Valence Politics and Electoral Choice in Britain, 2010

by

Harold D. Clarke
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences
University of Texas at Dallas and
Department of Government
University of Essex
email: clarke475@msn.com

David Sanders
Department of Government
University of Essex
email: sanders@essex.ac.uk

Marianne C. Stewart
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences
University of Texas at Dallas
email: mstewart@utdallas.edu

Paul Whiteley
Department of Government
University of Essex
email: whiteley@essex.ac.uk

Abstract

Valence Politics and Electoral Choice in Britain, 2010

This paper presents the results of analyses of forces shaping electoral choice in the 2010 British general election. The analyses are based primarily on data gathered in the Campaign Internet Panel Survey (CIPS) that was conducted as part of the 2010 British Election Study (BES). Tests of rival models of electoral choice reveal that, as in earlier British elections, a valence politics model provides a strong explanation of voting decisions. However, as in those earlier contests, a model based on the spatial modeling tradition also contributes to understanding how voters made up their minds in 2010. The paper concludes by reprising major findings and discussing why the Conservatives failed to secure a majority in a context seemingly ideally suited for them to do so.

Valence Politics and Electoral Choice in Britain, 2010

The 2010 British general election was an exciting but inconclusive contest. When voters awoke on May 7th, they found that they had elected a hung parliament—no party had won a majority of seats. Over the next few days, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats constructed an agreement for a coalition government, thereby forcing Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his government from office, some 13 years after Labour had taken the reins of power with its dramatic victory in the May 1997 general election. This paper presents the results of analyses of forces shaping Labour's reversal of electoral fortune in 2010. The analyses are based primarily on data gathered in the Campaign Internet Panel Survey (CIPS) that was conducted as part of the 2010 British Election Study (BES).[1] Tests of rival models of electoral choice reveal that, as in earlier British elections, a valence politics model provides a strong explanation of voting decisions. However, as in those earlier contests, a model based on the spatial theoretical tradition also contributes to understanding how voters made up their minds in 2010. The paper concludes by reprising major findings and discussing why the Conservatives failed to secure a majority in a context seemingly ideally suited for them to do so.

Valence Politics 2010

The valence politics model (Clarke et al., 2004, 2009; see also Clarke, Kornberg and Scotto, 2009) is inspired by the work of the Stokes (1963, 1992). Unlike spatial models of party competition (e.g., Downs, 1957; Merrill and Grofman, 1999; Adams, Merrill and Grofman, 2005) that emphasize 'pro-con' issues upon which voters take differing positions, the valence politics models give 'pride of place' to what Stokes called 'valence issues', i.e., issues upon which there is widespread agreement. The economy, a dominant issue in 2010, is a classic example of a valence issue, with overwhelming percentages of people endorsing vigorous,

sustainable economic growth, coupled with low levels of inflation and unemployment. Health care, education, crime and terrorism are other excellent contemporary examples. Virtually everyone wants high quality, affordable and accessible health care and education, virtually everyone wants security from the security threats posed by criminals and terrorists. In the realm of valence politics, it is not 'what', but rather 'who', and 'how' that matters.

The valence politics model also emphasizes the importance of party leader images and party identifications. These images and identifications are important because they serve as cues that enable voters to make sensible political choices in a political world where stakes are high and the risks of alternative possible courses of action are difficult, often impossible, to calculate. Leader images and partisan attachments serve as 'fast and frugal heuristics' (Gigerenzer, 2008) for voters who are 'smart enough to know they are not smart enough' to behave in accordance with the canons of traditional rational choice theory. *Pace* Butler and Stokes (1969) and other analysts who have downplayed the impact of leaders in British electoral politics, there is considerable evidence that voters rely heavily on leader images for information about who is most likely to 'do the job' (e.g., Clarke et al., 2004). They also rely on their party identifications for helpful cues, but their partisanship is not 'cast in stone'. Rather, partisan attachments may change in the face of evidence concerning recent party and leader performance. In the language of Fiorina's (1981) well-known 'running tally' metaphor, voters update their partisan attachments emphasizing recent performance and progressively discounting previous performance. The results of these updating exercises vary; sometimes voters 'stand pat', other times they 'move on'.

Leader Images

Although there were several important events in the long campaign preceding the 2010 election, one of the most significant was the replacement of Tony Blair by Gordon Brown as leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister. Brown had thirsted after his party's leadership for well over a decade and, when he finally attained it, the impact on public opinion was significant. After the 2005 election, Labour's popularity had declined concomitant with growing disaffection with Prime Minister Blair, whose steadfast support for British involvement in the Iraq War had made him increasingly unpopular, both in the country as a whole and, perhaps especially, among Labour activists (Clarke et al., 2009, ch. 4). As Figure 1 shows, Blair's exit in favour of Brown in late June 2007 was accompanied by an immediate, sharp increase in Labour support, with the party surging ahead of the Conservatives in the polls. The 'Brown bounce' continued as autumn approached, and a number of 'young Turks' among the new Prime Minister's advisors advised him to use the opportunity to go to the people to secure a new mandate for himself and his party. Ever cautious, Brown agonized about calling an election, before finally rejecting it in early October when a poll of key marginals suggested that a Labour victory was not a sure thing. Soon afterwards, Labour support eroded concomitant with surging Conservative popularity. In the event, Labour's lead in the polls was gone for good.

(Figure 1 about here)

Although Labour consistently trailed the Conservatives after the autumn of 2007, the party's fortunes did revive a year later. The failure of Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008 shocked economies throughout the world. Britain was no exception, and the deepening financial crisis presented Mr. Brown and his party with enormous problems and a possible political opportunity. As Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1997 and 2007, Brown had presided over a lengthy period of economic expansion. He was portrayed as the 'Iron Chancellor'—someone

whose will and wit enabled him to deliver on his promise to end the cycle of 'boom and bust' that had bedeviled the British economy throughout the post-World War II era. Playing on this reputation in the weeks after Lehman's Brothers failure, Brown claimed he was assuming an international leadership role in addressing the global financial crisis. Labour's support revived and, as 2008 drew to a close, it appeared that Brown might have turned serious economic adversity into significant political advantage.

