tactical voting from the regression residuals. In other words, inferences are based on voters who do not “fit” the model because they vote for a party other than their preferred party. Making inferences from residuals is often subject to omitted variable bias, which can distort obtained results (King 1986, 667-9).4

Other research estimates that voters prefer the party for whom they vote,

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unless they self-report that they voted tactically, in which case their self-identified preferred party is estimated to be their most preferred party (Heath et al. 1991; Evans 1994; Fieldhouse, Pattie and Johnston 1996). This strategy is problematic. It trusts that all voters who do not self-identify as tactical voters vote for their most preferred party and that all voters who self-identify as tactical voters vote for a party other than their most preferred party. In other words, it trusts that voters can accurately apply the political science definition of tactical voting to themselves. This is the very assumption that this thesis questions.

Instead of relying only on voters’ self-identification as tactical voters, Fisher records voters’ preferred party as the party for which they voted, unless they say they voted tactically or they record a higher strength-of-feeling score for a party other than the one for which they vote (2004, 163). This measure of voters’ party preferences still encounters the same problems as the measures used by Evans (1994) and Fieldhouse et al. (1996) - it assumes that each voter has the same conception of tactical voting as political scientists do.

Fisher’s use of strength-of-feeling scores as consistency checks, however, is a valuable contribution. Rather than relying just on the respondents’ explicitly avowed party preference (or on their voting decision), Fisher uses the answers to another question in the survey to confirm voters’ actual party preferences. Survey respondents tend to be inconsistent in the responses they give, and their answers are often subject to biases that make them more likely to identify with the party that wins (or is expected to win) the election (Weir 1975, 53). This makes reliance on just one voter response risky. Fisher’s attempt to corroborate voter responses is a worthy advance on previous party preference estimation methods. Unfortunately, Fisher discards voters whose strength-of-feeling scores conflict with their preferred party self-identification.
This creates a massive potential selection bias.

Instead of discarding these voters, I will use all other BES responses that relate to party preference in order to navigate discrepancies between the voter’s strength-of-feeling scores and his or her explicitly avowed party preference. Not only does this imputation strategy avoid problems with using vote choice or self-identification of tactical motivations to determine voters’ party preferences, but it also maximizes the use of information concerning party preference in the BES. Thus, the imputation method I will outline in subsequent chapters constitutes an important step forward for party preference estimation in the study of British tactical voting.

Voter Knowledge of the Constituency Electoral Situation

My second and third tactical voting criteria - that voters must expect their preferred party to finish third or worse in the constituency, and that they must expect the party for which they vote to finish better in the constituency than their preferred party - require me to assess the voter’s knowledge of electoral politics. Many studies on voter information focus on voters’ “background” political knowledge, using that information as a proxy for voter knowledge of the within-constituency electoral dynamic. Background knowledge is usually measured by examining voter responses to questions about current events and about common political knowledge (see Zaller 1992; Price and Zaller 1993; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Fisher’s tactical voting studies use voters’ highest level of educational attainment and their self-identified level of “political interest” as proxies for their level of political knowledge (2001a, 17).

Background political knowledge correlates only loosely with voters’ actual knowledge of the within-constituency electoral dynamic. Stevenson and

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5 In this context, imputation simply means using all available relevant information to estimate voter party preference.
Vonnahme’s forthcoming paper on voter information suggests that instead of considering traditional background measures of political knowledge, scholars should focus on voters’ “operational political knowledge.” They define operational political knowledge as the knowledge “necessary for a voter to cast a rational (and therefore sometimes strategic) vote.” For voters to vote tactically in British parliamentary elections, they only need to know “the relative sizes of parties in their district.” In other words, this is the specific operational political knowledge I should measure when I determine whether British voters recognize a wasted vote opportunity (Stevenson and Vonnahme 2010, 6).

By ascertaining the voter’s level of operational political knowledge, I can avoid the inaccurate proxies for within-constituency political knowledge used in previous tactical voting studies. In subsequent chapters, I will draw on questions from the BES that ask voters to assess each party’s chances of winning in their constituency. This is a strong proxy for voters’ perceptions of the “relative size of the parties” in their constituency. After all, voters’ assessments of party competitiveness are very much the consequence of their perceptions of the relative sizes of the parties.

**Aggregate Tactical Voting Estimates**

I should also briefly describe the literature’s estimates of the aggregate level of tactical voting in British elections. In particular, I focus on estimates made based on voter self-identifications of tactical voting (Heath et al. 1991; Fisher 2004; Clarke et al. 2004; Blais et al. 2006). These scholars estimate the aggregate level of tactical voting by calculating the fraction of BES voters who self-identify tactical motivations. The estimates across different elections have varied widely, but taken together, they suggest that tactical voting has increased gradually at every election. Fisher estimated for the 1987, 1992, and
1997 elections, respectively, that 5.0%, 7.7% and 8.5% of voters voted tactically (2004, 163). Clarke et al. estimated that 14% of voters voted tactically in 2001, and Blais et al. estimated that 15% of voters voted tactically in the 2005 election (Clarke et al. 2004, 83; Blais et al. 2006, 5).

These aggregate estimates are relevant because they are based on voter self-identifications of tactical voting. If voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not fit the standard political science definition of tactical voting, or if many voters who do not self-identify tactical motivations in the survey still look like tactical voters, then these widely-cited aggregate estimates might be rendered inaccurate. Accordingly, in subsequent chapters I will assess the accuracy of the aggregate tactical voting estimates discussed here.

**Party Campaigns and Targeting Tactical Voters**

Whether the way that British voters conceptualize tactical voting aligns with the standard tactical voting definition described above has implications for British parties’ efforts to identify and target potential tactical voters. Party behavior geared towards inducing tactical voting constitutes one element of what political scientists have labeled the “post-modern campaign” in Britain. The use of the term “post-modern campaign” refers to a shift towards more sophisticated campaign techniques reminiscent of those used in American elections. In particular, parties are focusing more on “targeting” voters and on using technology to reach voters with their message (Norris 2000, 163).

Scholars interested in the presence of “targeting” have focused primarily on national party strategy – namely, the level of effort the national party apparatus invests in different constituency. Fieldhouse, Pattie and Johnston examine party spending data from the 1992 election in constituencies where tactical
voting would have been most likely. They find that voters are more likely to vote tactically when party spending in their constituency is higher (1996, 406).

Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse construct a campaign intensity index to measure the effort parties put into each constituency in the 2005 and 2010 elections. In both elections they find that campaign intensity is higher in more marginal seats and in seats the parties said they would target (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2009, 367; Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse 2010, 1).

Less frequently, scholars apply the term “targeting” to describe how local parties make decisions about which voters to target within the constituency. Most of the consideration of within-constituency targeting has been rather superficial. Alistair Clark surveyed Scottish party officials, asking them whether they targeted specific groups within the constituency during the campaign. 44% of Labour officials, 52% of Conservative officials and 34% of Liberal Democrat officials reported attempting to target specific groups in the constituency (2002, 95). Fisher, Fieldhouse, Cutts and Denver have also surveyed British party officials about whether they used electronic media to target particular groups of voters within the constituency. Those surveys did not ask who the party officials targeted. Fisher et al. have only once attempted to assess whether within-constituency targeting efforts have been successful: they managed to correlate the relative prevalence of these efforts with the vote share that the party received in each constituency (Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse 2010; Fisher and Denver 2009). But they have not assessed whether parties’ within-constituency targeting efforts are addressed towards the right groups. There appears to be a void in the literature. If British parties are attempting to target specific voters in each constituency, have their efforts been effective?

The analyses in Chapter 6 will help fill this void by examining parties’ within-constituency targeting strategies with respect to potential tactical vot-
ers. I will assess whether parties have attempted to target potential tactical voters and, if so, whether those efforts have been effective. The chapter will also contribute to the literature on within-constituency targeting by examining whether the way that potential tactical voters conceptualize tactical voting influences the effectiveness of parties’ efforts to target these voters.

There is one final important point about party strategy and tactical voting. Stevenson and Vonnahme argue that in countries with executive selection systems that create incentives for tactical voting beyond the incentives generated by the electoral system itself, voters are better informed — well enough informed, in fact, to cast tactical votes that account for the strategic incentives created by both the electoral system and the executive selection system. Stevenson and Vonnahme conclude that “voters everywhere will become informed about those aspects of politics that are necessary to cast a rational vote...[because]...the knowledge necessary to cast a rational vote is disseminated” by political parties (2010, 2). In determining each voter’s level of operational political knowledge, I will assess whether it is actually true that voters are informed about the “aspects of politics that are necessary to cast a rational vote.” If I find that many voters in Britain develop false perceptions of the political climate in their constituency, my results would contradict the notion that parties are successfully disseminating to voters “the knowledge necessary to cast a rational vote.”

**Methodology Overview**

I will use data from the 2010 British Election Study (BES) internet survey. The internet survey is a panel survey with three waves - one conducted before the start of the campaign (pre-campaign), one during the month-long cam-
paign, and one after the election (post-election). Table 2.1 provides the size and timing of each wave. In all my analyses, I consider only the 12180 respondents who completed all three waves and who said in the post-election survey that they voted. I consider only voters because I am interested in predicting whether a given vote cast was tactical; I am not interested here in the tactical decision the respondent makes about whether or not to vote in the first place. That decision, known as “tactical non-voting”, has already been examined in considerable detail in previous research (see Fisher 2001b). All analyses include voters in England, Scotland and Wales.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Campaign Wave</td>
<td>Between March 29 and April 7</td>
<td>16816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Wave</td>
<td>Between April 8 and May 6</td>
<td>14973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Election Wave</td>
<td>Between May 7 and May 24</td>
<td>13356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Basic Information on British Election Study Internet Panel Survey. Election took place on May 6.

In all analyses, I will use the vote choice and self-identification of tactical motivations registered by the voter in the post-election survey. Potential problems with respondent recall of voting decisions are well-documented. For instance, respondents tend to incorrectly claim that they have voted for the party that ended up winning the election (Weir 1975, 53; Himmelweit et al. 1978, 365; Plumb 1986, 302; Fournier et al. 2001, 302). This would artificially increase the number of voters who would satisfy my first tactical voting criterion - that tactical voters must vote for a party other than their preferred party - since voters who may have supported a more minor party might have falsely recorded that they actually voted for one of the “winning” parties. Al-

6To keep my analyses in subsequent chapters presentable and comprehensible, I do not use the BES-suggested weights for the internet survey data. This is warranted because I am primarily interested in the decisions of individual BES respondents. The aggregate estimates of tactical voting are only of secondary concern in this thesis.
Varez and Nagler even suggest that there may a “postelection bias in favor of finding increased levels of strategic voting the further the interview is conducted from election day” (2000, 73), although this finding has been disputed by more recent research (Evans 2002, 185). Despite the potential problems with respondent recall, I use vote choice and self-identification of tactical motivations from the post-election survey because the voter’s vote choice (and, consequently, his or her motivations for the vote decision) may not be solidified until just days before the election. This is especially true given the fluidity of the 2010 election contest, something to which the late Liberal Democrat surge after the party leader debates in late April 2010 attests.

I use the BES internet survey because it provides a much larger sample size than the BES in-person survey does. 13356 respondents completed all three internet survey waves, while just 1935 and 3075 respondents completed the pre-election and post-election in-person surveys, respectively. The internet survey has not yet yielded substantively different results from the in-person survey. As Sanders et al. note, the BES internet survey has been checked extensively for representativeness.² On voting-related variables, the BES internet survey data are “statistically indistinguishable from data gathered in probability surveys using in-person interviews.” The marginal distributions of vote outcome variables are also just as accurate as in the in-person surveys, and both the in-person and the internet surveys tell the same story about what matters for party preference (Sanders et al. 2011, 8; Sanders et al. 2007, 257). All this suggests that there is good reason to be just as confident in results derived from the internet and in-person surveys.

²Retention numbers for the internet panel survey are fairly strong, too. 89% of those responding in the pre-campaign wave also responded in the campaign wave, and 91.3% of those responding in the campaign wave also responded in the post-election wave.
Chapter 3: *Ex Ante* Prediction of Tactical Voting in the 2010 British Election Study

To assess the level of convergence between the standard political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ perceptions of tactical voting, I begin by applying a novel estimation method to determine each voter’s preferred party. Once I impute voters’ party preferences, I will apply the standard definition as a model to predict, based on the pre-campaign wave of the 2010 BES internet survey, which respondents voted tactically. The chapter will conclude by examining the extent to which there is convergence between this predicted set of tactical voters and the set of voters who self-identify tactical motivations.

**Prediction Model for Tactical Voting**

I begin with the hypothesis that voters self-identify tactical motivations because they satisfy the traditional political science definition of tactical voting, as described in Chapter 2. This hypothesis has been assumed true throughout the political science literature. In his symmetry thesis, Carl Hempel asserts that “a scientific explanation is not adequate unless it could have functioned
as a prediction, and a scientific prediction is not adequate unless it could have functioned as an explanation” (Achinstein 2000, 167). In order to be able to explain why some voters self-identify as tactical voters, I should be able to predict \textit{ex ante}, using the political science definition of tactical voting, which voters will self-identify as tactical voters.

This is why I begin by considering a model for predicting \textit{ex ante} which votes were cast tactically. This predictive model will be grounded in the definition of tactical voting described in Chapter 2. For a vote to be considered a tactical vote, the voter must cast the vote for a party other than her most preferred party. Second, the voter must think that her most preferred party will finish in third or worse in the constituency. Finally, the voter must believe that the party for which she votes will finish better in the constituency than her preferred party. The predictive model will categorize a BES respondent as a tactical voter when he or she satisfies all three of these criteria.

In this chapter, I will examine pre-campaign responses in order to ascertain the voter’s preferred party and his or her beliefs on the relative competitiveness of that preferred party. I will use this information to predict \textit{ex ante}, based on the model outlined above, which voters were voting tactically. The prediction will be instructive insofar as it can preliminarily expose the level of convergence between the standard political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical voting.

**Identifying the Voter’s Preferred Party**

To apply my predictive model, I must first determine each voter’s preferred party. As explained in Chapter 2, relying on responses to a range of questions that implicate party preference will yield more accurate estimates than relying
on a single response will. Accordingly, I will estimate each voter’s preference by using a set of metrics derived from responses that implicate party preference in the pre-campaign wave of the BES internet survey.

This party preference imputation method is an improvement over the estimation methods typically used in tactical voting studies. The method does not use the respondent’s actual vote decision to determine his or her preferred party, as Fisher (2004) and Heath et al. (1991) do, so it avoids underestimating the number of voters who vote for a party other than their most preferred party. The imputation method is also novel because it does not rely exclusively on answers from one (or even two) BES questions. Instead, it uses all available information that pertains to party preference in the BES. Additionally, the method does not rely on voter self-identification of tactical voting to signal that the preferred party is different from the party for which the respondent voted, as Heath (1991), Evans (1994) and Fieldhouse, Pattie and Johnston (1996) do. This avoids identifying the voter’s preferred party based on the assumption that the voter understands tactical voting in the same way that political scientists do, the very assumption that this thesis questions. Finally, because I use a series of metrics instead of just relying on one question or a consistency check, I can generate a rough estimate of the uncertainty associated with my preferred party imputation.

**Party Preference Metrics**

I identify the questions or sets of questions in the BES pre-campaign internet survey that implicate the voter’s party preference. From each of these sets of related questions, I derive a metric that yields an estimate of the voter’s preferred party. The ten metrics I derive from the BES pre-campaign internet survey are described below. Further clarifications of how each metric estimate
was calculated are provided in Appendix A.

- **Metric 1: Explicit Self-Identification.** The pre-campaign wave asks, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?” The voter’s response to the question is coded as the metric 1 estimate of preferred party. There are nine possible responses - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Scottish National Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru, Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), British National Party (BNP), and unknown/none.¹

- **Metric 2: Strength-of-Feeling, Parties.** The pre-campaign wave asks, “On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about X?” There were eight questions in the BES that followed this format, one each for Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green, UKIP, and BNP. The metric 2 estimate of preferred party is the party that received the respondent’s highest rating. The metric has a menu of nine choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green Party, UKIP, BNP, and unknown/none.

- **Metric 3: Most Important Issue.** The BES asks, “Which party is best able to handle [what you think is the single most important issue facing the country at the present time]?” The voter’s response to the question

¹In coding the final choice as “unknown/none” for all these metrics, I group together those whose preferred party is not known - voters whose preferred party cannot be determined based on voter responses to the question(s), or voters who preferred a party other than the eight listed parties - with those who legitimately have no party preference. Unfortunately, the survey offers no way to distinguish those who do not have any party preference. Grouping voters who have no party preference with voters who have a party preference but whose preference cannot be determined from the BES is mildly problematic since it disrespects the preferences of those who prefer a minor party, like Respect, that is not given as an option in the question. But these minor parties that are not listed among the choices in the BES received less than 3% of the vote in the 2010 election, so their exclusion will not have much of a substantive effect on the result. The careful reader would do well, though, to bear in mind that minor parties like Respect are not considered in subsequent analyses.
is coded as the metric’s estimate of preferred party. Again, there are nine possible responses – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green Party, UKIP, BNP, and unknown/none.

