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CONGRUENCE BETWEEN CITIZENS AND POLICYMAKERS IN TWO VISIONS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

By JOHN D. HUBER and G. BINGHAM POWELL, Jr.*

A more reasonable justification for democracy, then, is that, to a substantially greater degree than any alternative to it, a democratic government provides an orderly and peaceful process by means of which a majority of citizens can induce the government to do what they most want it to do and to avoid doing what they most want it not to do.

—Robert A. Dahl
Democracy and Its Critics

LIBERAL democracy claims to establish connections between citizens and policymakers. The repeated processes of electoral competition and legislative bargaining are supposed to ensure that policymakers do what citizens want them to do. There are, however, at least two quite different visions of the democratic processes that can create congruence between citizen preferences and public policies.

In what we call the *Majority Control vision*, democratic elections are designed to create strong, single-party majority governments that are essentially unconstrained by other parties in the policy-making process. Policymakers are likely to do what citizens want them to do because the party that controls the government has won majority support in the election. Its announced policy comments, previous record, or both were preferred to the partisan alternative by a majority of the citizens. In the other vision, which we call the *Proportionate Influence vision*, elections are designed to produce legislatures that reflect the preferences of all citizens. After the election legislative bargaining between parties is necessary for policymaking, and the influences of the various parties in post-election bargaining processes determine the extent to which policymakers do what citizens want them to do.

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1992 annual meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago. The authors would like to thank Larry Bartels and Nancy Burns for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

In this paper, we offer a simple way to conceptualize the degree of congruence between citizens and their governments, comparing citizen self-placements on the left-right scale with the placement of the governing political parties on the same scale by expert observers. We then attempt to give explicit theoretical form to the Majority Control and Proportionate Influence visions, to link them empirically to specific types of modern democracies, and to measure their successes and failures at creating congruence. We want to know in particular how such theoretically critical features as responsible incumbent governments at the time of the election, identifiable future governments in electoral competition, proportional representation in electoral outcomes, and the formation of majority governments after the election are related to levels of congruence.

Congruence, of course, is not the only democratic virtue: some of the processes treated here as intervening may be highly valued in their own right.¹ Voters oriented to control may wish to see government formations that change in response to even small vote shifts. Voters may prefer to have very distinctive choices. Voters may prefer that policy-making be highly efficient. Permanent minorities may prefer proportionate representation and consultative legislative bargaining, especially if other processes directly impose the preferences of the majority. We therefore do not propose that congruence between citizen preferences and public policy should be the only grounds for choosing or supporting one vision over the other. We do think, however, that congruence between the preferences of citizens and the actions of policy-makers constitutes a major claim and goal of liberal democracy. Thus, Dahl's "reasonable justification for democracy" posits that "a majority of citizens can induce the government to do what they most want it to do and to avoid doing what they most want it not to do."² This is not a unique position but rather articulates more clearly than most a common assumption of those who theorize about liberal democracy. Hence, although congruence is only a part of our general interest in democratic processes, it is an important part.

CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN PREFERENCES OF CITIZENS AND POLICYMAKERS

Dahl's justification of democracy directs our attention to identifying the

¹ Some of these other virtues are more fully described and elaborated in G. Bingham Powell, Jr., "Elections as Instruments of Democracy" (Manuscript, University of Rochester, 1993).

² Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 95. In a similar vein, see Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 234.

policy position that is in some sense "most preferred" by the voters. We believe that the position that has the best claim to represent this "most preferred" policy is the position of the median voter. On a single issue or a single-issue dimension, if we assume that the preferences of voters are single-peaked, the position of the median voter is the only policy that is preferred to all others by a majority of voters.³ Thus, the relationship between the positions of policymakers and the position of the median voter is central to the study of congruence.