The advantage may have been real but, it was also transitory and insufficient to effect a long-run reversal of political fortune. Labour did not overtake the Conservatives in the polls (see Figure 1) and, as the financial crisis continued into 2009, Brown's image as a 'master of the economic universe' became increasingly tarnished. Indeed, as Figure 2 shows, his competence ratings fell significantly, closely tracking more general feelings about him. When Brown had become Prime Minister, his mean competence rating (5.8 points on a 0-10 scale) was impressive and well above his affect score (4.8).[2] This gap was consistent with what a number of commentators had predicted. Brown may have been widely seen as a dour, abrasive person but, building on his 'Iron Chancellor' image, he also was widely seen as highly competent. However, as Figure 2 shows, the competence dimension of Brown's image had strong dynamics. It collapsed in the late autumn of 2007, briefly revived in the wake of the financial crisis a year later, and then collapsed again. On the eve of the 2010 election, the Prime Minister clearly could not rely on his erstwhile reputation as a man who could get the job done. Although his competence score (4.1) in the March 2010 CMS was slightly higher than his affect score (3.8), both numbers were very mediocre for someone with aspirations to win a general election (Clarke et al., 2004: ch. 4; 2009: ch. 5). Operating in a political environment where competence counts, Brown had lost what many observers had surmised would be his electoral trump card.

(Figure 2 about here)

Campaigning: The BES CIPS data indicate that the 2010 'short campaign' did not enhance voters' assessments of Gordon Brown or of his Conservative rival, David Cameron. As Figure 3 illustrates, Messrs. Brown and Cameron had affect ratings of 3.9 and 4.4, respectively, at the campaign's outset on in early April. A month later, on the eve of the May 6th general election, these ratings were 3.7 and 4.4, respectively. However, the image of Liberal Democrat Leader, Nick Clegg, followed a very different trajectory. He began the campaign with a relatively stout affect score of 5.1 points which increased significantly to 5.6 on the day before the election. Reflecting Clegg's very well-received performance in the first-ever party leader's debate, Figure 4 indicates that most of the increase in Clegg's favourability rating occurred at the time of the first leader's debate on April 15th, an event watched by a very large television audience. Echoing that pattern, fully 78% of the CIPS respondents judged that Clegg had performed best in the first debate, whereas only 13% and 9%, respectively, concluded that Cameron and Brown had performed best. As Figure 4 also shows, Clegg was not able to repeat his performance in the second and third debates—contests won, according to CIPS respondents, by David Cameron. For his part, Brown was a consistent loser, with clear majorities of CIPS respondents judging that he performed worst in all three debates.

(Figures 3 and 4 about here)

The dynamics of voters' feelings about the party leaders are mirrored, albeit imperfectly, in judgments about which leader would make the best Prime Minister. For his part, David Cameron's ratings fell modestly, from 37% to 33% over the course of the campaign (Figure 5). Brown's loss was larger, with his best Prime Minister score falling from 33% to 25%. Paralleling how voters' reacted to his performance in the first leader debate (on April 15th),

Figure 5 suggests that the decline in Brown's rating had occurred in part, at least, well prior to his widely publicized 'bigoted woman' remark on April 24th. In contrast, the upward movement in Clegg's best Prime Minister score around the time of first debate is clearly apparent. Originally only a 9% share of the electorate, the cadre of voters judging him favourably surged into the mid-20s immediately after the first debate. At the end of the campaign, 22% endorsed Clegg, only 3% less than selected Brown.   By election day, it was abundantly evident that Brown's desultory campaign performance had worked to erode his party's already slim chances of a fourth consecutive victory.

<div align="center">(Figure 5 about here)</div>

Issues

As discussed above, the global economic crisis signaled by the fall of Lehman Brothers Bank in September 2008 was the defining event in the political economy of British party support during the 2005-10 period. A year earlier, the British bank, Northern Rock, had failed, but the gravity of Britain's—indeed, the world's—financial situation, did not become fully apparent until a venerable Wall Street institution collapsed amidst the glare of global publicity. The predictable result was that in the run-up to the 2010 election, the issue agenda of British politics was dominated by concerns about the perilous health of the country's economy. A quintessential valence issue, the economy has strong potential to drive voting behaviour and election outcomes. This had certainly been the case in the American presidential election of 2008 as mounting public anxiety about the financial collapse exerted major effects on voting behaviour (Scotto et al., 2011). There was every reason to expect that similar concerns would define the issue agenda for the 2010 British election.

The CIPS data indicate that the expectation was fulfilled. Fully 51% of the CIPS respondents interviewed during the campaign cited 'the economy' as the most important issue facing the country. This number dwarfs all other responses; the second most frequently cited issue is immigration, mentioned by 19%. As for other issues, 8% cited either unemployment or consumer debt, 4% mentioned crime and 1% referred to the MPs' expenses scandal or the dishonesty of public officials more generally. The dominance of the economy is also evident in answers CIPS respondents provided when given the opportunity to rank-order the 'top three' of eight possible issues. Echoing their open-ended responses, 42% mentioned 'the economy generally' as one of their most important three issues. An additional 11% cited 'government debt' and 8% designated unemployment. The 11% figure bears note because some commentators have asserted, *post hoc*, that government debt was a major preoccupation for many voters in 2010. Clearly, a small minority of voters was very worried about the issue, but many more evidently were not especially concerned—fully 66% did not rank government debt among their top three issues.