• Metric 4: Tax/Spend Dimension Proximity. The pre-campaign wave asks, “Using the 0 to 10 scale below, where the end marked 0 means that government should cut taxes a lot and spend much less on health and social services, and the end marked 10 means that government should raise taxes a lot and spend much more on health and social services, where would you place X on this scale?” The BES asks six questions in this format – the first of these questions asks respondents to place themselves on that scale, and the next five ask the respondent to place Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the SNP on the scale. The metric 4 estimate of preferred party is the party that is the closest (in absolute distance) to the voter’s self-identified position on the 0 to 10 scale. This metric has a menu of six choices – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and unknown/none.

• Metric 5: Strength-of-Feeling, Party Leaders. The pre-campaign wave asks, “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about X?” Five BES questions followed this format, one each for Gordon Brown (Labour), David Cameron (Conservative), Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat), Alex Salmond (SNP), and Ieuan Wyn Jones (Plaid Cymru). The metric 5 estimate of preferred party is the party affiliation of the leader whose rating was highest on the 0 to 10 scale. Thus, the metric has a menu of six choices – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and unknown/none.
• Metric 6: Party Leader Competence. The pre-campaign wave asks, “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means a very incompetent leader and 10 means a very competent leader, how would you describe X?” Five BES questions followed this format, one each for Brown, Cameron, Clegg, Salmond, and Jones. The metric’s estimate of preferred party is the party affiliation of the leader whose rating was highest on the 0 to 10 scale. This metric had a menu of six possible choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and unknown/none.

• Metric 7: Party Leader Knowledge. The pre-campaign wave asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think that in general he knows what he is talking about, or that he doesn’t know? Please use the following scale where 0 means that X really doesn’t know what he is talking about and 10 means he knows very much what he is talking about.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 7 estimate is recorded as the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the respondent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and unknown/none.

• Metric 8: Party Leader Best Interests. The BES asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think he has your best interests in mind, or that he does not think about your best interests? Please use the following scale where 0 means that X never has your best interests in mind, and 10 means that he always does.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 8 estimate is recorded as the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the respon-
dent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and unknown/none.

- Metric 9: Party Leader Truthful. The BES asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think generally that he tells the truth, or that he does not tell the truth? Please use the following scale where 0 means that he never tells the truth and 10 means that he always tells the truth.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 9 estimate is recorded as the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the respondent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and none/other.

- Metric 10: Economic Competence, Party Leaders. The BES asks, “Which of the party leaders do you think would do the best job of managing Britain’s economy?” The metric’s estimate of party preference is the respondent’s answer to the question. Respondents are given four choices – Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Nick Clegg, and “don’t know.” Therefore, the metric has a menu of four choices – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and unknown/none.

The ten metrics used to impute the voter’s party preference cover two of the three most prominent theories of British party identification, as identified by Clarke et al. (2004). Metric 4 incorporates the Downsian theory of party preference, which says that voters determine their party preference based on their issue position relative to the position of the other parties on the left-right continuum. Metric 3 and metrics 5-10 incorporate the valence theory of party preference, which says that voters determine their preferences based on their “judgements of the overall competence of the rival political parties.”
The valence theory incorporates “leadership images, evaluations of economic performance, and assessments of issue competence” (Clarke et al. 2004, 9). Metrics 5-10 assess voter perceptions of the leaders, and metric 3 identifies the voter’s assessment of issue competence on the issue most important to him or her.\(^2\) The lone theory that these metrics do not incorporate is the sociological explanation for party preference, which claims that social class determines party preference. The sociological theory was once a powerful explanation of party preference in Britain. But as Clarke et al. note, the power of that explanation has declined dramatically in recent elections (2004, 12).

**Imputing Party Preference from the Metrics**

To impute the voter’s preferred party from the ten metrics, I begin by looking just at metrics 1, 2 and 3. These three metrics are the only ones that include the full menu of preferred party choices, so only they could accurately estimate the party preference of those who actually prefer BNP, Green or UKIP. By contrast, the questions on which metrics 4 through 10 are based do not ask about BNP, Green or UKIP, so these metrics would inaccurately estimate the preference of those who do in fact prefer these minor parties.

If two or three among metrics 1 through 3 estimate the same party preference for a voter, then that party is the voter’s imputed party preference. If all three metrics estimate that the voter prefers “unknown/none”, then the imputed party preference is “unknown/none.”\(^3\) In these cases, I consider only metrics 1, 2 and 3.

\(^2\)It is not inappropriate that so many of the metrics focus on voter perceptions of party leaders. Clarke et al. find that in the 2001 election, voter opinions of party leaders were the strongest determinant of party preference identification (2004, 59).

\(^3\)If there is no clear estimate of party preference from metrics 1, 2 or 3, I have no indication of whether the voter might or might not prefer BNP, Green or UKIP. Because none of the other metrics include these minor parties as possible estimates, I should not have recourse to metrics 4 through 10 in imputing the voter’s party preference.
Beyond these two cases, though, the number of metrics considered in the party preference imputation depends on the preferences registered in metrics 1, 2 and 3. If at least one of these three metrics estimates that the voter prefers BNP, Green or UKIP, then I can only consider metrics 1, 2 and 3. This is because I have evidence that the voter might prefer one of these minor parties, a preference that could not be captured by any of the other metrics. If none among metrics 1 through 3 estimate that the voter prefers BNP, Green or UKIP, but if at least one among these three metrics estimates that the voter prefers SNP or Plaid Cymru, I consider just metrics 4, 5 and 6. Under these circumstances, I have evidence that the voter might prefer one of these two regional parties. A preference for one of the two regional parties could not be captured by metrics 7 through 10 since the menu of possible choices for those metrics only includes Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat. If, however, metrics 1, 2 and 3 each estimate that the voter prefers one among the three major national parties, then I will consider metrics 4 through 10.

If only metrics 1 through 3 are considered, then the imputed party preference is the modal estimate from the determinate metrics (the ones that yield an estimate of party preference other than “unknown/none”). When additional metrics are considered, then the imputed party preference is the modal estimate from just the determinate additional (either 4-6 or 4-10) metrics, provided that the modal estimate matches one of the estimates from metrics 1, 2 or 3. But if there are no determinate additional metrics, then the imputed party preference is the modal estimate from the determinate among metrics 1, 2 and 3. When there is no singular modal estimate, or when the modal estimate from the determinate additional metrics does not match any of the estimates from metrics 1 through 3, then the voter’s party preference is imputed as “unknown/none.”
The histogram below on the left displays the distribution of pre-campaign

Figure 3.1: The histogram on the left shows the distribution of party preferences for the 12180 BES voters, based on the party preference imputation method described here. The histogram on the right shows the distribution of self-identified party preferences, as recorded in metric 1. In both figures, DNK (do not know) represents the voters for whom it was not possible to identify a party preference.

survey party preferences across the set of 12180 BES voters, based on my imputation of party preference. On the right, a histogram shows the distribution of the parties that voters generally think of themselves as supporting, as recorded in metric 1. Under my imputation, a smaller fraction of voters were recorded Labour supporters and a larger fraction of voters had an unknown party preference than under voters’ explicit self-identification of party alignment. Of the 3927 who self-identified as Labour supporters, 937 (or 23.9%) expressed answers to other questions in the BES that disconfirmed their preference for Labour. The imputation method could not estimate a preferred party for 543 (or 58.0%) of these 937; these 543 account for most of the 667 respondent increase in the unknown party preference group from the self-identification in metric 1 to my preferred party imputation.
That Labour’s following is lower under the imputation method than under the self-identification of party preference in metric 1 might be explained by the electoral environment leading up the 2010 general election. Dissatisfaction with Labour was high. As a result, many traditional Labour supporters may not have preferred Labour to the other parties. But at least some of these traditional Labour supporters might still have said that they thought of themselves as Labour supporters, out of habit. The metrics other than metric 1 suggest that these voters no longer strictly preferred Labour to the other parties. But the inconclusiveness of these metrics for so many of these voters suggests that many had yet to determine which party they preferred more.

**Addressing Criticism of the Imputation Procedure**

While metrics 1 and 2 directly estimate which party the voter prefers most strongly, the rest of the metrics do not directly measure the voter’s preferred party. For instance, metric 3 asks for voters’ perceptions of party performance on the issue that they believe is most important. A voter might prefer one party but might still believe that another party will do a better job handling the issue most important to him or her. Metric 4 assesses the voter’s position on the tax/spend dimension, which need not be the only dimension based upon which voters determine their party preference. Metrics 5 through 10 all ask for respondents’ feelings towards party leaders. But voters’ feelings about the parties are not always in total lockstep with their feelings about the people leading the parties. They may view one leader more favorably than the others, but they may not prefer the party that the leader represents.

But while metrics 3 through 10 are not by themselves dispositive of voters’ party preferences, they do provide additional information that can clue us in to the respondent’s preferred party when the information contained in metrics
1 and 2 is insufficient to determine the voter’s preferred party. The imputation procedure is designed so that if the voter registers the same preference in metric 1, which measures preferred party directly, and metric 2, which measures preferred party indirectly through strength-of-feeling scores, then the estimates in metrics 3 through 10 are irrelevant - the imputed preferred party will be the party estimated by metrics 1 and 2. It is only when metrics 1 and 2 alone are insufficient to determine the voter’s preferred party that metrics 3-10 become relevant. Metrics 3-10 provide a reasonable rough estimate of party preference when metrics 1 and 2 together do not themselves yield a dispositive estimate. These additional metrics offer information that, on aggregate, can mediate discrepancies between the more direct measures of party preference.\footnote{I should note that metric 3 has more power to mediate these discrepancies than metrics 4-10. If there is a discrepancy between metrics 1 and 2, and if metric 3 agrees with either metric 1 or metric 2, then metric 3 determines the voter’s imputed preferred party. Metric 3 carries more weight than the other metrics not only because it is the only other metric to include all eight party preference choices, but also because it estimates the party that the voter thinks will deal best with the issue he or she believes is most important. It is very reasonable to expect that if metric 3 agrees with one among metric 1 or metric 2, then metric 3 is a good indication of the voter’s preferred party. This assertion is supported by the power of the valence theory - the notion that voter assessments of the relative competence of the parties in dealing with policy issues are determinative of party preference - in explaining party preference in recent elections (Clarke et al. 2004, 212).}

Because my imputation method uses all available information that relates to party preference, it does a better job of identifying a preferred party than the consistency check method that Fisher (2004) uses. As described in Chapter 2, Fisher’s method uses the equivalent of metrics 1 and 2 in my imputation scheme. If these two metrics disagree, Fisher discards that voter. If I applied Fisher’s consistency check method to determine party preference in the 2010 BES internet survey, I would have discarded 5113 voters. This is 42.0% of the 12180 voters in the survey. Instead of discarding these voters, my imputation method uses the balance of information contained in other relevant BES responses to resolve the discrepancy. When I apply my imputation method,
I am unable to impute party preference for just 1714 voters. By using the balance of information from other BES responses, I am able to impute a party preference for over two-thirds of the voters Fisher discards.

**Estimating Uncertainty in Party Preference Imputations**

Of course, I cannot be equally confident in all of the party preference imputations. It is much more likely that that the imputed party preference is correct when that preference is registered by metrics 1, 2, and 3 than when it is registered by just one of these three metrics. Therefore, it is useful to have at least some way of estimating the level of uncertainty associated with the preferred party imputation. As King, Keohane and Verba note, “All good social scientists...report estimates of the uncertainty of their inferences” (1994, 32). Part of what makes my imputation method a significant advance on existing party preference identification methods is that it is possible to quantify, at least roughly, the uncertainty associated with the estimate for each voter. This is something that has not been attempted by any other scheme of preferred party identification in the tactical voting context.

For each voter, I calculate a clarity score that falls between 0 and 1. The clarity score equals the number of metrics that estimate the imputed party to be the voter’s preferred party, among those considered in the imputation, divided by the total number of metrics considered in the imputation. For voters whose preferred party cannot be identified by the imputation method, this rule does not apply. The clarity score for these voters is 0 since their preferences are marked by an absence of clarity.

If metrics 1 and 2 estimated Liberal Democrat as the preferred party, and metric 3 estimated Labour as the preferred party, then only these three metrics would be considered by the imputation scheme. The imputed preference
would be Liberal Democrat, and the clarity score would be two-thirds (or two, the number of metrics estimating Liberal Democrat to be the preferred party, divided by three, the total number of metrics considered). If metric 1 estimated the party preference as Labour and metrics 2 and 3 estimated “none/unknown”, then the imputation method considers metrics 4 through 10. If the modal preference among metrics 4 through 10 is Labour, then the imputed preference is Labour. In this case, when five of the ten metrics considered estimate that the voter preferred Labour, the clarity score is one-half.

The intuition behind the clarity score is simple - the greater the number of metrics that estimate the respondent’s preferred party a certain way, the more confident we are that the imputed party is the respondent’s preferred party. Of course, the clarity score should not be interpreted as a precise error estimate, nor should it be interpreted as an estimate of the probability that the imputation is accurate. But the clarity score does provide a rough ballpark estimate of the reliability of the party preference imputation for each voter.

The distribution of clarity scores for the pre-campaign imputation is displayed in Figure 3.2. The figure excludes the voters for whom the imputation scheme could not identify a preferred party. Of the voters for whom my imputation method yielded an estimate, nearly 50% have clarity scores of 1, and another 40% have clarity scores above 0.6. There is good reason to be fairly confident in most of my party preference imputations. I will consider clarity scores when assessing convergence between my tactical voting prediction and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations in Chapter 5.
Figure 3.2: The figure shows the distribution of party preference clarity scores across the BES pre-campaign internet survey (n = 10466), excluding those voters for whom the imputation method could not determine a preferred party. It shows that most voters for whom the imputation method yielded an estimate of preferred party have imputed party preferences above 0.6.

Vote Choice

I am interested in predicting which votes were cast tactically. Therefore, I will consider as respondents’ vote choice the party they said they voted for in the post-election wave of the BES internet survey. Of course, as noted in chapter 2, using respondents’ recall of their voting decision exposes my result to recall bias. But using the post-election recall of vote choice is a better alternative than using voters’ expectations of their vote choice from either the campaign wave or the pre-campaign wave. Ultimately, I am interested in examining respondents’ avowed motivations for their vote choice, as expressed in the post-election survey. Accordingly, it makes sense to look at vote choice
from the post-election survey since that vote choice is expressed alongside the 
voter’s avowed motivations for the vote choice.

![Vote Choice, Among all Voters in the 2010 BES Internet Survey](image)

Figure 3.3: The figure shows the distribution of vote choice in the post-election 
wave of the BES internet survey (n = 12180).

Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of vote choice among the 12180 voters in 
the BES internet survey. The vote choice distribution is approximately similar 
to the distribution of pre-campaign imputed party preferences, as displayed in 
Figure 3.1. There is one glaring difference - the proportion of voters who said 
they voted Liberal Democrat is more than 10% higher than the proportion 
of voters whose imputed pre-campaign preferred party was Liberal Democrat. 
This suggests that a sizable number of voters deserted their pre-campaign 
preferred party to vote Liberal Democrat.\(^5\)

\(^5\)Compared to the actual 2010 election result, the vote choice from the 2010 BES internet 
survey post-election wave overstates the level of Liberal Democrat support and understates 
the level of Labour support. Liberal Democrats received 23.0% of the vote in the 2010 
election; in the post-election wave, they received 27.1% of the vote. Labour received 29.0%
The first criterion in my prediction model dictates that respondents must vote for a party other than their preferred party in order to be considered tactical voters. For now, I assume that voters for whom my imputation method could not determine a party preference did not satisfy this criterion. This is a conservative assumption that will almost certainly lead me to underestimate the actual level of tactical voting. Based on respondents’ avowed vote choice in the post-election wave and the pre-campaign imputation of party preference, I estimate that 21.7% (or 2637) of the 12180 voters in the BES internet survey vote for a party other than their most preferred party.\footnote{This is 25.2\% of the 10466 voters for whom my pre-campaign imputation method could successfully estimate a party preference.}

Expectations of Preferred Party Performance

Next, I will determine who satisfies the second criterion in my prediction model: voters must think their preferred party will finish in third or worse in the constituency. The pre-campaign internet survey asks voters to rate on a 0 to 10 scale - where 0 is unlikely and 10 is likely - each party’s chances of winning the election in their constituency. It asks the question about the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP and Plaid Cymru. It also asks, “On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means very unlikely and 10 means very likely, how likely is it that one of the other parties like the BNP, the Greens, Respect, or UKIP (or the Scottish Socialists if you live in Scotland) will win the election in your local constituency?” From the ratings for the five parties about which the BES asks directly, I can determine whether the voter thinks his or her preferred party will finish in third or worse in the
constituency. I should note that if the voter believes that his or her preferred party is tied for second position in the constituency, I will not code that voter as preferring a party expected to finish in third or worse. Additionally, any voter for whom the imputation procedure does not yield a party preference and any voter who opts not to rate his or her preferred party’s chances of winning in the constituency election will not be coded as preferring a party expected to finish in third or worse.