To see the importance of the median voter's preferences in another light, imagine that the voters did not elect representatives but rather voted directly on policy. We should expect these voters to adopt (eventually) a policy position that corresponds to the policy position of the median voter because the median voter's position is the only one that cannot be defeated by a majority. If some position other than the median is adopted, then a minority has prevailed over a majority. Indeed, as the adopted policy position moves farther away from the median voter, the size of the majority that prefers some other policy grows larger and the size of the prevailing minority grows smaller. As the concept of democracy depends on minorities not prevailing over majorities, the position of the median voter has notable normative significance.⁴

Unfortunately, there are fundamental theoretical, as well as practical, problems that constrain our ability to use the position of the median voter as the solution to the congruence problem. In particular, social choice theory seems to demonstrate that the preferences of citizens are almost always collectively uninterpretable if they form more than one dimension. Regardless of the distribution of preferences or the relative weight citizens assign to the different dimensions, there is no single position that a majority prefers to all other positions. In fact, a process of sequentially pitting one position against another can almost always lead to any outcome.⁵ These very general

³ See Duncan Black, "On the Rationale of Group Decision Making," *Journal of Political Economy* 56 (February 1948).

⁴ On the general importance of majorities for democratic theory, see Carl Cohen, *Democracy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 68–71; and Dahl (fn. 2), 135–53. To recognize the importance of majority positions in democratic theory is, of course, not to deny that taking account of intense minorities is an important theoretical and practical problem for democracy. We do not pretend to deal with it here.

⁵ See Richard D. McKelvey, "Intransitivities in Multidimensional Voting Models," *Journal of Economic Theory* 12 (June 1976); idem, "General Conditions for Global Intransitivities in Formal Voting Models," *Econometrica* 47 (September 1979); McKelvey and Norman Schofield, "Generalized Symmetry Conditions at a Core Point," *Econometrica* 55 (July 1987); and Charles Plott, "A Notion of Equilibrium and Its Possibility under Majority Rule," *American Economic Review* 57 (September 1967). For some recent challenges, see Ken Kollman, John H. Miller, and Scott E. Page, "Adaptive Parties in Spatial Elections," *American Political Science Review* 86 (December 1992); and Craig Tovey, "The Instability of Instability" (Manuscript, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1991).

and very powerful results lead William Riker to argue that it is impossible to compare what citizens "prefer" with any set of government policies.⁶

Although these theoretical results severely constrain the meaning of any claim that democracies can give citizens "what they want," there is nonetheless at least one answer that satisfies both the claims of social choice theory and the claims of traditional democratic theory: that it is frequently possible to understand "what citizens want" as a distribution of preferences on a single-issue dimension that may include many specific issues.⁷ Indeed, it may be that the ability of students of legislative voting behavior to describe voting over long periods of time in a single dimension and the ability of students of electoral behavior to describe party competition in many different countries using a single dimension reflect the need for democratic debate to reduce conflict to a single dimension in order to make it intelligible.⁸ Without something like this single dimension for competition and discourse, it is at best very difficult—perhaps even conceptually impossible—to compare citizen preferences with the promises and actions of the policymakers.

The most common single dimension in modernized democracies is almost certainly the left-right ideological continuum. The language of "left" and "right" creates a unidimensional discourse that can assimilate the various issues and alternatives that continuously appear before the electorate.⁹ Studies show that elites, political experts, and mass publics are able to think about political issues using the language of left and right.¹⁰

⁶ Riker, "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions," *American Political Science Review* 74 (June 1980); and idem, *Liberalism against Populism* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1982).

⁷ There might also be an issue or issue dimension that citizens agree is so important that in comparison to all other issues or dimensions can be ignored. Part of the power of democracy may, indeed, lie in the fact that a majority would reject the idea of officeholders looting the national treasury for their personal benefit, regardless of what other feasible policy promises were offered. Such an issue might never appear on the agenda of party competition, but its elimination as a possible outcome would be a powerful contribution of democracy.

⁸ On legislative voting behavior, see Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, "A Spatial Model for Legislative Role Call Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (May 1985); and idem, "Patterns of Congressional Voting," *American Journal of Political Science* 35 (February 1991). On party competition, see the contributions in Ian Budge, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl, eds., *Ideology, Strategy, and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-war Election Programmes in Nineteen Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁹ See Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (fn. 8); and Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 273–74.