Judgments about which party is best able to handle a particular issue is what gives that issue its political clout. In this regard, the 2010 CIPS data reveal that none of the major political parties had a decisive edge. Thinking in terms of a simple 'reward-punishment' model, one might have anticipated that voters reacting to the global economic crisis might have abandoned the governing Labour Party in droves in favour of its principal rival, the Conservatives, especially given that Gordon Brown's competence ratings were far below what they had been when he became Prime Minister. However, this was not the case. At the beginning of the 2010 campaign, only about one person in four (27%) believed that the Conservatives were best able to handle the most important issue facing the country. An identical number selected Labour, and

slightly more (29%) said no party could handle the most important issue or that they 'didn't know'. Telling also was that less than one person in 10 (9%) thought the Liberal Democrats were best, with an equal number picking one of the minor parties. Clearly, none of the parties were strongly positioned on most important issues when the campaign began.

The picture remained much the same at the end of campaign. Neither the Conservatives nor Labour made any net headway in developing an image of competence on important issues. Only 26% selected the former party, and 25% selected the latter one. The Liberal Democrats also failed to make a case. Despite their dramatic surge in the polls after the first leader debate and the strong popularity of their leader, the Liberal Democrats remained in a very weak position on issues that mattered to most people. As voters prepared to go to the polls, only 12% selected the Liberal Democrats as the party best on the issue designated as most important. In 2010 no party was able to establish widespread issue credibility.

Partisanship

The third key variable in the valence politics model is party identification, conceptualized as a potentially mutable cueing device that voters use to help them inform their electoral choices. There is now convincing evidence that party identifications in Britain can manifest substantial individual- and aggregate-level dynamics (e.g., Clarke et al., 2004; Clarke and McCutcheon, 2009). Although sophisticated panel modeling techniques that take into account random measurement error are required to make an airtight statistical case for individual-level dynamics (Clarke and McCutcheon, 2009), simple 'turnover' table analyses of multi-wave panel data tell the basic story. For example, five-wave BES panel data gathered between 2005 and 2009 indicate that 47% of the electorate maintained stable partisan attachments, with an additional 10% remaining stable nonidentifiers. Of the rest, 26% moved between identification and

nonidentification, and nearly one person in five (17%) switched their identifications between parties one or more times (Sanders et al., 2011).

Although these data reveal considerable individual-level partisan mobility after 2005, the aggregate picture is quite different. Partisan shares were remarkably similar at the beginning of the 2005 and 2010 campaigns. In 2005, 33% identified with Labour, 24% with the Conservatives and 11% with the Liberal Democrats. Five years later, the comparable numbers were 31%, 25% and 11%, respectively. Again, in both years, 9% identified with one of the minor parties and 23% were nonidentifiers. The Conservative figures are particularly noteworthy. Despite having led in the polls—sometimes by very large margins— throughout most of the post-2005 period, the Conservatives had not been able to achieve a partisan breakthrough. Their share of identifiers when the 2010 campaign began was almost exactly what it had been five years earlier.

In sum, the data presented above reveal that none of the parties were especially well-positioned for victory in 2010. The data for the Conservatives are especially interesting. As just observed, despite their impressive performance in many vote intention polls conducted over the inter-election period, the Conservatives had essentially the same percentage of identifiers as had been the case in 2005. Also, despite a deep recession and a continuing financial crisis, the party had failed to convince nearly three-quarters of the electorate that it had the wherewithal to deal with the failing economy or other major issues. And, despite being more warmly received than his predecessor, Michael Howard, new Conservative leader, David Cameron, had failed to ignite widespread enthusiasm similar to that which Tony Blair had enjoyed when he led New Labour to power in 1997. Thus, the three fundamentals that animate the valence politics model—

partisanship, party preference on major issues and leader image—were not configured in ways that would easily secure a Conservative majority in 2010.

Rival Models of Electoral Choice

The emphasis in the preceding discussion on the configuration of variables in the valence politics model assumes that valence considerations played a crucial role in determining electoral choice in 2010. Previous work indicates that the valence politics model dominated competing models in its ability to explain voting in the 2001 and 2005 elections. Table 1 documents that this continued to be true in 2010. As in 2001 and 2005, the valence politics model, which includes variables measuring partisanship, party preferences on issues designated 'most important' by the voter, and party leader images, outperforms its rivals. Similar to 2001 and 2005, the 'demographics' model that includes social class and various other socio-demographic characteristics fares very poorly, with very small pseudo R^2 statistics and relatively weak ability to correctly classify the choices voters made. A Downsian-style spatial model of party competition which includes variables measuring perceived proximities between voters and various parties on 11-point 'tax reduction-public services spending' and 'reduce crime-protect human rights' dimensions does considerably better. However, the spatial model still lags behind its valence rival when assessed by these criteria. The superior performance of the valence model is also testified to by its better (smaller) AIC value (e.g., Burnham and Anderson, 2002).

(Table 1 about here)

It bears emphasis that our analysis of the explanatory power of rival models of electoral choice does not prompt the conclusion that the valence politics model is all that matters. Rather, as Table 1 shows, a composite model that includes all of the predictor variables from the several rival models[3] outperforms the valence politics model in terms of pseudo R^2 values, per cent of

voters correctly classified, and AIC values. The improvements in these statistics over the pure valence politics model are not large, but they consistently point in the same direction, namely that there is explanatory 'value added' in the non-valence models. This finding for voting in 2010 is consistent with comparable analyses of voting in the 2001 and 2005 British elections (Clarke et al., 2004: ch. 4; 2009: ch. 5). In all three cases, the valence politics model speaks loudest but its rivals have something to say as well.