There are several possible strategies for dealing with voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP, parties the BES aggregates into a single question about respondent expectations of minor party performance. Under the most conservative approach, I would not code voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP as expecting their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency. This approach might be justified since it is impossible to determine whether those who prefer BNP, Green and UKIP are actually offering their beliefs about their preferred party’s expected performance when they answer the question about their expectations for the performance of minor parties in the constituency. After all, at least some voters might be responding with their expectations for the performance of another among these minor parties. Using this conservative coding strategy would mean that no voter who supports BNP, Green or UKIP could meet the second tactical voting criterion. Accordingly, none of these voters would be predicted to be tactical voters under my model. Using this coding strategy, I would record 1374 respondents who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency. This is 11.3% of the 12180 voters in the post-election BES internet survey.

In reality, assuming that BNP, Green and UKIP supporters do not think that their preferred party will finish in third or worse is unrealistic since these parties are not competitive in the vast majority of constituencies. Another
strategy for dealing with these BNP, Green and UKIP supporters is to assume that they all think that their preferred party will finish in third or worse. But this assumption is not defensible. In the BES pre-campaign internet survey, 530 voters believed that one of these minor parties would finish in second or better. 43 among this group rated the likelihood of victory for one of the minor parties as a 9 or 10 out of 10. Clearly, not all voters believe that minor parties are destined to lose at election time.

A better strategy is to assume that when these minor party supporters give their expectations of minor party performance, they answer the question with their preferred party in mind. Using this strategy, I record 2147 voters who preferred a party they expected to finish in third or worse in the constituency. This is 17.6% of the 12180 BES internet survey voters.

This estimate is probably still conservative. It is reasonable to think that the question wording will induce at least some respondents to answer with their expectations for the performance of the minor party most likely to do well in the constituency, which may differ from their expectations for preferred party performance. This means that the strategy might underestimate the number of voters who think their preferred party is running in third or worse. After all, if voters believe that the most competitive among the minor parties will finish in second, and if they prefer a different minor party, then they certainly believe that their preferred party will finish in third or worse. But those voters would not be coded as expecting their preferred party to finish in third or worse. Of course, this underestimation is far less egregious than the

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5These 2147 voters who were coded as fulfilling the second criterion constituted 22.3% of the 9591 voters who provided enough information about their expectations in the BES so that it was possible to determine which parties they thought were running in third or worse.

8I would generally not expect voters to respond with anything other than their expectations for their preferred party or their expectations for the party most likely to do well in the constituency.
underestimation that results from assuming that all voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP do not expect their preferred party to finish in third or worse.\(^9\)

Therefore, I use the results of this less conservative method to identify who satisfies the second criterion in my tactical voting prediction model.

**Expected Performance of Respondent Vote Choice**

The third criterion in the predictive model is that tactical voters must expect the party for which they vote to finish better than their preferred party.\(^{10}\) I identify 1178 respondents who voted for a party they thought would finish better than their preferred party. This is 9.7\% of all voters in the BES and just 44.7\% of the 2637 voters who voted for a party other than their most preferred party.\(^{11}\) Less than half of those who vote for a party other than their preferred party are voting for a party they expect will finish better in the constituency. Thus, many voters who appear to have voted for a party other than the one they prefer most are not voting tactically, per the standard political science definition of the term.

\(^9\)Rather than assuming that all 1409 voters who preferred either BNP, Green or UKIP did not believe their party to be in third or worse, as the most conservative procedure does, this method assumes just that 636 voters who preferred either BNP, Green or UKIP did not believe their party to be in third or worse.

\(^{10}\)Voters who vote for their preferred party cannot satisfy this third criterion, nor can voters who do not rate their expectations for either their preferred party’s performance or for their vote choice’s performance. For respondents who vote for BNP, Green, UKIP or any other minor party, I use the responses to the aggregated question about minor party performance as a proxy for how these voters expect their vote choice to perform.

\(^{11}\)This is just 45.4\% of the 2597 who voted for a party other than their most preferred party and who registered their performance expectations for both their preferred party and the party for whom they voted.
Preliminary Tactical Voting Prediction

Voters are predicted to have voted tactically when they have satisfied all three criteria in my predictive model. Per this predictive model, I identify 881 tactical voters. This is 7.2% of the 12180 voters in the BES internet survey, which aligns with Fisher’s aggregate estimates for the level of tactical voting in less recent elections - 5% in 1987, 7.7% in 1992 and 8.5% in 1997 (Fisher 2004, 163). But my estimate is approximately one-half the estimated level of tactical voting from the 2001 (14%) and 2005 (15%) elections (Clarke et al 2004, 83; Blais et al 2006, 5). Judging from what seems to be the increasing prevalence of tactical voting in British elections, my estimate for the level of tactical voting in the 2010 election is low. This may be a product of the conservative nature of my estimation procedure, or it might suggest that tactical voting was not as common in the 2010 election. I will consider these possibilities later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

This election did not follow the traditional tactical voting dynamic. Voters who prefer the Liberal Democrats usually vote tactically at a much higher clip than those who prefer Labour. In the 2010 BES internet survey, while 253 predicted tactical voters preferred Labour, just 111 predicted tactical voters preferred the Liberal Democrats. This equates to 8.1% of Labour supporters and just 6.4% of Liberal Democrat supporters voting tactically. Labour’s electoral prospects looked grim in much of the lead-up to the 2010 election. Perhaps this explains the increased tendency towards tactical voting among voters who preferred Labour. Even before the campaign started, many Labour supporters may have adjusted their expectations for Labour’s performance and may have thus been more willing to vote tactically in the election itself.
Self-Identification of Tactical Voting

Voters were asked in the post-election wave of the BES internet survey why they decided to vote the way they did. Two provided choices are: “c) I really preferred another party but it stood no chance of winning in my constituency; d) I voted tactically.” Both of these responses indicate that the voter was guided by tactical motivations. This interpretation of these two responses is consistent with their traditional interpretation in the tactical voting literature (Heath et al 1991; Fisher 2004). Including both responses, there were 2074 voters who self-identified tactical motivations. This constitutes 17.0% of voters in the internet survey. Breaking down these self-identifiers of tactical motivations, 989 of the 2074 said that they preferred another party that stood no chance of winning. The rest - 1085 - explicitly said that they voted tactically.

That 17% of voters in the 2010 BES internet survey self-identify tactical motivations aligns closely with aggregate estimates of tactical voting in recent elections. This is not surprising, given that Clarke et al. (2004) and Blais et al. (2006) use the same exact voter self-identifications of tactical motivations from the question reproduced above in order to estimate the extent of tactical voting. What this result does suggest is that tactical voting seems to be about as common as it was in the 2001 and 2005 elections.

More importantly, though, many voters who self-identify tactical motivations are not predicted ex ante as tactical voters. Table 3.1 displays the distribution of voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are predicted ex ante to be tactical voters. Among those who said they preferred a party that stood no chance of winning in the constituency, I predicted just 31.6% to be tactical voters. Of those who explicitly said they voted tactically, I predicted just 19.6% to be tactical voters. In total, then, I predicted just 526, or 25.3%, of the 2074 voters who self-identified tactical motivations to be
### Table 3.1: Self-Identification of Tactical Motivations and *Ex Ante* Prediction of Tactical Voting: Assessing Convergence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Not Predicted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI: No Chance</strong></td>
<td>313</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI: Explicit</strong></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>1085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not SI</strong></td>
<td>355</td>
<td>9751</td>
<td>10106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>881</td>
<td>11299</td>
<td>12180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“SI: No Chance” indicates that the voter said his or her preferred party stood no chance in the constituency; “SI: Explicit” indicates voters who explicitly said that they voted tactically; and “Not SI” indicates that the voter did not self-identify tactical motivations.

This means that 355, or 40.3%, of the 881 voters I predicted to be tactical voters do not express tactical motivations.

It is troubling that the standard political science definition predicts a subset of tactical voters that does not converge well with the subset who express tactical motivations in the post-election survey. Many voters who are *ex ante* predicted tactical voters do not self-identify tactical motivations, and many voters who self-identify tactical motivations are not *ex ante* predicted tactical voters. Perhaps it is possible to achieve better convergence with voters’ self-identification of tactical voting in the post-election survey if I examine the lay of the land at the time of the post-election survey itself. The next chapter will assess whether the lack of convergence between my prediction of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations also persists when I identify tactical voters *ex post*, based on the post-election survey and the actual election results, rather than predicting them *ex ante* based on the pre-campaign survey. In other words, does identifying voters who look like tactical voters after the election improve convergence between the standard political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations in the post-election survey?
Chapter 4: *Ex Post*

Identification of Tactical Voting in the 2010 BES

In Chapter 3, I predicted *ex ante* which respondents in the BES internet survey voted tactically. But the convergence between the set of *ex ante* predicted tactical voters and the set of voters who self-identified tactical motivations was surprisingly low. Perhaps convergence was low because the self-identification of tactical motivations that I consider is recorded in the post-election survey. This chapter imputes party preference from the post-election survey and uses the actual election results in order to identify which voters look like tactical voters *ex post*. I perform these analyses in order to assess whether identifying who looks like a tactical voter *ex post* improves convergence between the self-identification of tactical motivations from the post-election survey and the standard political science definition of tactical voting.

**Post-Election Imputation of Party Preference**

The standard political science definition of tactical voting dictates that tactical voters must satisfy three criteria: they must not vote for their preferred
party, they must expect their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the
constituency, and they must expect the party for which they vote to finish bet-
ter than their preferred party. In this chapter, I am interested in reassessing
the level of convergence between that standard definition and voters’ self-
identification of tactical motivations from the post-election survey. Therefore,
I will use the lay of the land at the time of post-election survey to identify ex
post who looks like a tactical voter, using the three tactical voting criteria. To
do this, I estimate voters’ party preferences from the post-election survey and
use actual election results instead of voters’ election outcome expectations.

One risk inherent in estimating party preferences from the post-election
survey is that voters might change their avowed party preference after the
election to reflect their vote choice in the election itself. But using a rigor-
ous imputation method, as outlined in Chapter 3, will help me detect voters
who, for instance, may simply alter their avowed preferences to come to terms
with voting for a party other than their actual preferred party. By using all
information in the post-election survey that relates to party preference in or-
der to estimate that preference, I can cross-check whether the voter’s avowed
preference is consistent with other responses that have some bearing on party
preference. This strategy will help me account for voters who really prefer one
party but who avow a different preference in the post-election survey.

But some voters’ party preferences actually might change in response to
their vote choice. In other words, some respondents may switch their party
preference to party X after they have voted for party X. But because I am
interested in analyzing voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations from
the post-election survey, this is hardly problematic. If voters base their self-
assessments of voting motivations on their preferences at the time of the post-
election survey, then the ex post identification scheme will not identify as
tactical voters at least some respondents who were predicted \textit{ex ante} tactical voters but who switched their party preference after the election. This would narrow the convergence gap created by respondents who were \textit{ex ante} predicted tactical voters but who do not self-identify tactical motivations in the post-election survey.

\textbf{Party Preference Metrics, Post-Election Imputation}

Just as in Chapter 3, I impute party preference from the sets of BES questions that relate to party preference. From the BES post-election internet survey, I derive nine metrics. 7 of these 9 metrics were also featured in the pre-campaign imputation of party preference.\footnote{Only metrics 4 (Tax/Spend Dimension Proximity) and 6 (Party Leader Competence) from the pre-campaign imputation cannot also be constructed from the post-election survey.} Where necessary, Appendix A offers additional information on the calculation of these metrics.

- Metric 1: Explicit Self-Identification. The post-election wave asks, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?” The voter’s response is coded as the metric 1 estimate of preferred party. There are nine possible responses - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green Party, UKIP, BNP, and unknown/none.

- Metric 2: Strength-of-Feeling, Parties. The post-election wave asks, “On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about X?” There were five questions in the BES that followed this format, one each for Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, and Plaid Cymru. The metric 2 estimate of preferred party is the party that received the respondent’s highest rating.
The metric has a menu of six choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, and unknown/none.

- Metric 3: Most Important Issue. The post-election wave asks, “Which party is best able to handle [what you think is the single most important issue facing the country at the present time]?” The voter’s response is coded as the metric 3 estimate of preferred party. There are nine possible responses – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green Party, UKIP, BNP, and unknown/none.

- Metric 4: Criminal Justice Dimension Proximity.\(^2\) The post-election survey asks, “Some people think that reducing crime is more important than protecting the rights of people accused of committing crimes. Other people think that protecting the rights of accused people, regardless of whether they have been convicted of committing a crime, is more important than reducing crime. On the 0-10 scale below [where 0 prioritizes reducing crime and 10 prioritizes the rights of the accused], where would you place X’s view?” The BES asks six questions in this format – the first of these questions asks respondents to place themselves on that scale, and the next five ask the respondent to place Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the SNP on the scale. The metric’s estimate of preferred party is the party that is the closest (in absolute distance) to the voter’s self-identified position on the 0 to 10 scale. This metric has a menu of six choices – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and unknown/none.

- Metric 5: Strength-of-Feeling, Party Leaders. The post-election wave

\(^2\)Unfortunately, the post-election survey does not ask about the tax/spend dimension. The criminal justice/rights-of-accused dimension is hardly the traditional dimension on which Downsian theory of party preference is considered. But in the absence of post-election information on the tax/spend dimension, this is the best I can do.
asks, “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about X?” Five questions follow this format, one each for Gordon Brown (Labour), David Cameron (Conservative), Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat), Alex Salmond (SNP), and Ieuan Wyn Jones (Plaid Cymru). The metric 5 estimate of party preference is the party affiliation of the leader whose rating was highest on the 0 to 10 scale. The metric has a menu of six choices – Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and unknown/none.

- Metric 6: Party Leader Knowledge. The post-election wave asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think that in general he knows what he is talking about, or that he doesn’t know? Please use the following scale where 0 means that X really doesn’t know what he is talking about and 10 means he knows very much what he is talking about.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 6 estimate is the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the respondent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and unknown/none.

- Metric 7: Party Leader Best Interests. The post-election survey asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think he has your best interests in mind, or that he does not think about your best interests? Please use the following scale where 0 means that X never has your best interests in mind, and 10 means that he always does.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 7 estimate is the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the re-
spondent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and unknown/none.

- Metric 8: Party Leader Truthful. The post-election survey asks the following question pattern: “When you listen to what X has to say, do you think generally that he tells the truth, or that he does not tell the truth? Please use the following scale where 0 means that he never tells the truth and 10 means that he always tells the truth.” The question is asked three times, once each about Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The metric 8 estimate is the party affiliation of the leader who receives the highest rating from the respondent. This metric has a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and none/other.

- Metric 9: Best Prime Minister. The post-election wave asks, “Who would make the best Prime Minister?” The voter is asked to choose between Gordon Brown, David Cameron, and Nick Clegg. The metric 9 estimate is the voter’s response. There is a menu of four choices - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and unknown/none.

**Imputing Preferences from the Post-Election Metrics**

The post-election imputation follows the same general logic as the pre-campaign imputation described in Chapter 3. To impute the voter’s preferred party from the metrics, I begin by considering just post-election metrics 1 and 3. Unlike pre-campaign metric 2, post-election metric 2 does not include BNP, Green or UKIP among its menu of possible estimates, so it (and post-election metrics 4 through 9) would inaccurately estimate the preferred party of voters who truly prefer BNP, Green or UKIP.
If either metric 1 or metric 3 estimates that the voter prefers BNP, Green or UKIP, I do not consider any other metrics. In that case, when both metrics estimate that the voter prefers the same party, that party is the imputed party preference. But if metrics 1 and 3 disagree, then the imputed party preference will be unknown/none. The lone exception is if one of the two metrics estimates that the preferred party is unknown/other, and the other estimates that the voter prefers one of the three minor parties: in that case, the lone determinate estimate is the imputed party preference.