¹⁰ See Samuel H. Barnes, *Representation in Italy: Institutionalized Tradition and Electoral Choice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Francis Castles and Peter Mair, "Left-Right Political Scales: Some Expert Judgments," *European Journal of Political Research* 29 (March 1984); Philip E.

Existing studies also show that when surveyed, most citizens can place themselves reasonably meaningfully on a left-right scale. Citizen self-placement on left-right scales is determined by attitudes toward the issues of the day and by perceptions of the party system.¹¹ Although the substantive content of the scale positions varies from country to country, the distance between scale points seems to reflect roughly similar differences in attitudes toward important issues.¹²

Left-right scales therefore provide an obvious tool for analyzing congruence. One can measure the position of the median voter using opinion surveys that have asked citizens in many countries to place themselves on a left-right continuum (which usually ranges from 1 to 10). And one can measure the position of governments and policymakers using a 1982 survey conducted by Castles and Mair that asked experts, academics, and journalists to place the parties in their country of expertise on a 0–10 left-right scale.¹³ We can then measure congruence by analyzing the distance between the position of the policy-making parties and the position of the median citizen: the larger the distance, the less the congruence; the smaller the distance, the greater the congruence.

Our study is obviously related to and influenced by those empirical studies of political representation that built on the seminal work of Miller and Stokes and that examined relationships between the positions of citizens and the positions or behavior of their representatives.¹⁴

Converse and Roy Pierce, *Political Representation in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Russell J. Dalton, "Political Parties and Political Representation: Party Supporters and Party Elites in Nine Nations," *Comparative Political Studies* 18 (October 1985); Dalton, Scott C. Flanagan, and Paul Allen Beck, eds., *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Societies: Realignment or Dealignment?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Inglehart (fn. 9).

¹¹ See John D. Huber, "Values and Partisanship in Left-Right Orientations: Measuring Ideology," *European Journal of Political Research* 17 (September 1989); Inglehart, "The Changing Structure of Political Cleavages in Western Society," in Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (fn. 10); and Inglehart and Hans Klingemann, "Party Identification, Ideological Preference and the Left-Right Dimension among Mass Publics," in Ian Budge, Ivor Crewe, and Dennis Fairlie, eds., *Party Identification and Beyond* (London: Wiley, 1976).

¹² Huber (fn. 11).

¹³ See fn. 10. Most of our estimates of the positions of the median voters are taken from the Eurobarometer surveys, which use a scale that ranges from 1 to 10. We also use citizen surveys taken in Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand. We convert the scales from these surveys, as well as those from the Castles and Mair expert survey, to the 10-point scale used by the Eurobarometer. Our analysis assumes that the experts on the country used a scale whose meaning was similar to that used by citizens in that country and that the distance between scale numbers was roughly the same for the experts and citizens in all countries.

¹⁴ Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress," *American Political Science Review* 57 (March 1963). See also Christopher H. Achen, "Measuring Representation: Perils of the Correlation Coefficient," *American Journal of Political Science* 21 (November 1977); idem, "Measuring Representation," *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (May 1978); Barnes (fn. 10); Converse and Pierce (fn. 10); Dalton (fn. 10); Morris Fiorina, *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1974); Warren E. Miller, "Majority Rule and the Representative System of Government," in Erik Allardt and Yrjö Littunen, eds., *Cleavages, Ideologies*