A detailed report of the performance of various predictor variables in the composite voting models is presented in Table 2. This table summarizes two analyses. The first one, a binomial logit analysis, is motivated by the idea that voting for a governing party versus any of its opposition rivals is a fundamental electoral decision. Accordingly, the analysis pits Labour voting versus voting for any of the opposition parties. The second analysis, a multinomial logit, provides additional information about factors driving voters' choices by considering voting for various opposition parties with Labour voting used as the reference category.[4] The results of these analyses are consistent with expectations, with a large majority of predictors in the valence politics model being statistically significant and correctly signed.[5] For example, positive feelings about Gordon Brown increase the probability of a Labour vote, whereas positive feelings about David Cameron and Nick Clegg decrease that probability. Similarly, selecting Labour as best on the most important issue is positively associated with Labour voting, whereas selecting any of the other parties as best on a most important issue is negatively associated with casting a Labour ballot. Partisanship works the same way, with Labour identifiers being more likely to vote for their party, and identifiers with other parties being less likely to do so. Yet another variable in the valence politics framework, economic evaluations, demonstrates expected effects too.

Positive economic evaluations bolster support for Labour, the governing party, and diminish support for the opposition Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties.

(Table 2 about here)

Key variables in other models also behave as anticipated. Perhaps particularly noteworthy are spatial variables measuring proximities to various parties on tax-spend and crime-rights scales. Eight of nine of these variables are statistically significant, and all but two of the nine are correctly signed. Six additional variables measuring voters' agreement-disagreement with issue positions adopted by the Liberal Democrats in their party manifesto are significant as well, and in every case, correctly signed. As expected, controlling for other considerations, agreement with the issue position is positively associated with voting Liberal Democrat and negatively associated with voting for Labour or Conservative.

Still other noteworthy findings pertain to variables measuring opinion on the Afghanistan War, the MPs' expenses scandal and tactical voting. Approval of the war has a predictable positive effect on Labour voting and a predictable negative effect on Liberal Democrat voting. However, despite the enormous publicity surrounding the scandal, it had no significant direct effects on electoral choice. Finally, tactical voting is shown to have worked to the advantage of both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, and to the disadvantage of Labour. The effects for the Liberal Democrats are similar to those at work in 2001 and 2005, and a similar negative Labour effect also was evident in 2005. However, the positive Conservative effect is something not present in either 2005 (when there was no significant effect) or 2001 (when there was a significant negative effect) (see Clarke et al., 2004, ch. 4; Clarke et al., 2009, ch. 5).

Since the results of logit analyses are difficult to interpret, we calculate how changes in the values of statistically significant predictors affect the probability of voting for various

parties.[6]   When performing this exercise, we allow a predictor to vary over its range, while

holding other predictors at their means (in the case of continuous variables) or at zero (in the

case of dummy variables). The results displayed in Table 3 underscore the importance of party

leader images as determinants of electoral choice in 2010. Specifically, as feelings about Gordon

Brown move from negative to positive, the probability of voting Labour increases by 49 points.

The magnitude of the 'Clegg effect' on Liberal Democrat is very similar, 46 points. Effects

associated with feelings about David Cameron are even more impressive. As the Conservative

leader's image become increasingly favourable, the likelihood of casting a Conservative ballot

increases by fully 89 points.

<center>(Table 3 about here)</center>

The numbers in Table 3 also make the point that leader images were not everything;

several other predictors could exert quite sizeable effects. In addition to partisanship and party

preferences on important issues, issue proximities are noteworthy, particularly in the case of

Conservative voting. Impressive also are opinions on Liberal Democrat economic and political

policy positions.   As these opinions became increasingly positive, the probability of voting

Liberal Democrat increased by 28 and 39 points respectively, and the probability of voting

Conservative decreased by 39 and 38 points. Again, the effects of tactical voting was nontrivial,

boosting the likelihood of voting Liberal Democrat by 20 points and decreasing the likelihood of

voting Labour by 16 points. In contrast, the impact of opinions about the Afghanistan War were

much weaker; the effects on the probability of voting Labour or Liberal Democrat were four and

two points, respectively. The weakness of these latter effects echoes the weak direct effects that

attitudes towards the Iraq War had on voting behaviour in the 2005 election (Clarke et al. 2009:

ch. 5). The weakness of orientations towards the Afghan conflict aside, the major conclusion

suggested by the data in Table 3 is that several predictors from the valence politics model and its spatial rival had considerable potential to affect voting decisions in 2010.

Conclusion: The Politics of Doom and Gloom

As is typically the case in British general elections, a wide variety of forces influenced electoral choice in 2010. At the individual level, the story was a familiar one; valence politics variables exerted very sizeable effects, with those associated with party leader images being particularly large. Given the context in which the election was held, the strength of the valence politics model does not surprise. The contest occurred in the wake of one of the biggest shocks to the British economy since the Great Depression of the 1930s. A financial crisis, a deep recession and rising unemployment captured the attention of a worried electorate and prompted demands for government action. Quintessential valence politics considerations, these economic concerns did much to define the issue agenda in the run-up to the 2010 election.   Knowing 'what' they were concerned about, voters focused heavily on the 'who' of electoral choice.

Given Labour's lengthy tenure in office, widespread unhappiness with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and the prevailing economic distress, voters clearly were open to—indeed, searching for—alternatives in 2010. In this regard, the limitations of the Conservatives were abundantly evident. The Tories had not strengthened their cohort of party identifiers since 2005 and their leader, David Cameron, appeared popular only relative to the exceedingly chilly reception voters had accorded his three most recent predecessors, William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard. But, perhaps most noteworthy was the party's failure to make the case that it could competently address the country's economic woes. As discussed above, only about one person in four thought the Conservatives would do the best job in addressing what that person designated as the most important issue. In retrospect, this was a political context ideally

suited for a major campaign move by a 'third' party led by a popular leader. The first ever nationally televised leader debate gave Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, the chance to make his case. He forcefully seized the opportunity and the electorate responded. But, the ensuing outburst of 'Clegg mania' was not enough. Given the weakness of the Liberal Democrats' partisan base and their continuing inability to convince voters that they were best suited to handle the economic crisis, the Liberal Democrat 'surge' ultimately receded.