If neither post-election metrics 1 nor 3 estimate that the voter prefers BNP, Green or UKIP, I then consider post-election metric 2 along with metrics 1 and 3. From here, the procedures for imputing party preference mirror those used for the pre-campaign imputation. The procedure only differs in the number of additional metrics considered in the event that metrics 1 through 3 alone are insufficient to impute the party preference. When 1 through 3 alone are insufficient, then if metrics 1, 2 or 3 estimate that the voter prefers SNP or Plaid Cymru, I additionally consider just metrics 4 and 5 (instead of 4-6, as is the case in the pre-campaign imputation); but if metrics 1 through 3 do not estimate that the voter prefers one of the two regional parties, then I consider metrics 4 through 9.

The histogram on the left in Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of post-election imputed party preferences for the 12180 voters in the BES internet survey. The one on the right displays the distribution of voter party identification from the post-election survey, as recorded in metric 1. As was the case in the pre-campaign imputation, the post-campaign imputation estimates a lower fraction of Labour voters and a higher fraction of voters with unknown party preference than does the self-identification in metric 1. That 782 (or about 19.5%) of the 4012 voters who self-identified as Labour supporter gave
Figure 4.1: The histogram on the left shows the distribution of post-election imputed party preferences for the 12180 BES internet survey voters. The histogram on the right shows the distribution of voter self-identification of party support, as recorded in post-election metric 1. In both figures, DNK (do not know) represents the voters for whom it was not possible to identify a party preference or who did not vote for one of the eight listed parties.

answers to other BES questions that suggested they did not actually prefer Labour could reflect the general dissatisfaction with the Labour government in the lead-up to the election and the force of habit that may have driven many of these voters to continue to claim that they preferred Labour.

**Estimating Uncertainty: Clarity Scores**

In order to roughly quantify the level of uncertainty associated with my party preference estimates, I calculate a clarity score associated with each voter’s imputed preferred party. The clarity score ranges from 0 to 1. It is calculated using the same rules described in Chapter 3.

Figure 2 displays the distribution of clarity scores for the post-election imputation of party preference. The figure omits voters for whom the imputation method could not estimate a preferred party. As with the pre-campaign im-
Figure 4.2: The figure shows the distribution of party preference clarity scores for the post-election imputation of party preference, excluding those voters for whom the imputation method could not determine a party preference (n = 101816). The vast majority of these voters have clarity scores above 0.6.

Imputation of party preference, over half of voters have clarity scores of 1, and almost 90% have clarity scores above 0.6. There is good reason to be fairly confident in my post-election imputation of party preference.

Comparing Pre-Campaign and Post-Election Imputations

For 3547 (or 29.1%) of the 12180 voters in the internet survey, the imputed party preference changed between the pre-campaign and post-election imputations. Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of pre-campaign (at left) and post-election (at right) imputed party preferences for respondents whose imputed preferences changed. The number of voters who preferred the Conservatives and Labour increased. There was an especially substantial increase in the number of voters who preferred the Liberal Democrats - 14.3% preferred them in
Figure 4.3: The histograms examine the 3547 voters whose imputed preference changed from the pre-campaign to the post-election imputation. The histogram on the left displays the distribution of pre-campaign imputed preferences for these voters; the histogram on the right displays the distribution of post-election imputed preferences for these voters. The number of voters who preferred the Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal Democrats, increased, while the number of voters who preferred UKIP and for whom I could not identify the imputed party preference decreased.

the pre-campaign imputation, while 19.1% preferred them in the post-election imputation. These increases are likely the product of a campaign period that places voters’ focus predominantly (and almost exclusively) on the three major parties. The substantial rise in Liberal Democrat support, in particular, reflects the late Liberal Democrat surge after the leader debates that took place just before the election.

The number of voters whose imputed preference was BNP, Green and UKIP declined from pre-election to post-election imputation. There were three pre-election metrics that included a full menu of possible preferred party estimates but there were only two post-election metrics that included a full menu. This meant that I had less information on post-election party preference for those who might have been minor party supporters, which made it harder to impute
these voters’ party preferences. My post-election imputation scheme classifies 287 of the 876 who expressed in post-election metric 1 that they self-identified as supporters of BNP, Green or UKIP as having a “none/unknown” preference; in particular, 179 of the 497 (or 36%) who self-identified post-election as UKIP supporters had a “none/unknown” post-election imputed party preference. But even though the post-election imputation recorded some minor party supporters as having an unknown preference, the number of voters for whom my imputation could not determine a preference declined from the pre-campaign to the post-election imputation. Many voters who did not initially express a clear preference ended up preferring either the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives or Labour. This supports the notion that the campaign period channels voter focus and support towards the three major parties.

**Vote Choice and the Post-Election Imputation**

The first criterion in the standard political science definition of tactical voting is that tactical voters cannot vote for their most preferred party. As in Chapter 3, I use the voter’s recall of vote choice from the post-election survey. Based on the post-election imputation of party preference, 1796 (or 14.7%) of 12180 internet survey voters satisfy the first tactical voting criterion.\(^3\)

**Considering Election Outcomes**

The second criterion in the political science definition of tactical voting is that tactical voters must think that their preferred party is running in third or

\(^3\)Based on the pre-campaign imputation, I estimated that 2637 voters (or 21.7%) voted for a party other than their most preferred party. The decline in the number of voters who satisfy the first criterion is not all that surprising. Voters change their preferences during the campaign and may vote sincerely for their top preference, so it is expected that vote choice will align more closely with post-election preference than with pre-election preference.
worse in the constituency. The third criterion is that tactical voters must vote for a party that they expect to finish better than their preferred party. But as noted earlier, this chapter attempts to identify which voters look like tactical voters, based on the “lay of the land” at the time of the post-election survey. This kind of ex post analysis requires recourse to the constituency election results. Therefore, voters fulfill the second ex post identification criterion if their (post-election imputed) preferred party finishes in third or worse in the constituency. They fulfill the third ex post identification criterion if they vote for a party that finishes better than that preferred party. Any voter whose preferred party is imputed as “unknown/none” in the post-election imputation will be coded as satisfying neither of these two criteria.

3061 (or 25.1%) of the 12180 voters in the internet survey prefer a party that finished in third or worse in the constituency. These 3061 included just 1134 voters who expected in the pre-campaign survey that their preferred party would finish in third or worse in the constituency. In other words, only 52.8% of voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse before the campaign started actually had their preferred party finish in third or worse in the constituency. Even more striking, just 37.0% of voters whose preferred party actually finished third or worse in the constituency were coded as expecting that outcome in the pre-campaign survey. Many voters were misinformed about the electoral situation in their constituency just before the 2010 campaign began, a theme I will explore in greater depth in Chapter 5.

1035 (or 8.5%) of the 12180 voters in the internet survey satisfy the third ex post identification tactical voting criterion by voting for a party that fin-

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4This is much higher than the number of voters (2147) who expected in the pre-campaign survey that their preferred party would finish in third or worse.
5This figure becomes 41.6% when I consider that for 332 of the 3061 voters whose preferred party finished in third or worse, it was not possible to determine from the survey responses whether or not the voter expected the preferred party to finish in third or worse.
ished better than their preferred party. These voters constitute 57.6% of respondents who voted for a party other than their preferred party. This suggests that a large minority of voters who do not vote for their preferred party do not look like tactical voters because they vote for a party that ultimately performed worse in the constituency than their preferred party.

**Identification of Tactical Voting**

Based on the political science definition of tactical voting, I identify 873 (or 7.2%) of the 12180 voters in the internet survey as tactical voters *ex post*. In other words, these 873 look like tactical voters based on their post-election survey responses and on the actual election results. In Chapter 3, I predicted *ex ante* a set of 881 tactical voters. Therefore, as a fraction of the total number of voters in the internet survey, my two tactical voting estimates are similar. As with the *ex ante* prediction, though, my *ex post* identification estimate is about one-half the size of typical tactical voting estimates for the two most recent British elections (see Clarke et al. 2004, 83; Blais et al. 2006, 5).

Of the 873 *ex post* identified tactical voters, just 356 (or 40.8%) were predicted as tactical voters *ex ante*. Meanwhile, 525 (or 59.6%) of the 881 voters who were predicted *ex ante* as tactical voters did not look like tactical voters *ex post*. A majority of voters who fit the tactical voting criteria *ex ante* do not look like tactical voters *ex post*. Chapter 5 will consider several possible explanations for this result: voters may change their minds about their party preference, they may change their expectations for the constituency outcome, they may change their minds about their party preference, they may change their expectations for the constituency outcome,

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6For voters who say they voted for a party other than the eight given choices in the survey, I use as a proxy for the vote choice’s vote share in the constituency the highest vote share received by a minor party not among the eight given choices. For instance, for voters who said that they voted for a party other than the eight given choices in Birmingham Hall Green, I presume that the vote share of the vote choice was 25.1%, which was the Respect Party’s vote share in the constituency. Even if the respondent voted for an unlisted party other than Respect, the vote share of the respondent’s vote choice is recorded as 25.1%.
or their pre-campaign constituency outcome expectations may be incorrect.

Assessing Convergence

To conclude this chapter, I assess the level of convergence between my *ex post* identification of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations in the post-election survey. Table 4.1 displays the distribution of voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are identified *ex post* as tactical voters. Among the 873 voters who were identified as tactical voters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI: No Chance</th>
<th>Identified</th>
<th>Not Identified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI: Explicit</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not SI</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>1085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>221</td>
<td>9885</td>
<td>10106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>873</td>
<td>11307</td>
<td>12180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Self-Identification of Tactical Motivations and *Ex Post* Identification of Tactical Voting: Assessing Convergence. “SI: No Chance” indicates that the voter said his or her preferred party stood no chance in the constituency; “SI: Explicit” indicates voters who explicitly said that they voted tactically; and “Not SI” indicates that the voter did not self-identify tactical motivations.

*ex post*, 74.7% self-identified tactical motivations. This means that almost a quarter of all *ex post* identified tactical voters did not self-identify tactical motivations. What is more troubling, though, is that just 31.4% of the 2074 voters who self-identify tactical motivations were identified *ex post* as tactical voters. Breaking this down, 37.7% of the voters who said their preferred party stood no chance of winning were identified as tactical voters *ex post*, and just 25.2% of the voters who explicitly self-identify as tactical voters looked like tactical voters *ex post*.

Identifying tactical voters *ex post* does slightly improve convergence between the political science definition of tactical voting and voter self-identification
of tactical motivation. Just 59.7% of \( \text{ex ante} \) predicted tactical voters self-identified tactical motivations in the post-election survey; this improves to 74.7% when I identify tactical voters \( \text{ex post} \). Meanwhile, just 25.3% of voters who self-identified tactical motivations were predicted \( \text{ex ante} \) as tactical voters; this improves to 31.4% when I identify tactical voters \( \text{ex post} \).

But even with these improvements, convergence is still fairly poor. Table 4.2 shows possible combinations of \( \text{ex ante} \) prediction, \( \text{ex post} \) identification, and self-identification of tactical motivations. Row 7 of the table contains the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \text{P, I, &amp; SI} )</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{P, not I, &amp; SI} )</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{Not P, I &amp; SI} )</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{P, I, &amp; not SI} )</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{P, not I &amp; not SI} )</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{Not P, I &amp; not SI} )</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{Not P, Not I &amp; SI} )</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{Not P, Not I &amp; not SI} )</td>
<td>9582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12180</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Breaking Down \( \text{ex ante} \) Prediction, \( \text{ex post} \) Identification and Self-Identification. \( \text{P} = \text{ex ante} \) predicted; \( \text{I} = \text{ex post} \) identified; \( \text{SI} = \text{self-identified} \).

1200 voters who were not predicted \( \text{ex ante} \) or identified \( \text{ex post} \) as tactical voters but who self-identify tactical motivations. These 1200 voters constitute 57.9% of all voters who self-identify tactical motivations. This underscores the primary source of the convergence issue: voters who do not appear to satisfy the political science criteria for tactical voting but who self-identify tactical motivations anyway.\(^7\) Fortunately, row 4 of the table contains only 52 voters who appear to satisfy the political science criteria for tactical voting both pre-campaign and post-election but who do not self-identify tactical motivations.

\(^7\)Breaking down these 1200 voters, 483 said they preferred a party that stood no chance in the constituency, and 717 explicitly said that they voted tactically.
Voters who satisfy the political science definition of tactical voting but who do not self-identify tactical motivations pose a far smaller convergence problem.

The continued lack of convergence has several plausible explanations. First, voters may switch their party preferences between the pre-campaign survey and the time of the election, or they may update their expectations of party performance before the election. If this is true, my ex ante prediction model might not have picked up many voters who later express tactical motivations. Second, my prediction and identification attempts may have missed some tactical voters because of the procedures I use to predict and identify tactical voters. Third, voters might have had inaccurate expectations for the election result, so my ex post identification of tactical voting may have missed some voters who thought that the election outcome would be different than it actually was. Finally, it is possible that many voters simply do not know what the catchphrase “tactical voting” means or that they have a different conception of what voting tactically means. The next chapter address each of these possibilities, probing why the prediction and identification of tactical voters based on the political science definition of tactical voting does not converge well with voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations.
Chapter 5: Why Is There a Convergence Problem?

This chapter examines why my *ex ante* prediction and *ex post* identification of tactical voting do not converge well with voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations. First, I assess whether voters change their expectations of party performance between the pre-campaign and post-election surveys: do those changes explain the convergence problems associated with the *ex ante* tactical voting prediction? I then consider whether inaccuracies in voters’ expectations of party performance explain the convergence problem encountered in the *ex post* tactical voting identification. Third, I address whether convergence problems are a consequence of my estimation procedures. The chapter concludes by analyzing any remaining voters who I do not predict *ex ante* or identify *ex post* as tactical voters but who still self-identify tactical motivations: why do these voters self-identify tactical motivations even though they do not fit the political science definition of tactical voting?

Changes in Voters’ Expectations

In Chapter 3, I used voters’ expectations of the election outcome from the pre-campaign wave of the BES internet survey to predict tactical voting *ex*
Accordingly, convergence between the *ex ante* prediction of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations in the post-election survey may have been low because voters update their expectations of party performance, along with their party preferences, as the election approaches.

In Chapter 4, I used constituency election outcomes instead of using voters’ expectations of party performance. But the voter does not have access to election results on election day. Using election outcomes as a proxy for voter expectations is risky: it assumes that all voters correctly identify the electoral competitiveness of each of the parties. Polling data are not available in most constituencies, so many voters may not have known the exact electoral dynamics in their constituency, especially in a volatile election like 2010. This is especially true for voters who were voting in a new constituency in 2010 thanks to constituency boundary changes.

Unfortunately, the post-election wave of the internet survey does not ask about voters’ expectations of party performance in the constituency. The next best alternative, then, is to use voters’ recorded expectations of party performance from the campaign wave of the internet survey.\(^1\) Therefore, to estimate tactical voting anew using the three criteria embedded in the political science definition of tactical voting, I combine voters’ recorded expectations from the campaign wave with their post-election preferred party imputation.

Using responses from two different waves of the survey may seem problematic. For instance, if voters’ preferred party is somehow a function of their perception of constituency electoral dynamics, then combining imputed

\(^1\)Of course, using party performance expectations from the campaign survey assumes that voters retained those expectations all the way up to the time of the election. Given the fluid nature of the election contest in the weeks leading up to election day, this assumption may not be warranted for voters who were administered the campaign wave at the start of the campaign period, nearly one month before election day. Nonetheless, using voter expectations from the campaign survey will offer important insights into whether changes in voter expectations of party performance, together with changes in party performance, might have accounted for convergence problems in the *ex ante* prediction of tactical voting.
party preference and election expectations from different waves of the internet survey might paint an incoherent - or, at very least, inaccurate - picture for voters whose expectations change between the campaign survey and the election. Nonetheless, I combine party preference and election outcome expectations from different waves of the internet survey because the preferred party imputation from the post-election wave and voters’ expectations of election outcome from the campaign wave are the closest available estimates of voters’ preferred party and voters’ election outcome expectations at the time of the election and at the time of the post-election survey. Employing information that is most directly pertinent to voter beliefs at the time of the election and at the time of the post-election survey will ground my assessment of whether accounting for changes in voter beliefs from the time of the pre-campaign wave can improve convergence between the political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identifications of tactical motivations.

**Estimating Tactical Voting Anew**

The campaign wave of the internet survey asks voters to rate on a 0 to 10 scale - where 0 is unlikely and 10 is likely - each party’s chances of winning the election in their constituency. The BES asks the question about the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP and Plaid Cymru. From the ratings for the five parties about which the BES asks directly, I determine whether voters satisfy the second and third criteria embedded in the political science definition of tactical voting - that is, I determine whether voters expect their preferred party (from the post-election imputation) to finish in third or worse in the constituency and whether they expect their vote choice to finish better in the constituency than their preferred party. I follow the same procedures outlined in Chapter 3 for determining voters’ expectations of the election out-
come. The lone difference in procedure is that the campaign wave, unlike the pre-campaign wave, does not ask voters about their expectations for the performance of minor parties like the BNP, Green and UKIP. Without any indication of how voters who prefer BNP, Green and UKIP think their preferred party will perform, I must drop these voters from my analyses. Therefore, all subsequent analyses in this section do not include voters who prefer one of these three minor parties.  