However, our work diverges from this tradition in three important respects. First, we treat parties as units in assessing policymaker positions;¹⁵ given the high levels of unified party voting in most parliamentary systems, this is an essential starting point.¹⁶ Second, we do not analyze connections between groups of voters and their chosen representatives; rather, we analyze those between the citizenry as a whole and the collective policymakers. Third, although our measures of congruence are closely related to Achen's "centrism" measure (which is the *squared* difference between the representative and the citizen mean), we focus on the citizen median rather than the citizen mean.¹⁷ Our reason for using the median is theoretical: if the median and the mean do not coincide, a majority will always prefer the median to the mean. Moreover, since the mean minimizes the sum of the squared distances, it gives greater weight to cases more distant from the center. We see no justification in democratic theory for permitting minorities to prevail over majorities or for giving greater weight to ideologically extreme citizens. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that ideologically extreme citizens hold their positions more intensely, which might be the one possible, but hotly debatable, justification for weighting them more heavily. For those unpersuaded by our theoretical argument, however, we can report that all the subsequent results hold equally well using means, rather than medians, for citizens.

ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND CONGRUENCE

In each of the two visions of democracy examined here, there is a clear path by which both electoral and legislative processes can create congruence between the citizen median and the behavior of governments and policymakers. But the path in each vision is different and so are the areas where one may expect problems.

The Majority Control vision assumes that political power will be concentrated in the hands of identifiable governments chosen by the electorate and responsible to it. Elections involve competition between incumbent governments and challengers. Voters evaluate the past performance and future promises of each and choose the contender whose policies they expect will be closest to their preferences. That contender wins electoral and legislative majorities and comes to office committed

and *Party Systems* (Helsinki: Academic Bookstore, 1964); and Lynda Powell, "Issue Representation in Congress," *Journal of Politics* 44 (August 1982).

¹⁵ Dalton (fn. 10) also uses parties as the unit of analysis.

¹⁶ For linkage analysis confirming this point, see Converse and Pierce (fn. 10); and Barnes (fn. 10).

¹⁷ Achen (fn. 14, 1978).

to a set of policies favored by a citizen majority. When in office, the new government carries out those policies under the eye of the electorate, which can evict it in the next election if it fails to keep its promises.

The key stage in the Majority Control vision is clearly electoral competition: party alternatives, voter choices, and the aggregation of the two. Elections must provide voters with identifiable alternative governments; they must also produce clear control over policy-making for the party preferred by the citizens. If these defining characteristics of majority control are achieved, then whether there is a close correspondence between voters and policymakers will depend on another feature of the election: the presence of a party or candidate located at or very near the median voter. If neither identifiable alternative government is close to the median voter, then by our definition, the majoritarian democratic process will not result in a government that is committed to "what the voters want." Responsible incumbents in office at the time of the election should be helpful: single-party majority governments that bear clear responsibility for their actions will be pressed to anticipate the citizen majority as they look to the election; voters will find it easier to evaluate the credibility of promises and to choose the party whose true position is closest to their preferences.

Scholars have offered a variety of specific models to explain how Majority Control systems can deliver policies that the citizens want. In the well-known two-party competition model proposed by Anthony Downs, the desire to win elections drives both parties toward the position of the median voter. With a single dimension of party competition, a party that fails to converge nearly to the median can always be defeated by a party that does move to the median. The strategic incentives for the parties and the rational choices of voters act together to provide victories for the party that is closest to the median.¹⁸ If the theory of center-driven party competition were empirically true, it would provide a powerful underpinning for the claim of the Majority Control vision to create congruence. However, there is much controversy about the correspondence between Downs's theory and the empirical facts of party competition.

Since only the winning party needs to be near the citizen median to create congruence, the Majority Control vision need not depend on

¹⁸ Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957); see also Heinz Eulau and Kenneth Prewitt, *Labyrinths of Democracy: Adaptations, Linkages, Representation and Policies in Urban Politics* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973); Joseph Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966); and Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1942).

Downs's strategic parties. It can also encompass "mandate" versions of democracy¹⁹ or other models in which incumbents face challengers who over time offer a large array of possible alternatives.²⁰ We cannot here explicate the varying assumptions of these models, but we merely note that various specific models in the broad Majority Control vision can lead to the prediction that the *winner* of the election should usually be at or near the median voter. All of these models then tend to assume that the election winner will subsequently dominate the policy-making process and implement the promised policies.