In the end, the Conservatives came close to capturing a majority of seats at Westminster. But, they failed. We contend that although there is no single explanation for the failure, the party's almost single-minded emphasis on what they deemed to be excessive public sector expenditures and the need for debt reduction probably was an important factor. Starting several months before the 2010 campaign officially began, David Cameron and Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne, repeatedly called for massive cuts in public sector spending, coupled with selective, but possibly significant, tax increases. Even if this bitter fiscal medicine was the correct prescription for what is ailing the British economy, it was precisely that—bitter medicine. And, it was touted as a cure for a disease that, rightly or wrongly, was not that widely recognized; as discussed above, the 2010 BES surveys document that at the time of the election a large majority of voters did not accord high priority to reducing the government debt *per se*. More generally, the British electorate had grown accustomed to New Labour's optimistic electoral messages, and a rival party advocating extremely harsh measures to voters already suffering the pain of a sharp economic down-turn was unlikely to receive a ringing endorsement. In contrast, if the Conservatives had taken a page from Ronald Reagan's storied political playbook for how right-of-centre parties can win elections and provided a dose of 'hope, growth and opportunity' to sweeten their policy prescriptions, the result on May 6th might have been

different. In a world of valence politics, a campaign promise of 'doom and gloom' is always a

hard sell.

**Figure 1. Party Support, May 19th 2005 - May 5th 2010**
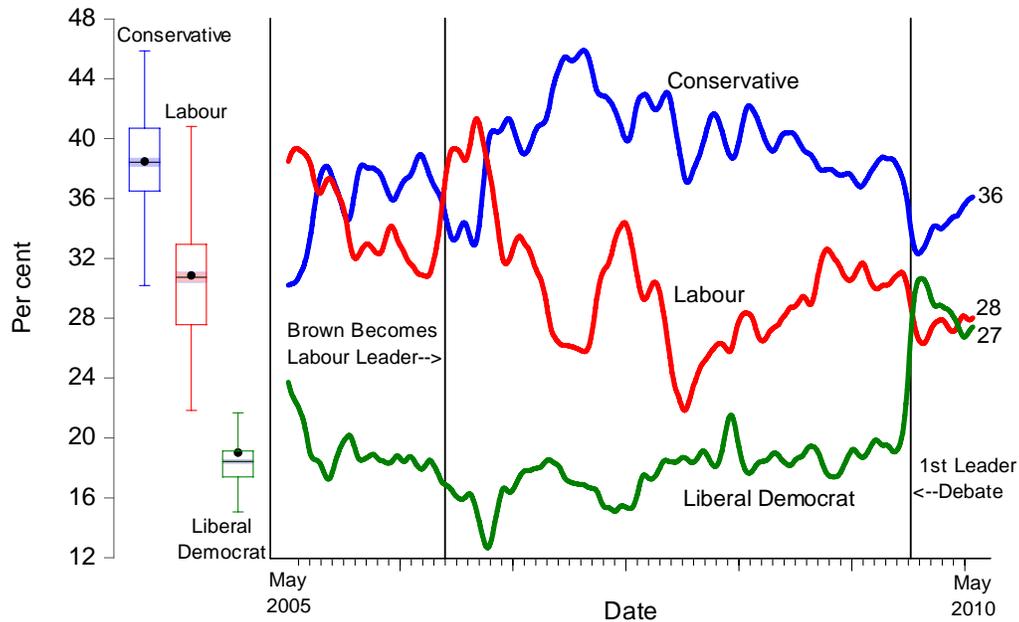
Note: data smoothed with the Hodrick-Prescott filter.

Source: 607 public opinion polls measuring vote intentions between May 19, 2005 and May 5, 2010. Polling houses include: Angus Reid, BPIX, Communicate/Ind, Comres, Harris, ICM, Ipsos/Mori, Market Sciences, Populus, TNS, YouGov.

Note: the 'box and whisker' plots on the vertical axis provide information on the mean (dot), median (horizontal line in box), and variation in support for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. Similar box and whisker plots appear in Figures 2, 3 and 5 below.

**Figure 2. Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Image,
July 2007 - March 2010**
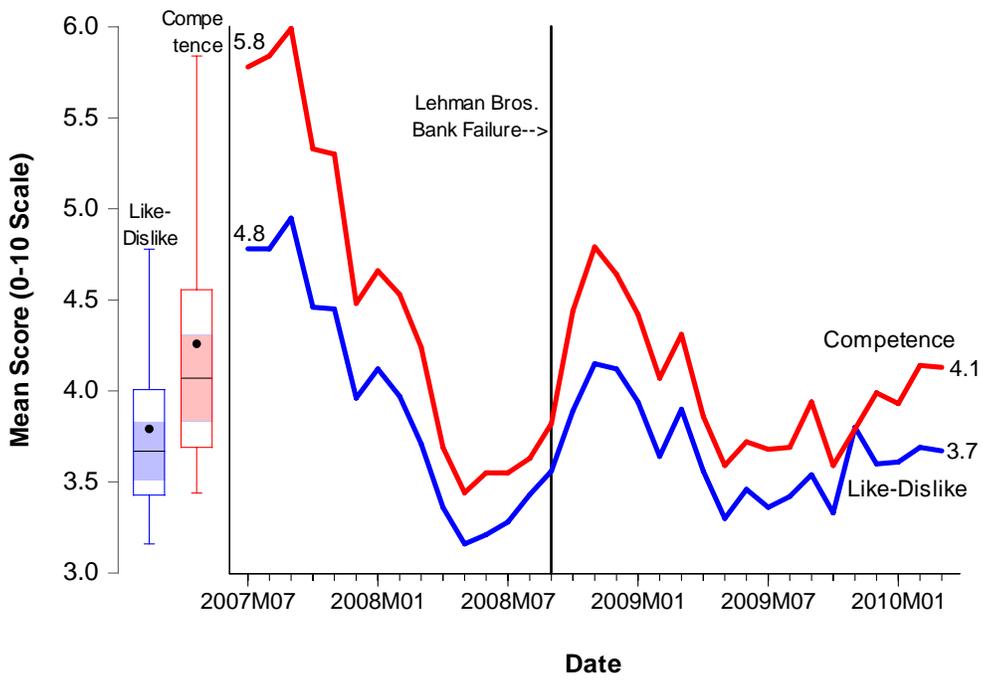
Source: July 2007 – March 2010 CMS surveys