Based on the post-election imputation of party preference, I estimate that 1446 voters expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency. This is 12.5% of the 11534 voters who did not prefer BNP, Green or UKIP in the post-election imputation. In the *ex ante* prediction of tactical voting, 1374 (or 12.8%) of the 10771 voters who did not prefer BNP, Green or UKIP in the pre-campaign imputation expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency. While there is little difference between the pre-campaign and campaign surveys in terms of the proportion of voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency, just 657 (or 48.0%) of the 1374 voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the pre-campaign survey also expected that in the campaign survey. Meanwhile, 789 (or 54.6%) of the 1446 voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the campaign survey did not expect that in the pre-campaign survey. Clearly, the set of voters who satisfy the second tactical voting criterion based on post-election imputed party preference and campaign survey expectations of

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2Unfortunately, because the campaign survey did not ask about voters’ expectations of the performance of these minor parties, some voters who thought their preferred party would finish in third behind one of the minor parties will not be recorded as preferring a party expected to finish in third or worse. This may cause me to underestimate the number of tactical voters. But given that just 12 of the 12180 voters in the pre-campaign survey thought one of the minor parties would finish in second and their preferred party would finish in third, the size of that underestimate will probably be negligibly small.
election outcome is very different from the set who satisfy that criterion based on pre-campaign imputed party preference and pre-campaign expectations of election outcome.³

The third tactical voting criterion is that voters must expect the party for which they vote to do better than their preferred party.⁴ 853 respondents voted for a party they expected to finish better in the constituency than their preferred party. This is 63.5% of the 1343 voters who voted for a party other than their most preferred party. Just 453 (or 53.1%) of the 853 voters who satisfied the third criterion here also satisfied it in the ex ante tactical voting prediction. Additionally, 725 (or 61.5%) of the 1178 voters who satisfied the third criterion in the ex ante prediction do not satisfy that criterion based on the post-election imputation and voter expectations of election outcome from the campaign survey. As with the second criterion, the set of voters who satisfy the third tactical voting criterion based on post-election imputed party preference and campaign survey expectations of election outcome is very different from the set who satisfy that criterion based on pre-campaign imputed party preference and pre-campaign expectations of election outcome.

Respondents are estimated to be tactical voters when they satisfy the three criteria embedded within the political science definition of tactical voting.⁵ Based on the post-election imputation of party preference and voters’ expectations of party performance from the campaign survey, I identify 479 tactical

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³If I paired voters’ expectations of election outcome from the campaign survey with the pre-campaign imputation, then 1051 (or 76.5%) of the 1374 voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the ex ante prediction would still have expected that in the campaign survey. Therefore, discrepancies in the set of voters who satisfy the second criterion are not just the product of changes in voter expectations of election outcome. Rather, they are the product of the interplay between changes in party preference and changes in voter expectations.

⁴Respondents who say they voted for BNP, Green or UKIP cannot satisfy this criterion because I cannot assess their expectations for the performance of their vote choice.

⁵The result for the first criterion - that voters must not vote for their preferred party - is the same as in Chapter 4.
voters. This is 4.2% of the 11534 voters in the post-election imputation.\footnote{Because I have excluded voters who prefer minor parties, I will not attempt to compare this estimate to other scholars’ aggregate estimates of tactical voting from the literature.} Meanwhile, 458 (or 4.3%) of the 10771 voters from the pre-campaign imputation were predicted \textit{ex ante} as tactical voters. The proportion of voters who are estimated as tactical voters is not much different. But now that I have accounted for changes in voter party preference and expectations of election outcomes, has convergence improved?

Table 5.1 provides the distribution of estimated tactical voters (based on the post-election imputation and voter expectations from the campaign survey) and self-identifiers of tactical motivations. Of the 479 estimated tactical voters in the table, 83.1% self-identified tactical motivations. On the other hand, in the \textit{ex ante} prediction, just 319 (or 69.7%) of the 458 predicted tactical voters also self-identified tactical motivations. Updating voters’ expectations and party preferences reduces the proportion of voters who fit the political science definition of tactical voting but who do not self-identify tactical motivations. Thus, part of the convergence problem in the \textit{ex ante} prediction can be explained by the fact that voters update their expectations and their preferences.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lrrr}
\hline
 & Estimated Tactical & Not Estimated Tactical & Total \\
\hline
SI: No Chance & 242 & 650 & 892 \\
SI: Explicit & 156 & 847 & 1003 \\
Not SI & 81 & 9558 & 9639 \\
\hline
Total & 479 & 11053 & 11534 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Self-Identification of Tactical Motivations and Estimation of Tactical Voting (Based on Post-Election Party Preference Imputation and Voter Election Outcome Expectations from the Campaign Survey): Assessing Convergence. The table excludes all voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP in the post-election imputation. “SI: No Chance” indicates that the voter said his or her preferred party stood no chance in the constituency; “SI: Explicit” indicates voters who explicitly said that they voted tactically; and “Not SI” indicates that the voter did not self-identify tactical motivations.}
\end{table}
between the pre-campaign survey and the election itself.

But 79.0% of the 1895 voters who self-identify tactical motivations are not estimated as tactical voters based on the post-election imputation and voters’ expectations from the campaign survey. This is essentially the same result as in the *ex ante* prediction, where 81.5% of the 1627 voters who self-identify tactical motivations are not predicted as tactical voters. Clearly, updating voters’ expectations of election outcome and voters’ party preferences does not make a dent in the most important source of the convergence problem - namely, that an overwhelming majority of those who self-identify tactical motivations do not fit the political science definition of tactical voting. While I cannot assess the effect of changes in voter expectations of election outcomes for voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP, the analyses in this section show that the convergence problem in the *ex ante* prediction cannot simply be explained away by the fact that voters change their party preference or their expectations of election outcomes.

### Incorrect Expectations of Election Outcomes

In Chapter 4, I used constituency election outcomes and the post-election party preference imputation to identify respondents who looked like tactical voters based on the “lay of the land” at the time of the post-election survey. Convergence between the *ex post* identification of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations may have been low because many voters might not expect the constituency election to turn out the way it actually does. In other words, convergence may have been low because voters are mis-

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7 Breaking this down further, 72.9% of the 892 voters who say they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance were not estimated as tactical voters, and 84.7% of the 1003 voters who explicitly said they voted tactically were not estimated as tactical voters.
taken in their expectations of the election outcome. Appendix B investigates the extent to which voters are misinformed about the electoral situation in their constituency, examining in greater detail the effect of voter misinformation on the convergence problem associated with my *ex post* identification.

Fortunately, the result in the previous section - summarized in Table 5.1 - doubles as a good summary of the effect of accounting for voters’ incorrect election outcome expectations on the convergence problem associated with the *ex post* tactical voting identification. After all, voters’ expectations of the election outcome from the campaign wave constitute the best available estimate of voters’ expectations at the time of the election. As above, I exclude voters who prefer BNP, Green or UKIP.

As noted above, 83.1% of the 479 tactical voters estimated based on the post-election imputation and voter expectations from the campaign survey also self-identified tactical motivations. Meanwhile, 80.3% of the 636 *ex post* identified tactical voters self-identified tactical motivations. The improvement in convergence from accounting for voters’ incorrect expectations of election outcomes is practically indiscernible. Under both estimation methods, about four-fifths of the tactical voters I identify also self-identify tactical motivations.

Among the 1895 voters who self-identify tactical motivations, 79.0% are not estimated tactical voters based on the post-election imputation of party preference and voter expectations of election outcome from the campaign survey. Under the *ex post* identification, 73.0% of the 1895 are not identified as tactical voters. When I account for voters’ incorrect expectations of constituency election outcomes, the set of voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who do not fit the political science criteria for tactical voting actually grows. The convergence problem gets worse.

Before continuing, it is worth summarizing the extent of the convergence
problem that remains even after accounting for changes in voters' expectations and for voters' incorrect expectations of election outcomes. So far, I have described the results of three tactical voting estimation methods - the *ex ante* prediction in Chapter 3, the *ex post* identification in Chapter 4, and the estimation based on the post-election imputation and voters' expectations from the campaign survey in this chapter. Table 5.2 displays how many voters were estimated to be tactical voters by none, 1, 2 or all 3 of these methods. The table also shows how many in each grouping self-identified tactical motivations.

The first row of Table 5.2 shows that 93.9% of the 230 voters who were identified as tactical voters by all three of my estimation methods self-identify tactical motivations. This is an extremely strong result. The vast majority of voters who clearly satisfy the three criteria in the political science definition of tactical voting self-identify tactical motivations. These voters hardly seem like the source of the convergence problem.

But there are 1163 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are not identified as tactical voters by any among my three estimation methods. These 1163 voters constitutes 56.1% of all respondents who self-identify tactical motivations. The problem is particularly glaring among voters who explicitly say that they have voted tactically: 64.9% of these voters were not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SI: No Chance</th>
<th>SI: Explicit</th>
<th>Not SI</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estim. tactical by 3 methods</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estim. tactical by 2 methods</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estim. tactical by 1 method</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estim. tactical by 0 methods</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>9567</td>
<td>10730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>10106</td>
<td>12180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
identified as tactical voters by any of my three estimation methods. Clearly, the convergence problem finds its source in the set of voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who do not satisfy the three criteria embedded in the political science definition of tactical voting. Therefore, the rest of this chapter focuses on this problematic set of voters.

**Methodological Problems and Convergence**

Perhaps the problems with convergence between the political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations are the consequence of the methodology I have used to estimate tactical voting in this and preceding chapters. There are three ways my methodology may have caused me to miss some tactical voters. First, some of the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations and who were not picked up by any of my three estimation methods may have had their party preference imputed as “unknown”; this would have made it impossible for me to estimate that they were tactical voters. Second, voter non-response may have prevented me from determining some voters’ expectations for their preferred party’s performance; this would prevent the voter from being coded as satisfying either the second or the third criteria tactical voting criteria. Third, voter non-response may have prevented me from determining some voters’ expectations for the electoral performance of their vote choice; this would prevent the voter from being coded as satisfying the third tactical voting criterion.

Here, I consider just the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not picked up by any of my three estimation methods. Appendix C explains in greater detail which voters were precluded by my methodology from being estimated as tactical voters, and it describes the reasons they were
precluded. 425 of the 1163 were precluded by my methodology from being picked up in my \textit{ex ante} prediction. 353 voters were precluded in my \textit{ex post} identification. And 504 voters were precluded from being picked up in my estimation based on the post-election party preference imputation and voter expectations from the campaign survey.

But just 173 of the 1163 could not have been picked up by any of my three methods because of my methodology. This leaves 990 voters who could have still been successfully picked up by at least one of my estimation methods. In fact, 455 voters could have been successfully picked up by all three of the estimation methods.\footnote{Of the 990 who could have been coded as tactical voters by at least one among the three estimation procedures, 613 explicitly said they voted tactically and 377 said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance of winning. Of the 455 who could have been coded as tactical voters by all three estimation procedures, 291 explicitly said they voted tactically and 166 said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency.} My methodology does prevent me from picking up some voters who self-identify tactical motivations. But again, this only makes a dent in the convergence problem.

\textbf{Clarity Scores and Misidentification of Party Preference}

But perhaps I have misidentified the party preference of some of the 1163 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are not picked up by any of my three estimation methods. To assess whether this might be true for the 738 voters who were not picked up by any of my three methods and for whom my methodology did not preclude an \textit{ex ante} tactical voting prediction, I compare the distribution of pre-campaign clarity scores for these 738 voters with the distribution of pre-campaign clarity scores for the 526 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who I predict \textit{ex ante} to be tactical voters.\footnote{I make this comparison because it looks like I have gotten correct the party preference imputation for the 526 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are predicted \textit{ex ante} as tactical voters.}

\begin{itemize}
\item Of the 990 who could have been coded as tactical voters by at least one among the three estimation procedures, 613 explicitly said they voted tactically and 377 said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance of winning. Of the 455 who could have been coded as tactical voters by all three estimation procedures, 291 explicitly said they voted tactically and 166 said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency.
\item I make this comparison because it looks like I have gotten correct the party preference imputation for the 526 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are predicted \textit{ex ante} as tactical voters.
\end{itemize}
The pre-campaign clarity scores are significantly higher for the 526 voters who I predict to be tactical voters and who self-identify as tactical voters than for the 738 voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who are not coded as tactical voters by any among my three estimation methods. The difference in mean clarity scores is 0.059, with the 95% confidence interval for the difference ranging from 0.035 to 0.082. But as Figure 5.1 suggests, the difference

![Figure 5.1: The histogram on the left shows pre-campaign clarity score distribution for the 738 voters who self-identified tactical motivations, who were not coded as tactical voters by any among my three estimation strategies, and who were not precluded from being predicted \textit{ex ante} as tactical voters by my methodology. The histogram on the right shows pre-campaign clarity score distribution for the 526 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who were predicted \textit{ex ante} as tactical voters. The distributions are similar - the main difference is that the distribution on the right has a slightly lower proportion of voters in the 0.60-0.70 range and a slightly higher proportion of voters with clarity scores of 1.]

between the two distributions lies in the proportion of voters who have clarity scores of 1 versus clarity scores of $2/3$. More of the clarity score distribution

\footnote{The difference was calculated using a two-sample t test. The mean clarity score for the 526 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are \textit{ex ante} predicted to be tactical voters is 0.746 (0.728, 0.764); the mean clarity score for the 738 voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who are not coded as tactical voters by any among my three estimation procedures is 0.687 (0.673, 0.701).}
for the 738 self-identified but not *ex ante* predicted voters (left) falls between 0.6 and 0.7, while more of the distribution for the 526 self-identified and *ex ante* predicted tactical voters (right) falls around 1. The differences in clarity scores reside primarily at the top of the clarity score distribution, so there is no strong reason to be less confident in the pre-campaign imputation of party preference for the 738 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are not predicted *ex ante* as tactical voters.

Next, I examine post-election clarity scores for the 659 voters who self-identify tactical motivations, who are not coded as tactical voters by any of my three estimation methods, and who are not precluded by my methodology from being identified either *ex post* or based on voter expectations from the campaign survey as tactical voters. I compare those clarity scores with the post-election clarity scores for the 710 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are identified as tactical voters either *ex post* or based on voters’ party performance expectations from the campaign survey. The 710 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who I identify as tactical voters have significantly higher clarity scores - the mean difference is 0.084 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.061 to 0.108.\(^{11}\) But Figure 5.2 shows that the differences between the two distributions reside primarily at the top of the distributions. A much higher proportion of the 659 voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who are not identified as tactical voters by any of my estimation methods have clarity scores between 0.6 and 0.7, while a much higher proportion of the 710 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are estimated as tactical voters by at least one of my estimation methods have clarity scores of 1. If there were more voters at the bottom of

\(^{11}\)The difference in means was calculated using a two-sample t-test. The mean clarity score and 95% confidence interval for the group of 659 voters is 0.690 (0.674,0.706); the mean clarity score and 95% confidence interval for the 710 voters is 0.774 (0.758, 0.790).
Figure 5.2: The histogram at left shows the post-election clarity score distribution for the 659 voters who self-identified tactical motivations, who were not coded as tactical voters by any of my three estimation strategies, and who were not precluded by my methodology from being predicted as tactical voters either \textit{ex post} or based on voters’ campaign survey election outcome expectations. The histogram at right shows the clarity score distribution for the 710 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who were identified as tactical voters either \textit{ex ante} or based on voters’ campaign survey expectations. The distribution at right contains a lower proportion of voters in the 0.60-0.70 range and a higher proportion of voters with clarity scores of 1.

the clarity score distribution for the 659 self-identified but not \textit{ex post} identified voters, there might be reason for concern. But because the statistically significant difference in clarity scores is the result of differences at the top of the clarity score distribution, the difference does not seem to be practically significant. Therefore, there is little reason to be more concerned about post-election imputation inaccuracies for the 659 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not picked up by my estimation methods than for the 710 voters who self-identified tactical motivations and who were picked up by my estimation methods.
Why The Trouble Picking Up Self-Identified Tactical Voters?

Even after I account for inaccuracies in and changes to voters’ election outcome expectations, and for methodological issues that may have caused my methods to miss some tactical voters, a dauntingly large number of voters who self-identified tactical motivations are not picked up by any of my three tactical voting estimation methods. There are 1901 voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who could have been picked up by at least one of my three estimation methods. 990 (or 52.1%) of these 1901 voters were not picked up by any of my methods. Breaking this down further, of the 907 voters who could have been picked up by at least one of my three methods and who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency, 377 (or 41.8%) were not picked up by any of my methods. Meanwhile, of the 994 voters who could have been picked up by at least one of my methods and who explicitly said they voted tactically, 613 (or 61.7%) were not picked up by any of my methods. Importantly, there is a clear gap here. Even though my methods do not do a good job with either type of self-identifier, they do a much better job picking up self-identifiers of tactical motivations who say that their preferred party has no chance than they do picking up those who explicitly say they voted tactically.

Tables 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 break down which criteria in each method were satisfied by the voters who self-identified tactical motivations and who were not picked up by any of my three estimation methods but who would not have eluded identification as tactical voters based on my methodology.\(^\text{12}\) What is

\(^{12}\)As a reminder, criterion 1 is that voters must vote for a party other than their most preferred party, criterion 2 is that the voters must expect their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency, and criterion 3 is that voters must expect their vote choice to finish better than their party preference. As described in Chapter 4, the last two among
### Table 5.3: Satisfaction of *Ex ante* Prediction Criteria, among 738 voters who self-identified tactical motivations, who would not have eluded *ex ante* prediction based on my methodology, and who were not recorded as tactical voters by any of my estimation methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria Satisfied</th>
<th>SI: No Chance</th>
<th>SI: Explicit</th>
<th>Total SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only criterion 1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criterion 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criteria 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criteria 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the criteria</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>294</strong></td>
<td><strong>444</strong></td>
<td><strong>738</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.4: Satisfaction of *Ex Post* Identification Criteria, among 810 voters who self-identified tactical motivations, who would not have eluded *ex post* identification based on my methodology, and who were not recorded as tactical voters by any of my estimation methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria Satisfied</th>
<th>SI: No Chance</th>
<th>SI: Explicit</th>
<th>Total SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only criterion 1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criterion 2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criteria 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only criteria 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the criteria</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>284</strong></td>
<td><strong>520</strong></td>
<td><strong>810</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immediately striking is the very small fraction of voters who expected their preferred party to finish in third or worse in the constituency - in other words, the small fraction of voters who satisfied criterion 2 - among voters who said that they believed that their preferred stood no chance in the constituency. Only 12.2% of the 294 voters in Table 5.3 who claimed to vote the way they did because they believed that their preferred party stood no chance also believed that their preferred party was running in third or worse in the constituency. This drops to 4.8% (of 231 voters) in the estimation of tactical voting based on voters’ campaign survey expectations of election outcome, displayed in Figure 5.5. This underscores the risks inherent in relying on voters’ self-identifications these three criteria are adjusted slightly in the *ex post* identification of tactical voting.
Table 5.5: **Satisfaction of Tactical Voting Criteria, Based on Voter Expectations of Party Performance from the Campaign Survey**, among 659 voters who self-identified tactical motivations, who would not have eluded estimation (when using voters’ campaign survey party performance expectations) based on my methodology, and who were not recorded by any of my estimation methods as tactical voters.

To gauge the level of tactical voting. If 40% of voters who say they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency do not satisfy all three tactical voting criteria, as is approximately the case in the BES internet survey, then it appears as though around 35% of those who say their preferred party stood no chance do not believe that their preferred party is running in third or worse in the constituency.

In fact, 64.5% of the 231 voters in Table 5.5 who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance of winning believed in the campaign survey that their preferred party would finish first in the constituency. A sizable number of voters who assert in the BES that they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance of winning do not seem to actually believe that to be the case.\(^\text{13}\) This speaks strongly against using this response, a complicated one for a voter to understand in the survey context, as a gauge of tactical voting behavior, as Fisher (2004) recommends.

Another clear trend that emerges from the tables is that a majority of voters

\(^{13}\text{A critic might take this as evidence that voters are dramatically changing their beliefs about the expected election outcome between the time of the campaign survey and the election. But for instance, 77.9% of the 231 voters in Table 5.5 were administered the campaign survey only in the week before the election. It is hard to imagine that so many voters would change their expectations so dramatically in such a small timeframe.}\)
who self-identify tactical motivations but who are not picked up by any of my methods are voting for their preferred party. 57.8% of voters in Table 5.3 who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party had no chance of winning actually voted for their preferred party from the \textit{ex ante} prediction, and 58.6% who explicitly said that they voted tactically actually voted for their preferred party from the \textit{ex ante} prediction. In the other two methods, these numbers get worse - for instance, 76.4% of voters in Table 5.5 who explicitly said that they voted tactically voted for their preferred party.\footnote{This estimate excludes voters who prefer BNP, Green and UKIP, all of whom are excluded from Table 5.5. The estimate might be slightly inflated because it excludes these minor party supporters, who are more likely to not vote for their preferred party. But these BNP, Green and UKIP supporters make up such a small fraction of the electorate that excluding them does not alter my substantive result - that a clear majority of voters in Tables 5.3-5.5 are voting for their preferred party.} If I assume that approximately 60% of those who explicitly self-identify as tactical voters do not fulfill all three tactical voting criteria, as is approximately the case in the BES, then at least 30% of those who explicitly claimed to be voting tactically in the 2010 election ended up voting for their most preferred party.

\section*{Conclusions}

When voters self-identify tactical motivations, many do not satisfy the standard political science definition of tactical voting. Around 60% of those who explicitly self-identified as tactical voters in the post-election survey did not at any point during the BES surveys display behavior that satisfied the three criteria political scientists use to define tactical voting. It is not unreasonable to estimate, based on the analysis in this chapter, that over 30% of those who explicitly claimed to be voting tactically are actually voting for their preferred party and that about 20% of those who said their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency actually thought in the weeks leading up to the
election that their preferred party would finish first in the constituency.

Unfortunately, what voters mean when they say they are voting tactically is not clear from the preceding analyses. For about 40% of those who explicitly self-identify as tactical voters, tactical voting means the same thing it means to political scientists. The other 60% who explicitly self-identified as tactical voters did not overwhelmingly tend to satisfy (or not satisfy) any one among the three standard tactical voting criteria. I will not venture to guess here what exactly most voters think when they self-identify as tactical voters. Of course, this is a very important avenue for future research. Understanding what voters mean when they use the phrase “tactical voting” is crucial if political scientists want to gain a better understanding of why voters choose to vote tactically in the first place.

Nonetheless, the findings in this chapter have dramatic implications for the study of tactical voting. Because many voters do not seem to define “tactical voting” in the same way that political scientists do, researchers should not rely on voter self-identifications of tactical voting in order to identify or study tactical voting behavior. Unfortunately, this calls into question the results obtained by nearly all previous studies of tactical voting in the British context, most notably Heath et al. (1991), Evans (1994) and Fisher (2004). As long as studies rely on self-identifications of tactical motivations, they are not measuring tactical voting behavior, at least not in the way that political scientists define it.

The findings also call into question widely-cited academic estimates of the prevalence of tactical voting. These aggregate estimates usually draw straight from voter self-identifications of tactical motivations (Fisher 2004; Clarke et al. 2004; Blais et al. 2006). Given that many voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not satisfy the political science criteria for tactical voting, and
given that a sizable majority of voters who clearly satisfy these criteria do self-identify tactical motivations, the analyses in this chapter imply that these estimates of the aggregate level of tactical voting in Britain may be too high. Even if I assume that the 173 voters for whom identification as a tactical voter was precluded by my methodology did satisfy all three tactical voting criteria, 52.3% of voters who self-identified tactical motivations were not recorded as tactical voters by any of my three estimation methods. Based on this result, it is reasonable to suggest that an estimate of tactical voting derived from voter self-identifications of tactical motivations for the 2010 British general election should be closer to 9% than to 17.1%, the raw estimate derived directly from voter self-identifications of tactical motivations in the BES. Estimating the aggregate level of tactical voting based on voter self-identification of tactical motivations, as Fisher (2004) and others do, is hardly an accurate strategy. Unfortunately, these estimates have made it seem as though tactical voting in Britain is far more common than it actually is.
Chapter 6: Implications for Party Strategy

Britain’s current governing Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition has plans for a 5 May 2011 referendum on the introduction of the Alternative Vote (AV) for future British general elections. Generally speaking, AV would require voters to rank the candidates in their constituency. If a candidate receives over 50% of first-place votes, that candidate is the winner; if no candidate receives over 50%, then the candidate who receives the lowest number of votes is eliminated and votes for the eliminated candidate are redistributed to the candidate listed second on those ballots. This redistribution process continues until a candidate has above 50% of the vote (Sanders et al. 2011, 7).

Sanders et al. find that using AV would have made a big difference in the outcome of the 2010 election. Had AV had been used instead of first-past-the-post, Liberal Democrats would have gained 32 seats, Conservatives would have lost 22 seats, and Labour would have lost 10 seats relative to the actual election outcome (Sanders et al. 2011, 18). This would have been enough to rewrite the script on the coalition bargaining that occurred in the week following the election since it would have given Labour enough seats to form a majority coalition alone with the Liberal Democrats, something that was not possible after the 2010 election.
What makes this dramatic change in the result relevant here is that AV essentially does the tactical voting for the voter. Voters can rank their preferences sincerely, knowing that even if their most preferred party is not competitive in the constituency, their vote will not be wasted since that vote will be redistributed to their second place party. In other words, the AV result is what the 2010 election might have looked like if the full potential of tactical voting had been harnessed. In particular, the Liberal Democrats look like they failed to harness tactical voting to its fullest potential in 2010: many voters who could have voted tactically for the Liberal Democrats did not, so the Liberal Democrats actually won far fewer seats than they would have won under AV.

My result in Chapter 5 could explain the apparent failure of the Liberal Democrats to successfully engage tactical voters. Chapter 5 concluded that many voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not satisfy the standard political science definition of tactical voting; in other words, many voters think of tactical voting differently than its standard academic (and political) usage. Using data collected in interviews with party agents and candidates after the 2010 election, the analyses that follow in this chapter examine parties’ efforts to target tactical voters and describe the implications of the result in Chapter 5 for the ways that parties conducted those efforts. The chapter concludes by assessing whether parties successfully conveyed information about potential tactical voting opportunities to voters.

**Interview Methodology**

Interviews were conducted in August 2010 in three UK constituencies. One of the three constituencies was a Labour-Conservative marginal, one was a

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\[1\] I obtained approval from the Harvard Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in June 2010.
Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal, and the third was a Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal.\footnote{2} I chose three two-party marginal constituencies because tactical voting is most likely to occur in these types of constituencies. In two-party marginal constituencies, voters who prefer the third among the major parties - the one not in immediate contention for the seat - have a strong incentive to vote tactically. Therefore, these are also probably the constituencies in which political parties make the strongest efforts to target potential tactical voters and encourage tactical voting. In other words, I expect that I am most likely to find a coherent party strategy with respect to tactical voting in these two-party marginal constituencies.

The constituencies in which I conducted interviews were chosen based on the marginality of the 2005 and 2010 election results. In the Labour-Conservative marginal, the Labour margin of victory in 2005 was under 5\% and the Conservative margin of victory in 2010 was under 1\%. In the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal, the Liberal Democrat margin of victory in 2005 and 2010 was under 1\%. In the Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal, the Labour margin of victory in 2005 was under 3\% and the Labour margin of victory in 2010 was under 10\%.\footnote{3} In choosing constituencies, I also paid attention to the vote share received by the party running third in the constituency. After all, for the parties to devote their attention to courting potential tactical voters, there should be a sizable number of voters who support the party

\footnote{2}{The term “marginal” means that the election was very competitive between the top parties in the constituency. All three constituencies I chose were two-party marginal constituencies. This means that the third among the major parties was not very competitive in the constituency. I do not provide constituency names to preserve the anonymity of interview respondents.}

\footnote{3}{There are not many Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal seats. That made it difficult to find Labour-Liberal Democrat marginals with close margins. Despite the larger margin in the 2010 election for my Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal, I use this constituency because, given Labour’s poor national standing and the Liberal Democrats’ good national standing in the weeks leading up to the election, the seat had all the trappings of a close election in the days before election 2010.}
running in third. In all three constituencies I chose, the party running in third secured between 10 and 20% of the total vote in both 2005 and 2010. The constituencies were chosen so that all three major types of two-party marginals were represented and so that there would be at least some regional diversity. One constituency is in East Midlands, another is in West Midlands, and the third is in the South East. In each constituency, I conducted interviews with party agents and candidates representing each of the three major parties in the constituency. Additionally, interviews were conducted with one representative from each of the three national parties’ campaign apparatuses in London.

I began each interview by asking respondents what they thought tactical voting meant. Every interview response I received was consistent with the standard political science definition of tactical voting: all respondents noted that tactical voters vote for a party other than their preferred party, that they vote the way they do because they believe that their preferred party will run poorly in the constituency, and that they vote for a party they think will have a better chance of winning the election. When asked whether other candidates and election agents thought about tactical voting that way, too, all respondents answered affirmatively. This provides reasonably strong evidence that parties conceptualize tactical voting the same way that political scientists do.

**Targeting Potential Tactical Voters**

The Liberal Democrats in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal constituency made the strongest effort I witnessed to target potential tactical voters. There, the Liberal Democrats maintained a local database that included 46% of voters in the constituency. They constructed the database using responses from telephone and door-to-door surveys that asked, among
other things, which party the voter preferred and whether the voter would “consider voting tactically.” Based on these responses, the database coded voters who said they preferred Labour, but who would “consider voting tactically”, as “soft Labour” voters. Using that database, the Liberal Democrat candidate wrote a specially tailored letter to these soft Labour supporters every two months in the year preceding the election. The last letter sent to soft Labour voters before the election began by noting, “At the last General Election, I won the seat by just 279 votes against the Conservatives. Labour trailed in third place some 12,000 votes behind.” In the middle of that letter, in boldface print, the candidate writes, “Many Labour supporters are switching to me this time. They know that Labour cannot win.” The candidate said that these letters were the party’s only attempt to target potential Labour-prefering tactical voters in the constituency. The candidate also noted that the Liberal Democrats’ efforts to target tactical voters appeared to have been in vain: the vote share Labour received in the constituency was higher than the Liberal Democrats expected, and the Conservatives picked up many of the Labour supporters who eventually decided to vote for a party other than their preferred party.

This was not the only constituency where Liberal Democrats tried to identify potential tactical voters. A Liberal Democrat national party campaign agent noted that in a sizable minority of constituencies, the local party used a database almost identical to the one used in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal. While the agent could not estimate the number of constituencies where the party used databases to target voters, she did note that a handful of other local Liberal Democrat parties constructed their databases based on surveys that asked about voter openness to tactical voting.

In the Labour-Conservative marginal, the Labour candidate mailed fliers
to more heavily pro-Liberal Democrat parts of the constituency on different color paper than the fliers sent to the rest of the constituency. The substance of the fliers was the same - Labour just printed fliers for the Liberal Democrat-heavy areas on green paper instead of red paper! As paltry as this targeting effort sounds, the other four competitive parties in the three marginals where I interviewed party agents said that they did not attempt to target potential tactical voters. In particular, the two Conservative constituency agents and the Conservative national party agent I interviewed said that compiling information on potential tactical voters was a daunting task and that the benefit of the task was not commensurate with the effort it required.

At least with respect to tactical voting, the Liberal Democrats seem to be the only party attempting to embrace in some constituencies the within-constituency targeting that Pippa Norris identifies as a crucial element of the post-modern campaign she believes modern British parties are waging (2000). Given the increasing prevalence of parties’ efforts to target messages to particular within-constituency groups, as documented by Clark (2006), it is quite surprising that most parties I interviewed in marginal constituencies - the constituencies where tactical voting would have the biggest potential effect on vote outcomes - are not doing much to target tactical voters.