Figure 3. Party Leader Images Over the 2010 Election Campaign

Note: two-day moving averages
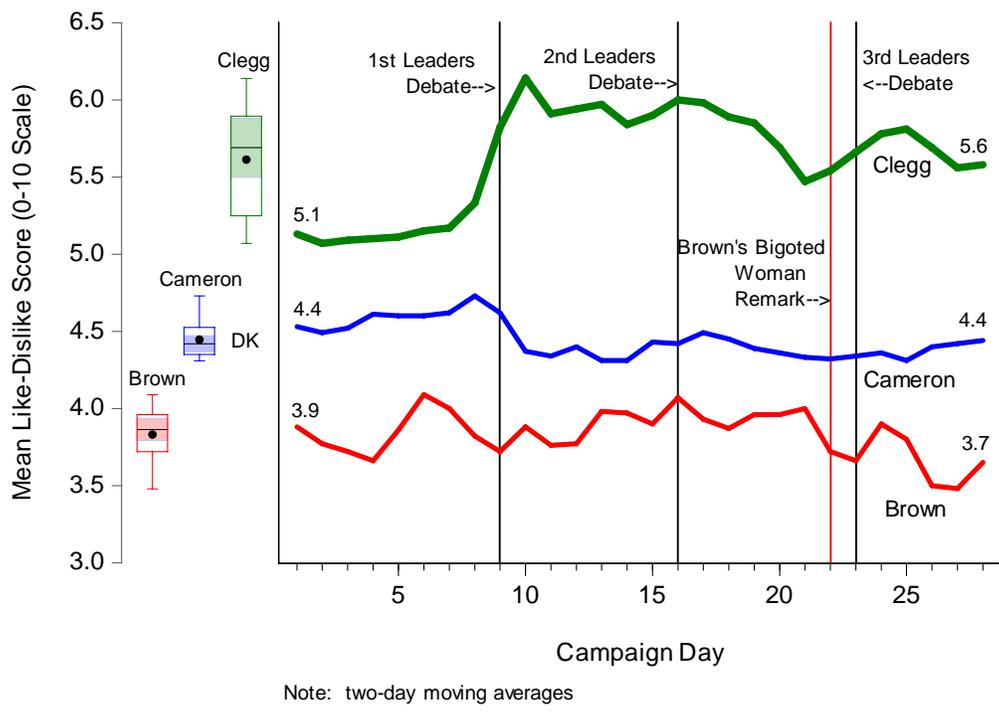
Source: 2010 BES CIPS campaign wave

Figure 4. Evaluations of Party Leader Performance in the 2010 Debates

A. Best Performance

	First Debate	Second Debate	Third Debate
Brown	9	26	25
Cameron	13	41	51
Clegg	78	33	24

Brown ■ Cameron □ Clegg

B. Worst Performance

	First Debate	Second Debate	Third Debate
Brown	55	54	57
Cameron	42	36	36
Clegg	3	10	17

Brown ■ Cameron □ Clegg
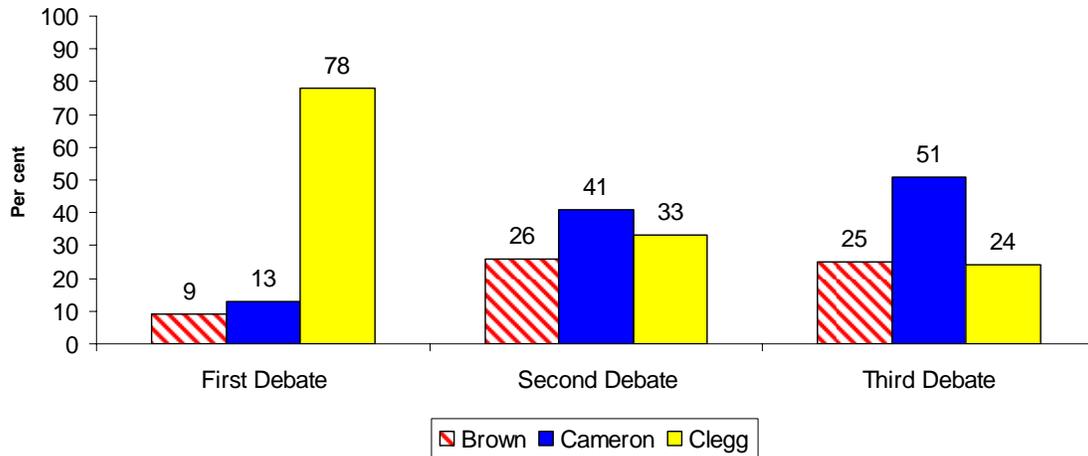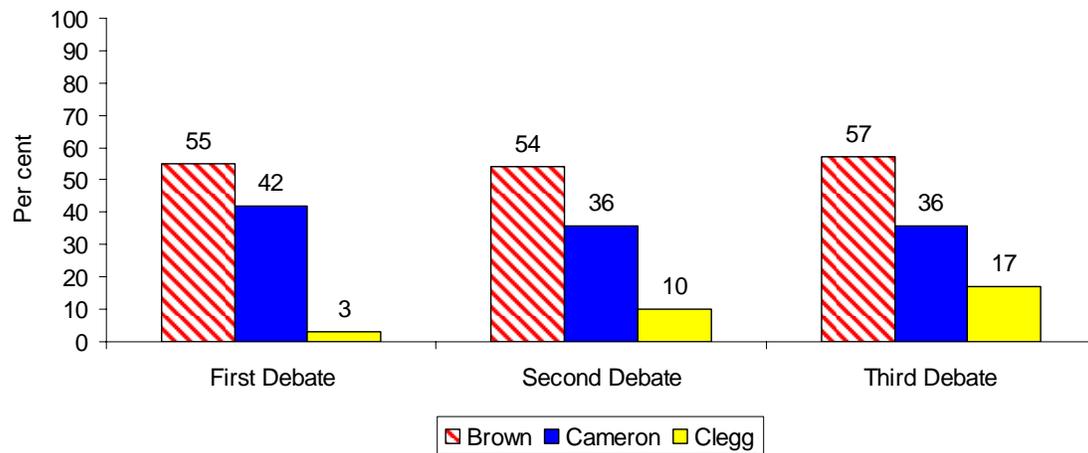
Source: campaign wave of 2010 BES CIPS