**Implications of Lack of Convergence for Party Strategy**

The results in previous chapters help explain why the Liberal Democrats in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal felt that their efforts to target potential tactical voters were not successful. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, about 40% of voters who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance of winning and about 60% of voters who explicitly said that they voted tactically did not satisfy the three tactical voting
criteria and, by extension, would not have satisfied the parties’ conception of tactical voting, either. This underscores the tremendous difficulty inherent in identifying potential tactical voters based on survey responses, as the Liberal Democrats in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal attempted. To determine who they would target, the Liberal Democrats asked voters whether they would “consider voting tactically.” Given that so many voters who claim to vote tactically do not fit the definition of tactical voting that the parties seem to accept, the Liberal Democrats’ self-described failure in targeting tactical voters is not surprising.4

It is interesting that even though the Liberal Democrats made the strongest efforts among the three major parties to identify tactical voters, they were hurt most by the parties’ collective inability to harness tactical voting’s full potential. The Liberal Democrat case highlights just how difficult it is to target tactical voters. Many voters who claim to be thinking about tactical voting are not, in fact, thinking about the same thing that parties are thinking about when they use the phrase “tactical voting.” Thus, the Conservatives in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat and Conservative-Labour marginal seats may have been at least partially right. Given that many voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not end up satisfying the standard tactical voting criteria, targeting tactical voters is more trouble than it is worth, at least when the parties are explicitly using the phrase “tactical voting” to identify potential tactical voters. This may explain why it seems that Liberal Democrats

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4Chapter 5 suggests that most voters who are tactical voters, per the political science definition, also self-identify tactical motivations. If this is true, then the Liberal Democrats’ targeting efforts would have still been effective because they would have included all voters who were actually potential tactical voters. But while most voters in chapter 5 who clearly satisfied the three tactical voting criteria self-identified tactical motivations, at least some voters who were probably still tactical voters (and who were estimated as tactical voters by two, or even one, of my estimation procedures) may not have self-identified tactical motivations. Thus, asking voters to self-identify tactical motivations probably still misses some voters who the Liberal Democrats in their targeting efforts.
were unable to harness the full power of tactical voting in 2010. That the lack of convergence makes identifying tactical voters so difficult also helps explain why campaign strategy with respect to tactical voting lags behind the postmodern campaign techniques, like selective targeting, that Norris identifies as characteristic of modern-day British campaigns (2000).

Parties should not use the phrase “tactical voting” when they try to identify potential tactical voters or encourage them to vote a certain way. At least a majority of voters who explicitly self-identify as tactical voters construe the phrase “tactical voting” to mean something other than what parties seem to construe it to mean. Rather than encouraging voters to cast a “tactical vote”, or rather than asking voters whether they might cast a “tactical vote”, parties and activists should be straightforward with voters. They should eschew advertisements, like one that appeared on the front page of the Daily Mirror the day before the election, that encourage voters to “vote tactically.” Instead, when determining which voters to target as potential tactical voters, parties should ascertain - straightforwardly - which party voters support and whether they would ever consider voting for another party. When encouraging potential tactical voters to vote tactically, parties should simply explain, as the letter from the Liberal Democrat in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative constituency does, that the voter’s preferred party stands no chance and that the voter should vote for another party instead. But as suggested by my results with respect to voters who said they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance, parties might still have trouble identifying and targeting potential tactical voting even with this straightforward tack.
Are Parties Successfully Conveying Information About Tactical Voting to Voters?

All party agents I interviewed from competitive parties agreed that for tactical voting to benefit their party, voters needed to properly understand the electoral situation in the constituency. They acknowledged that parties play a crucial role informing voters about the constituency electoral situation and about tactical voting opportunities.

Each of the parties tried to inform voters about the constituency electoral situation. The two competitive parties in each of the three marginal constituencies all used bar charts in their literature in order to convey the constituency electoral situation to voters. For example, in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal, a Liberal Democrat full page mailer prominently displayed a bar chart at the top. The chart represented the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives with large bars of approximately similar size and Labour with a much smaller bar. The chart headline read, “It’s a two-horse race.” An arrow pointing to Labour’s bar said matter-of-factly, “Can’t win here.” Three of the parties - Conservatives in the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal, Labour in the Labour-Conservative marginal, and Labour in the Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal - also included in their mailers a quote from the third place party in the constituency saying that the third place party could not win. For example, the Labour candidate in the Labour-Conservative marginal included in one mailer a bolded green box with this statement from a former Liberal Democrat candidate in the constituency: “This election is a straight choice between [the Labour candidate] and the Tories - everyone knows the LibDems can’t win.”

Yet for all of their efforts to educate voters about the constituency electoral
situation, the parties have significant (and often unexpected) trouble convincing voters of that electoral situation. In the Labour-Conservative marginal, the *Evening Post* in the closest city to the constituency ran the results of a poll one week before the election. The poll informally asked voters in the city, which was not part of the marginal constituency, which party they planned on supporting on election day and then reported the findings as polling results for the marginal constituency. Because the city is heavily pro-Liberal Democrat, the poll results said that the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives were running neck-and-neck and that Labour was trailing in what was actually a Labour-Conservative marginal. Labour fired back frantically one week before the election, mailing fliers to everyone in the constituency detailing the flaws in the polling result and describing what the party believed to be the correct lay of the land in the constituency. But as the Labour party agent in that constituency noted, at least some Labour voters took the *Evening Post* poll at its word and decided to vote tactically for the Liberal Democrats, while potential tactical voters who preferred the Liberal Democrats decided to vote for the Liberal Democrat candidate. The information game is a constant factor at the constituency level, and it is often an uphill battle for candidates trying to convince voters that their party is competitive in the constituency.

Appendix C suggests that parties are not successfully informing voters who are positioned to vote tactically about the constituency electoral situation. As Appendix C explains, among the 2101 voters whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse in the constituency, 1062 (or 50.5%) believed at the time of the campaign survey that their preferred party would finish in second or better in the constituency. Of these 1062 voters, 336 actually believed that their preferred party would finish in first. Examining BES data on the three constituencies where I conducted interviews does nothing to change the
impression that competitive parties are failing to inform voters about the constituency electoral situation. Of the 14 BES voters from the Liberal Democrat-Conservative marginal, 4 believed that Labour would finish in the top two in the constituency; of the 32 voters from the Labour-Conservative marginal, 11 believed that the Liberal Democrats would finish in the top two in the constituency; of the 20 voters from the Labour-Liberal Democrat marginal, 10 believed that the Conservatives would finish in the top two. Parties’ efforts to convey the electoral situation to voters who are positioned to vote tactically seem to fall on deaf ears.

But does being contacted by one of the competitive parties in a constituency lead self-identifiers of tactical motivations to align more closely with the definition of tactical voting? In other words, might party contact improve voters’ understanding of what tactical voting means? To answer this question, I examine the 999 internet survey voters who self-identified tactical motivations and who were identified either by both or by neither of my two tactical voting estimation methods that were based on the post-election imputation of party preference.\(^5\) I apply a probit model, where my dependent variable is a binary indicating whether or not the respondent was picked up by my tactical voting estimation method. The treatment variable of interest is whether or not the voter was contacted by one of the two most competitive parties in the constituency.\(^6\) I am interested in whether being contacted by one of the competitive parties in a constituency lead self-identifiers of tactical motivations to align more closely with the definition of tactical voting.

\(^5\)To clarify, the two estimation methods I consider are the \textit{ex post} identification and the estimation based on campaign survey expectations. I exclude the \textit{ex ante} prediction since voters’ perceptions were unaffected by campaign contact at the time of the pre-campaign wave. The dataset only includes voters who were not precluded by my methodology from being identified as tactical voters by either estimation method. I exclude from the dataset voters who were only identified by one of the two estimation methods based on post-election party preference imputation; this is because I am interested in comparing those self-identifiers who clearly satisfy the three tactical voting criteria with self-identifiers who clearly do not satisfy the tactical voting criteria. There are 340 voters identified by both methods and 659 voters identified by neither method.

\(^6\)As a proxy for competitiveness, I use the actual 2010 election outcome. The two most competitive parties in a constituency are the parties that finished first and second.
competitive parties increases the probability that the voter who self-identifies tactical motivations will satisfy the standard tactical voting definition. My result also probes whether being contacted by one of the competitive parties increases the probability that voters who self-identify tactical motivations have the right perception of the tactical situation in the constituency. After all, a self-identifier probably needs to have perceptions of the tactical situation that align with the actual vote outcome in order to be picked up by the ex post identification, which uses the election outcome instead of voter expectations.

I include several controls in my model. From the campaign survey, I include a variable indicating the self-reported level of attention the voter pays to politics. This is reported on a 0 to 10 scale in the BES pre-election survey, where 0 is “no attention” and 10 is a “great deal” of attention.\(^7\) To control for the possible effects of uncertainty in the imputation of voters’ preferred party, I also include the voter’s clarity score from the post-election imputation in the model. Finally, I include a variable indicating whether the voter was contacted by any of the parties that finished third or worse in the constituency. After all, these parties have an incentive to provide voters with an inaccurate picture of the constituency electoral situation.

To isolate the effect of campaign contact by competitive parties on the ability of my estimation schemes to pick up self-identified tactical voters, I match exactly on all of the control variables. I find pairs of voters who share exactly the same values of the control variables; this allows me to estimate the “effect” of my treatment variable. Exact matching leaves 856 matched observations. When voters who self-identify tactical motivations and who are

\(^7\)That voters report their own level of attention to politics is somewhat troubling. One voter might believe a “2” on the 0-10 scale means something very different than what the next voter believes it to mean. But for the purposes of this rough preliminary analysis, this variable serves as a reasonable proxy for the actual level of attention the voter pays to the election.
not contacted by either of the competitive parties in the constituency pay the median level of attention to the election, have the median clarity score, and are not contacted by a party running in third or worse in the constituency, the probability that they are identified by both my estimation methods is 0.269, with a 95% confidence interval for that estimate ranging from 0.224 to 0.314. But when those same voters are contacted by at least one of the two most competitive parties in the constituency, they are identified by both estimation methods with probability 0.360, with a 95% confidence interval for that probability estimate ranging from 0.307 to 0.414.\(^8\) Being contacted by at least one of the most competitive parties in the constituency significantly increases the probability of being identified by both estimation methods by 0.088; the 95% confidence interval for the difference ranges from 0.025 to 0.152.

This is a preliminary indication that party contact from one of the two most competitive parties in the constituency is associated with an increase in the probability that voters who self-identify tactical motivations will actually satisfy the traditional tactical voting criteria.\(^9\) This suggests a more positive outlook on the role parties play in educating voters about tactical voting. Even if competitive parties’ strategies for identifying and targeting tactical voters have not succeeded, party contact from the most competitive parties in the constituency may make some difference in educating voters about what tactical voting means and about the constituency electoral situation.

\(^8\)Standard errors in the model were clustered by constituency. All medians are calculated with respect to the 999 voters in the dataset, not with respect to all 12180 BES voters.

\(^9\)This result should not be construed as a causal estimate. The model suffers from post-treatment bias: the clarity score included as a control variable in the model is probably influenced at least somewhat by party contact; this makes it impossible to say that party contact has a causal effect on the probability that the self-identified tactical voter clearly satisfies all three tactical voting criteria. Additionally, whether or not the voter self-identifies in the first play may be a product of party contact. Nonetheless, the analysis is instructive because shows that party contact from the competitive parties in the constituency may be associated with better voter understanding of what tactical voting means.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The preceding chapters have clarified the answer to the central question guiding this thesis: do voters and political scientists think about tactical voting in the same way? My results suggest that there is surprisingly low convergence between voter self-identification of tactical motivations and the political science definition of tactical voting: about one-half of voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not satisfy the political science definition of tactical voting. Two particular results in Chapter 5 are worth mentioning again. First, about 30% of voters who explicitly self-identified as tactical voters actually voted for their own preferred party. Second, about 35% of voters who say they voted the way they did because their preferred party stood no chance in the constituency actually end up having their preferred party finish in second or better, and 20% of voters who said their preferred party stood no chance actually believed at the time of the campaign survey that their preferred party was running first in the constituency.

The kinds of contradictions outlined here are not uncommon in survey research. They should, however, serve as an important reminder of the risk of relying on voters to self-identify under a complex label. That so many who have studied tactical voting, from Heath et al. (1991) to Fisher (2004), have relied on self-identifications of tactical motivations to identify tactical voters calls into serious question the accuracy of the existing literature.
Unfortunately, self-identifications of tactical motivations form the foundation for several widely-cited estimates of the aggregate level of tactical voting in Britain. The results in this thesis suggest that studies quantifying the aggregate level of tactical voting in Britain may significantly overestimate the actual level of tactical voting. My result calls into question the country-wide estimates of tactical voting made based on self-identification by Heath et al. (1991), Evans (1994), Cox (1997), Fisher (2004), Clarke et al. (2004), and Blais et al. (2006). And it also calls into question the growing body of scholarly work analyzing the determinants of tactical voting. To date, these studies in the British context - particularly those conducted by Myatt and Fisher - rely on voter self-identification to establish who is a tactical voter and who is not (Myatt 2000; Fisher 2001a; Fisher 2001b; Myatt 2004). Political scientists must go back to the drawing board when it comes to analyzing tactical voting. Their methods have probably identified as tactical voters many voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who do not satisfy the traditional political science definition of tactical voting.

My result also matters for political parties. Parties seem to share political scientists' understanding of tactical voting, which implies that there is also a gap between how parties and voters conceptualize tactical voting. This has made it difficult for parties to target potential tactical voters. Because so many voters who self-identify tactical motivations do not satisfy the political science definition of tactical voting, parties that have explicitly mentioned tactical voting in their attempts to gauge who is a tactical voter have trouble identifying potential tactical voters. This might explain why political parties have not embraced post-modern campaign techniques to woo tactical voters. It might also explain why any efforts that the parties - especially the Liberal Democrats - have made have not succeeded. The results in Chapter 6 begin
to fill an important void in the literature - opened by Clark (2002), Fisher, Cutts and Denver (2010), and Fisher and Denver (2008) - on the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of British post-modern campaign techniques.

This thesis is also relevant to Stevenson and Vonnahme’s assertion that “voters everywhere will become informed about those aspects of politics that are necessary to cast a rational vote” (2010, 2). As noted in Chapters 5 and 6 and in Appendix C, about half of the voters whose preferred party finished in third or worse actually believed that their preferred party would finish in second or better, and about 15% thought that their preferred party would finish in first. Many voters who are positioned to cast a tactical vote are not getting accurate information about the electoral situation in their constituency. I do find some evidence that voters are more likely to know what tactical voting means and are more likely to correctly recognize the tactical situation in their constituency when they have been contacted by at least one of the two most competitive parties in their constituency. But overall, my results contradict Stevenson and Vonnahme’s notion that parties give voters the information they need “to cast a rational vote.” Many British voters who are positioned to vote tactically are not getting this information.

Methodologically, this thesis also improves on methods currently used in the tactical voting literature to estimate voters’ preferred party. My imputation method does not simply trust voters at their word by accepting their avowed preferences, as Heath et al. (1991) does. Nor does it only use strength-of-feeling scores, as Fisher (2004) does, to check the consistency of voters’ preferences. My imputation method also does not discard voters for whom strength-of-feeling scores contradict avowed preferences, as Fisher does. Instead, my imputation method uses all available information in the BES that pertains to party preference in order to estimate the voter’s party preference.
The method does account for the fact that some question responses in the BES are more determinative of party preference than others - the procedure by which the metrics are considered ensures that if the metrics that most clearly pertain to party preference are in agreement, the other metrics will not sway the imputation. Perhaps most importantly, though, my imputation method is the first in the tactical voting literature to quantify the level of uncertainty associated with party preference estimates. The ability to quantify uncertainty, even if only roughly, is a major step forward for party preference estimation in the tactical voting literature.

**Implications of the Alternative Vote**

As noted in Chapter 6, Britain’s current governing Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition has plans for a May referendum on the introduction of the Alternative Vote (AV). Under AV, there may still be some tactical voting. For instance, voters may believe that their second preference party has about the same number of votes in the constituency as their first preference party, but they might think that their second preference party is likely to have more votes redistributed to it than the first preference party will. In other words, the voter may think that the second preference party has a higher probability of winning than the first preference party. In this case, it would make sense for voters to put the second preference party first on their ballot and their first preference party second on their ballot. This would constitute a tactical vote. But tactical votes would be few and far between. Generally speaking, AV eliminates incentives to vote tactically. Therefore, AV would make voter misconceptions of tactical voting largely irrelevant, practically speaking. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see how the adoption of AV could affect voter self-identification
of tactical voting intentions and tactical behavior more generally.

AV is generally thought to favor the Liberal Democrats most among Britain’s three major parties since AV is more proportional than first-past-the-post. Sanders et al. corroborate that this obtains in practice. As noted in Chapter 6, Sanders et al. find that the Liberal Democrats would have gained 32 seats in the House of Commons if AV had been used instead of first-past-the-post in the 2010 election (2011, 18). This result suggests that AV would mitigate the effect of the difficulty that the parties, especially the Liberal Democrats, have in identifying and targeting tactical voters. The Liberal Democrats’ hypothetical gains under AV are in constituencies where there are sizable numbers of voters whose second preference is a competitive Liberal Democrat and whose first preference is a non-competitive Labour or Conservative candidate. Because the Liberal Democrats have been unable to successfully target and woo these potential Labour and Conservative-supporting tactical voters, these voters vote for their first preference instead of voting for the Liberal Democrats. But under AV, these voters might list the Liberal Democrats as their second preference. When their votes are redistributed, their ballot becomes equivalent to a tactical vote for the Liberal Democrats. Therefore, because AV does the dirty work of tactical voting for the voter, it remedies the parties’ difficulties in targeting potential tactical voters since it would, at least theoretically, eliminate the need for parties to target tactical voters in the first place.