Figure 5. Best Prime Minister Judgments Over the 2010 Election Campaign

Note: two-day moving averages.

Source: monthly CMS surveys, July 2007 - March 2010

Table 1
Performance of Rival Models of Party Choice, 2010 British General Election

A. Labour v. All Other Parties - Binomial Logit Model

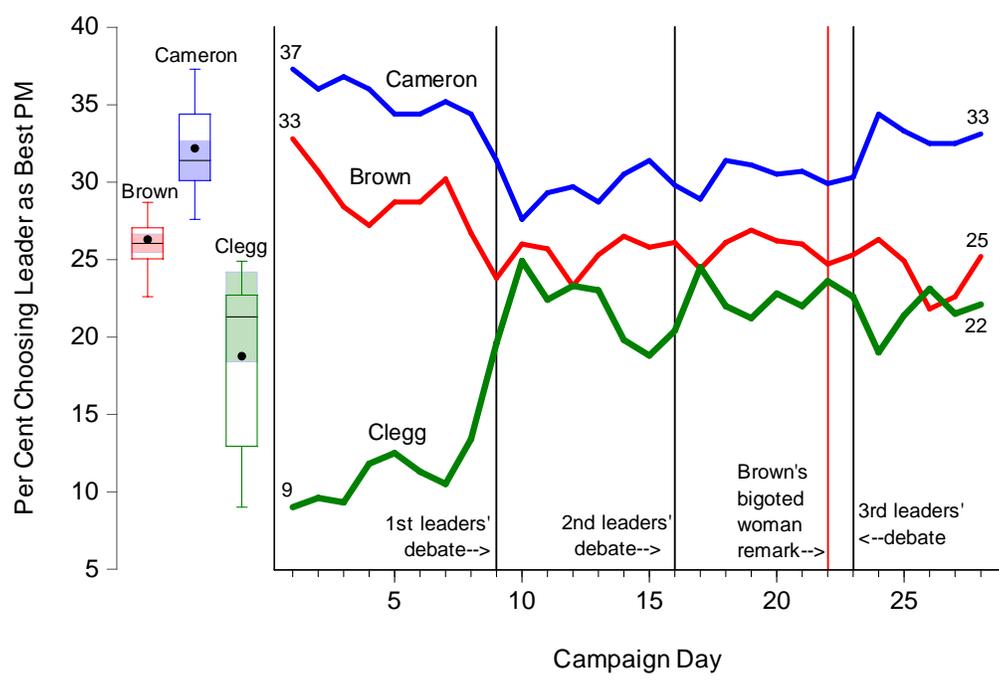| Model	McFadden R^2	McKelvey R^2	Per Cent Correct	AIC†
1. Demographics	.06	.10	71.5	12643.28
2. Economic Evaluations	.11	.19	74.2	11877.91
3. Spatial	.18	.36	75.3	10955.00
Valence Politics Model Components				
4a. Most Important Issue	.35	.49	84.3	8741.05
4b. Party Identification	.38	.53	85.0	8273.72
4c. Party Leaders	.40	.59	83.4	8102.55
5. Valence Politics‡	.52	.67	87.7	6563.25
6. Composite	.55	.71	88.8	6103.65

B. Opposition Parties With Labour as Reference Category - Multinomial Logit Model

Model	McFadden R^2	McKelvey R^2	Per Cent Correct	AIC†
1. Demographics	.07	--	37.8	27543.57
2. Economic Evaluations	.07	--	45.0	27272.32
3. Spatial	.21	--	55.7	23111.95
Valence Politics Model Components				
4a. Most Important Issue	.34	--	65.9	19514.85
4b. Party Identification	.36	--	69.5	18752.52
4c. Party Leaders	.39	--	68.9	17978.44
5. Valence Politics‡	.51	--	75.9	14494.36
6. Composite	.55	--	78.3	13393.90

† - Akaike Information Criterion; smaller values indicate better model performance.

‡ - valence politics model includes party best on most important issue, party leader images and party identification.

-- - not defined for multinomial logit model.

Table 2. Binomial and Multinomial Logit Analyses of Factors Affecting Voting
In the 2010 British General Election

		Vote	
Predictor Variables	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	Liberal <u>Democrat</u>
	β	β	β
Leaders: Brown	.29***	-.35***	-.26***
Cameron	-.13***	.51***	.06***
Clegg	-.15***	-.06**	.28***
Partisanship:			
Labour	1.24***	-1.47***	-1.13***
Conservative	-1.32***	1.43***	.25
Liberal Democrat	-.92***	.26	1.06***
Other Party	-.73***	-.06	-.16
Party Best Impt Issue:			
Labour	.64***	-1.01***	-.59***
Consrvative	-.97***	.93***	.14
Liberal Democrat	-.73***	.03	.75***
Other Party	-.36**	-.05	-.28*
Issue Proximities:			
Labour	.11***	-.15***	-.10***
Conservative	-.04***	.10***	.03**
Liberal Democrat	-.04**	.00	.07***
Liberal Democrat			
Policies: Economic	-.15***	-.17**	.28***
Political	-.15***	-.16***	.30***
Economic Evaluations	.08**	-.10*	-.07*
Economic Emotions	-.03	.02	.06
Afghanistan War	.05*	-.02	-.06*
MPs Expenses Scandal	-.04	.03	.02
Tactical Voting	-1.04***	.63***	1.35***
Age: 18-25	.29	-.31	-.09
26-35	.29*	-.32	-.08
36-45	.43***	-.63***	-.28
46-55	.18	-.43**	-.04
56-65	.08	-.26	-.07
Education	-.10***	.02	.15***
Gender	-.15*	-.15	.17*
Income	-.02*	.05***	.01
Private/Public Sector	-.12*	.19*	.07
Social Class	-.03	-.03	.12
Union Membership	.19*	-.38***	-.20*
Region:			
South East	-.57***	.67***	.53***
South West	-.78***	.41	.91***
Midlands	.10	.11	-.20
North	.35***	-.45**	-.25*
Scotland	.13	-.73***	-.50***
Wales	.00	-.50*	-.06
McFadden R^2	.55	.55	
McKelvey R^2	.71	†	
Per Cent Correctly			
Classified	88.8	78.3	
Log Likelihood	-3011.82	-6536.95	
AIC	6103.65	13393.90	
N	11389	11389	

Note: Labour analysis is a binomial logit (Labour v. all other party voting);
Conservative and Liberal Democrat analysis is a multinomial logit with Labour as the

reference category. Other party voting is included in the multinomial logit analysis
but coefficients not displayed in table.

*** - p $\leq$ .001; ** - p $\leq$ .01; * - p $\leq$ .05, one-tailed tests for all variables except
age, gender and region.

† - Not defined for multinomial logit model.

Table 3. Changes in Probability of Voting Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat
Associated With Changes in Various Predictor Variables

	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Predictor Variables			
Leaders: Brown	+49	-41	-16
Cameron	-21	+81	-22
Clegg	-25	-32	46
Partisanship:			
Labour	+23	-17	-07
Conservative	-20	29	
Liberal Democrat	-14		19
Other Party	-11		
Party Best Impt Issue:			
Labour	+12	-13	-02
Conservative	-15	20	
Liberal Democrat	-11		16
Other Party	-6		
Issue Proximities:			
Labour	+31	-34	-01
Conservative	-13	30	-01
Liberal Democrat	-13		17
Liberal Democrat			
Policies: Economic	-14	-39	+28
Political	-17	-38	+39
Economic Evaluations	-11	-09	-02
Economic Emotions			
Afghanistan War	+4		-02
MPs Expenses Scandal			
Tactical Voting	-16	-04	+20

Endnotes

1. Information on the CIPS is available from the 2010 BES website. Go to http://bes2009-10.org for SPSS and STATA versions of the data and pdf versions of the questionnaires, together with a memo that describe sample sizes, weights and panel filters. Information regarding the construction of variables used in the analyses presented in this paper is also available on the website, together with SPSS code that will enable interested readers to replicate various analyses. On the quality of the CIPS data in comparison with the traditional BES in-person survey data see Sanders et al. (2007).

2. Monthly Continuous Monitoring Survey (CMS) data and accompanying questionnaires are available on the 2010 BES website.

3. For comparability with multivariate analyses of voting in the 2001 and 2005 elections (see Clarke et al., 2004, ch. 4, 2009, ch. 5), the composite model also includes a variable that measures whether the voter engaged in tactical voting.

4. The binomial and mulitnomial logit analyses are performed using STATA 11. Mixed logit models that control for possible IIA violations yield very similar results. See, e.g., Clarke et al., 2009: ch. 4.

5. Minor party coefficients are estimated but not reported for the analysis presented in Table 2.

6. Probabilities are calculated using the CLARIFY program (Tomz, Wittenberg and King, 1999.

References

Adams, James F., Merrill III, Samuel and Grofman, Bernard. 2005. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burnham, Kenneth and Anderson, David. 2002. *Model Selection and Multimodel Inference*. 2nd edition. New York: Springer.

Butler, David and Stokes, Donald. 1969. *Political Change in Britain: Forces Shaping Electoral Choice*. New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press.

Clarke, Harold D. and McCutcheon, Allan. 2009. 'The Dynamics of Party Identification Reconsidered'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73:704-28.

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

Clarke, Harold D., Sanders, David, Stewart, Marianne C. and Whiteley, Paul. 2009. *Performance Politics and the British Voter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clarke, Harold D., Kornberg, Allan and Scotto, Thomas J. 2009. *Making Political Choices: Canada and the United States*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.

Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gigerenzer, Gerd. 2008. *Rationality for Mortals: How People Cope with Uncertainty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Merrill III, Samuel and Bernard Grofman. 1999. A Unified Theory of Voting: Directional and Proximity Spatial Models. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sanders, David, Clarke, Harold D., Stewart, Marianne C. and Whiteley, Paul. 2007. 'Does Mode Matter for Modeling Political Choice?' *Political Analysis* 15: 257-85.

Sanders, David, Clarke, Harold D., Stewart, Marianne C. and Whiteley, Paul. 2011. 'Downs, Stokes and the Dynamics of Electoral Choice. *British Journal of Political Science*, 41: forthcoming.

Scotto, Thomas, Clarke, Harold D., Reifler, Jason, Sanders, David, Stewart, Marianne C. and Whiteley, Paul. 2011. 'The Dynamic Political Economy of Support for Barack Obama During the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign'. *Electoral Studies*, 30: forthcoming.

Stokes, Donald. 1963. 'Spatial Models of Party Competition'. *American Political Science Review* 57: 368-77.

Stokes, Donald. 1992. 'Valence Politics'. In Dennis Kavanagh, ed. *Electoral Politics*. Oxford: Clarendon University Press.

Tomz, Michael, Wittenberg, Jason and King, Gary. 1992. *CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Government.