**Future Research**

Without additional information about voters’ motivations for their vote choice, I am unable to determine exactly what the self-identified tactical voters who did not fit the political science definition of tactical voting were thinking when
they identified their motivations for their vote choice. With the right survey question in the next BES, it may be possible to determine exactly what these voters are thinking when they self-identify tactical motivations. For instance, the BES could include a question just for voters who explicitly self-identify tactical motivations: “In your opinion, what made your vote choice a tactical one?”1 Hopefully, future research can yield a much more complete picture of what voters mean when they use the phrase “tactical voting.”

Whether or not voters and political scientists conceptualize tactical voting in the same way is a worthy subject of comparative study, one that this thesis does not have the opportunity to address. Do voters understand strategic voting better in other democracies? How successfully do political parties in other countries transmit ideas about tactical voting to voters? This comparative analysis can aid scholars in more thoroughly assessing Stevenson and Vonnahme’s assertion that voters tend to get the information they need in order to vote strategically.

Future research must also revisit existing scholarship on the aggregate extent of tactical voting and on the determinants of tactical voting. All previous studies have been conducted under an assumption that this thesis proves false - namely, that voters and political scientists think about tactical voting in the same way. That about one-half of voters who self-identify tactical motivations appear not to have fit the political science definition of tactical voting suggests that these studies’ results are probably inaccurate. Reconsidering these analyses may very well alter our understanding of why voters choose to vote tactically in the first place.

Finally, my results in this thesis can be criticized on the grounds that I have created a selection bias by excluding voters for whom it was not possible

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1 This kind of question could follow a multiple choice format, with each of three criteria in the tactical voting definition as possible choices.
to impute party preference or determine expectations of the election outcome. This is a fair criticism. I tried to hedge against it by providing only rough estimates based on relatively conservative assumptions. Nonetheless, it is my hope that future research will obtain more precise estimates that can be accurately applied to the entire population of British voters by using multiple imputation procedures in order to deal with missing data and by using the suggested data weights associated with the BES internet survey.

The future research proposed here can yield a more complete understanding of what voters think about important catchphrases like “tactical voting.” This research is the natural extension of this thesis’ finding that British voters and political scientists have divergent conceptions of tactical voting. But if this thesis leaves future researchers with any one message, it should be this: assuming that voters define a concept in the same way that political scientists do is a dangerous mistake, one that can potentially invalidate years of promising research.

\[2\]

For instance, in asserting that about one-half of self-identifiers did not fit the political science definition of tactical voting, I assumed that the voters I excluded due to missingness would have fit the political science definition, which is a very conservative assumption when trying to estimate the proportion of self-identifiers who did not satisfy the tactical voting criteria.
Appendix A: Imputation of Party Preference

This appendix clarifies the procedures used to estimate the metrics used in the pre-campaign and post-election imputations of party preference.

Preference Metrics, Pre-Campaign Wave

• Metric 2: Strength-of-Feeling, Parties. If two or more parties tied for the respondent’s highest rating, the metric’s estimate of preferred party is “unknown/none.” If the respondent answered “don’t know” to all eight questions or skipped them, the metric’s estimate of party preference is “unknown/none.” If the respondent answered only for one party, the metric will estimate that the respondent prefers that party only if the respondent rates the party above an 8; otherwise, the metric’s estimate for that respondent will be “unknown/none.”

• Metric 4: Tax/Spend Dimension Proximity. If there is a tie between two or more parties in lowest absolute distance, the metric preference will be recorded as “unknown/none.” If the voter does not respond to any of the six questions, or responds only to the first question but not the subsequent five questions, then the metric preference will also be
recorded as “unknown/none.” If the respondent places herself on the 0 to 10 scale and answers for only one other party, then that party will be the metric’s estimate of party preference only when the absolute difference between the respondent and the party is less than 2. If greater than 2, the metric estimate of party preference will be “unknown/none.”

- Metric 5: Strength-of-Feeling, Party Leaders. In the case of a tie for the highest rating among two or more leaders, the metric’s estimate of party preference is “none/other.” If the respondent answered “don’t know” to all five questions or skipped them, the metric’s estimate of party preference is “none/other.” If the respondent answered only for one leader, the metric will estimate that the respondent prefers the party of that leader only if the respondent rates the leader above an 8; otherwise, the estimate for that respondent will be “none/other.”

- Metric 6: Party Leader Competence. This metric follows the same procedures for estimating party preference as Metric 5.

- Metric 7: Party Leader Knowledge. If there is a tie for the highest rating, then the metric estimate is “none/other.” If a respondent does not answer any of the questions, then the metric estimate is “none/other.” If a respondent answers for only one leader, then the metric estimate is the party affiliation of that leader only when that leader receives above an 8; if not, then the metric estimate is recorded as “none/other.”

- Metric 8: Party Leader Best Interests. This metric follows the same procedures for estimating party preference as Metric 5.

- Metric 9: Party Leader Truthful. This metric follows the same procedures for estimating party preference as Metric 5.
Preference Metrics, Post-Election Wave

- Metric 2: Strength-of-Feeling, Parties. Same procedures as metric 2, pre-campaign wave.

- Metric 4: Criminal Justice Dimension Proximity. Same procedures as metric 4, pre-campaign wave.

- Metric 5: Strength-of-Feeling, Party Leaders. Same procedures as metric 5, pre-campaign wave.

- Metric 6: Party Leader Knowledge. Same procedures as metric 7, pre-campaign wave.

- Metric 7: Party Leader Best Interests. Same procedures as metric 8, pre-campaign wave.
Appendix B: Voter Misinformation and Convergence, Redux

This appendix examines in greater detail the extent of voter misinformation in the tactical voting context, spelling out the implications of misinformation for the level of convergence between the political science definition of tactical voting and voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations. All analyses use the post-election imputation of party preference and exclude voters who preferred BNP, Green or UKIP in the post-election imputation.

Preferred Party Electoral Performance

Of the 1446 voters who expected at the time of the campaign survey that their preferred party would finish in third or worse, 71.8% actually had their preferred party finish in third or worse. A clear majority of voters who believed that their preferred party was running poorly in the constituency were right. There were 407 voters who believed that their preferred party would finish in third or worse but whose preferred party actually finished in second or better. Among these 407, 31 had their preferred party finish less than 2
percentage points in front of the third place party, and another 72 voters had their preferred party finish less than 5 percentage points in front of the third place party. That means that 304 voters who thought that their preferred party would finish in third or worse had expectations that were not in the right ballpark. 105 actually preferred the party that won the election. Clearly, a substantial number of voters who think that their preferred party is running poorly do not accurately identify the electoral position of their preferred party.

The 407 voters who believed their preferred party would finish in third or worse but whose preferred party actually finished in second or better would not have been identified *ex post* as tactical voters. Of these 407, just 74 self-identified tactical motivations. This is a small fraction of the 1422 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not identified *ex post* as tactical voters. Accounting for voters’ incorrect expectations of preferred party electoral performance seems to make only a small dent in the major convergence problem that I encounter in my *ex post* tactical voting identification.

Meanwhile, there are 2420 voters whose preferred party actually finishes in third or worse in the constituency. 1381 (or 57.1%) of these are not coded, based on the campaign wave, as expecting their preferred party to finish in third or worse. Voter non-response to the expectations questions account for why 326 of the 1381 are not coded as expecting their preferred party to finish in third or worse.¹ Another 719 of the 1381 expected their preferred party to finish second or tied for second, and the remaining 336 expected their preferred party to finish first or tied for first.

Of the 719 voters who believed that their preferred party would finish in

¹I include among this group the 7 voters who gave their expectations of their preferred party and their vote choice’s performance but who did not give their expectations for the performance of one of the parties that finished in the top two in the constituency. After all, by not giving their expectations for either of the top two parties in the constituency, these voters risk making it seem as though they thought their preferred party was running in the top two when they actually believe that their preferred party is running in third or worse.
second and whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse, 193 rated their preferred party and all the other parties save one - the party believed to be running in first - as having no chance of winning in the constituency.\(^2\) These 193 were not necessarily “wrong” in their expectations - after all, their preferred party did not win. Of the other 526 voters who believed that their preferred party would finish in second and whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse, 61 had their preferred party finish within 2 percentage points of the party that actually finished in second, and another 86 had their preferred party finish within 5 percentage points of the party that actually finished second. Roughly speaking, though, a majority of the voters who believed that their preferred party would finish in second but whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse had expectations that proved to be incorrect - 53.2% of these voters preferred a party that ended up finishing more than 5 points behind the second place party in the constituency.

Even more strikingly, among the 336 voters who expected their preferred party to finish in first but whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse, just 3 had their preferred party finish within 5 percentage points of the party that finished in first place, and just another 19 had their preferred party finish within 10 percentage points of the party that finished in first. Just 28 among the 336 voters who expected their preferred party to finish in first had their preferred party finish within 2 percentage points of the party that finished in second in the constituency, and only another 51 had their preferred party finish within 5 percentage points of the second place party. In other words, an overwhelming majority of the voters who expected their preferred party to finish in first but whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse were far from correct in their expectations, so much so that just 23.5%\(^2\)This means they rated the chances of their preferred party winning in the constituency as a 0 on a 0 to 10 scale.
of these voters ended up having their preferred party finish within five percentage points of the party that finished in second in the constituency.

Table 9.1 summarizes voter expectations for preferred party performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pref. Party, Campaign Survey</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>SI, Not I</th>
<th>I, Not SI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>SI and I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finish in Third or Worse</td>
<td>1039</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>351</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations Unclear: Non-Response</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied for Second, No Chance Though</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish in Second</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish in First</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Breaking Down the Expectations of Preferred Party Performance, from the campaign wave of the internet survey, for voters whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse. I = ex post identified; SI = self-identified.

among the 2420 voters whose preferred party actually finished in third or worse in the constituency. The second through fourth columns identify the number of voters among each grouping who self-identified tactical motivations and who were identified ex post as tactical voters. The fourth and fifth rows of the table contain voters who were identified ex post as tactical voters but who would not be estimated as tactical voters if I considered voters’ expectations of party performance from the campaign wave instead.

If I consider voters’ expectations instead of the actual election outcomes, 42 voters from the fourth and fifth rows of the table who do not self-identify tactical motivations would no longer be identified as tactical voters per the political science definition of tactical voting. But 102 voters in the fourth and fifth rows who are ex post identified tactical voters and who also self-identify tactical motivations would no longer be identified as tactical voters when I consider voter expectations instead of actual election results. Therefore, using voters’ expectations of party performance instead of election outcomes to determine who voted tactically does not resolve problems with convergence
between voters’ self-identification of tactical motivations and the political science definition of tactical voting.

The above analyses suggest that many voters whose preferred party finishes in third or worse tend to overestimate the competitiveness of their preferred party. This suggests that using actual vote outcome as a proxy for voters’ expectations, as tactical voting studies ranging from Evans (1994) to Fisher (2004) do, is risky business. By using actual vote outcomes instead of voters’ expectations of constituency election outcomes, scholars run the risk of overestimating the total number of tactical voters.

More saliently, the results here suggest that many voters are not getting the right information about parties’ expected constituency performance. This may be a product of failures by political parties running well in the constituency to convince some voters that their preferred parties are not competitive in the constituency. I discuss this theme in much greater detail in Chapter 6.

Vote Choice Performance Relative to Preferred Party

Voters do a much better job of identifying the competitiveness of their vote choice relative to their preferred party. Per the campaign wave of the BES, there were 853 voters who believed that their preferred party would fare worse than their vote choice. Of these 853 voters, 745 (or 87.3%) actually had their preferred party finish worse than the party for whom they voted.

Of the 108 voters who incorrectly believed that their preferred party would fare worse than the party for whom they voted, 66 self-identified tactical motivations. These were among the 1422 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not ex post identified as tactical voters, the set of voters responsible for the most glaring convergence problem. As noted earlier in this appendix, accounting for voters’ incorrect expectations about the election out-
come makes only a small dent in the size of this problematic set.

Based on the post-election imputation, there were 1343 voters who voted for a party other than their most preferred party. 795 of these 1343 voted for a party that actually performed better than their preferred party. Of these 795 voters, 563 (or 70.8%) expected their vote choice to fare better in the constituency than the party they preferred. This leaves 232 voters whose preferred party finished worse than their vote choice but who were not coded as believing that this would be true at the time of the campaign survey. 98 of these 232 were not coded as believing it to be true because of non-response, while 64 of these 232 were not coded as believing it to be true because they thought that their vote choice and their preferred party had the same chance of winning the constituency election. This leaves 70 voters - or just 8.8% of the 795 voters whose preferred party actually finished worse than their vote choice - whose preferred party actually finished worse than their vote choice who expected the opposite to be true.

Table 9.2 summarizes the analysis for the 795 voters who voted for a party that finished better than their preferred party. The columns show how many voters self-identified tactical motivations and how many were identified \textit{ex post} as tactical voters. Rows 3 and 4 include the voters whose expecta-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations, Pref. Party vs. Vote</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>SI, Not I</th>
<th>I, Not SI</th>
<th>SI and I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pref. Party Will Do Worse</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations Unclear: Non-Response</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pref. Party Will Do Equally Well</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pref. Party Will Do Better</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>795</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2: Breaking Down Relative Expectations of Preferred Party Performance and Performance of Vote Choice Party, from the campaign wave of the BES, for voters whose preferred party finished worse in the constituency than the party for whom they voted. \textbf{I} = \textit{ex post} identified; \textbf{SI} = self-identified.
tions for preferred party performance, relative to their expectations for the performance of their vote choice, were incorrect. There are 27 voters in rows 3 and 4 who were identified \textit{ex post} as tactical voters, who did not self-identify tactical motivations, and whose incorrect expectations mean that they do not satisfy the third criterion in the tactical voting definition. This might seem to increase convergence between the set of voters who self-identify tactical motivations and the set of voters who are definitionally tactical voters, but taking into account voters’ inaccurate expectations of the election outcome increases by 71 the number of voters who self-identify as tactical voters but who do not satisfy the criteria embedded within the political science definition of tactical voting, the very group of voters responsible for the greatest convergence problems. Therefore, taking the inaccuracy of voters’ expectations of election outcomes into account does little to improve convergence.
Appendix C: Methodology and Missed Tactical Voters

This appendix breaks down in greater detail why my methodology missed some of the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not estimated as tactical voters by any of my three estimation methods.

Of the 1163 voters who self-identify tactical motivations but who were not coded as tactical voters by any of my three estimation schemes, 364 had an unknown party preference per the pre-campaign imputation. 73 other voters did not offer their opinions on enough parties’ expected performance in the pre-campaign survey for it to be possible to determine which parties those voters thought would finish in third or worse, 8 more did not provide their expectations for their preferred party, and 7 more did not provide their expectations for their vote choice. But of the 87 (73 + 8 + 7) voters who could not be coded as satisfying either the second or third criteria in the ex ante prediction, just 61 satisfied the first criterion. In other words, only for these 61 is voter non-response responsible for my inability to pick them up ex ante as tactical voters. In total, 425 of the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not picked up by any of my three tactical voting estimation schemes could not have been predicted ex ante as tactical voters because the pre-campaign imputation of party preference did not yield a clear
estimate of party preference or because I could not determine voters’ pre-campaign expectations of party performance due to voter non-response.

353 of the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations but who were not coded as tactical voters by any of my three estimation schemes were recorded as having an unknown party preference per the post-election imputation. Because the *ex post* identification of tactical voting relied on actual election outcomes to determine whether voters satisfied the second and third tactical voting criteria, these 353 were the only voters among the 1163 who could not be identified *ex post* as tactical voters because of my methodology.

For the tactical voting estimate based on voters’ expectations of party performance in the campaign survey, in addition to the 353 voters whose party preference was unclear from the post-election imputation, 37 voters preferred BNP, Green or UKIP. These 37 could not satisfy the second or third tactical voting criteria since the campaign survey did not ask about voters’ expectations for minor party electoral performance. An additional 125 voters did not offer their expectations for enough of the parties in the campaign survey for it to be possible to determine which parties the voter expected to finish in third or worse, and 74 more did not offer their expectations for the performance of their vote choice. But of these 199 (125 + 74) additional voters, just 114 satisfied the first criterion. Only for these 114 voters is voter non-response clearly responsible for my inability to pick them up as tactical voters. Thanks to my methodology, then, 504 of the 1163 voters who self-identified tactical motivations and who were not identified as tactical voters by any of my three estimation schemes could not have been estimated to be tactical voters based on voters’ election outcome expectations from the campaign survey and the post-election party preference imputation of party preference.
Bibliography