If some combination of these models proves empirically accurate, then the other (presumed) virtues of majoritarianism will be buttressed by good congruence between the preferences of the electorate and the commitments of the policymakers. The potential problem, of course, is that various empirical studies, and also some theoretical work, show failure of competition to produce consistently a party at the median.²¹

The Proportionate Influence vision gets to a similar prediction of congruence in a very different way. The models and research associated with this vision are not directly oriented to majorities or to control, but rather are oriented to representation and bargaining. This vision is less clearly articulated in its multiple stages. At the electoral level the large literature on proportional representation stresses the fairness of having all voters' voices count in getting officials into office.²² At the policy-making level, various analysts of accommodative or consociational democracy, most influentially Arend Lijphart, argue that minorities in deeply divided systems will want "grand coalition" arrangements that guarantee them a

¹⁹ See Anthony Birch, *Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1972); and Austin Ranney, *The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

²⁰ See Kollman, Miller, and Page (fn. 5); and Richard D. McKelvey and Peter C. Ordeshook, "Elections with Limited Information: A Fulfilled Expectations Model Using Contemporaneous Poll and Endorsement Data as Sources," *Journal of Economic Theory* 36 (June 1985).

²¹ For theoretical results, see, e.g., Alberto Alesina, "Credibility and Policy Convergence in a Two-Party System with Rational Voters," *American Economic Review* 78 (September 1988); Peter J. Coughlin, "Candidate Uncertainty and Electoral Equilibria," in James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich, eds., *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Voting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Melvin J. Hinich, "Equilibrium in Spatial Voting: The Median Voter Result Is an Artifact," *Journal of Economic Theory* 16 (December 1977); Donald A. Wittman, "Candidates with Policy Preferences: A Dynamic Model," *Journal of Economic Theory* 14 (February 1977); and idem, "Spatial Strategies When Candidates Have Policy Preferences," in Enelow and Hinich. For empirical results, see, e.g., David Robertson, *A Theory of Party Competition* (London: Wiley, 1976); Ian Budge and Dennis Fairlie, *Voting and Party Competition* (London: Wiley, 1983); and Bernard Grofman, Robert Griffen, and Amihai Glazer, "Identical Geography, Different Party: A Natural Experiment on the Magnitude of Party Differences in the U.S. Senate, 1960-84," in R. J. Johnston, F. M. Shelley, and P. J. Taylor, eds. *Developments in Electoral Geography* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²² See Douglas Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

voice in policy-making.²³ In his model of "consensus democracy," Lijphart draws attention to various institutional devices less inclusive than a grand coalition that induce majorities to bargain with minorities.²⁴ Most of this work assumes that multiparty elections and proportional representation are highly desirable prerequisites for such negotiation.

To convert the Proportionate Influence vision into a more clearly identified model of elections connecting citizens and policymakers, we must spell out the assumptions at each of the two important stages in the process of government formation. At the election stage, the vision assumes multiple parties offering a variety of alternatives, so that all groups of citizens can find compatible parties. The parties do not—must not—converge to the center unless virtually all the voters are located very close to it.²⁵ At the time of the election, then, the choices of voters and the working of proportionate election laws result in a legislature with parties representing all these groups in their proportionate strength. A critical implication of this fact is that the position of the median legislator (or median party, if parties are in fact the relevant units) should be very close to that of the median voter.

The second stage of the Proportionate Influence vision concerns coalition bargaining. Since an election often creates a legislature with no single-party majority, various coalitions could form among the many parties represented. Naturally, the more diverse the electorate and, consequently, the legislature, the more possible in the abstract to build a coalition that strays from the position of the median citizen. But as in electoral competition, coalition theory predicts that in one-dimensional situations the median party will play a dominant role in government formation,²⁶ that is, all coalitions should include the median party, although any coalition may incorporate other parties that fall to one side or the other (or both).

Existing research does not, however, provide a clear prediction about whether the median party will dominate policy-making, even in the one-

²³ Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); see also G. Lembruch, "A Non-Competitive Pattern of Conflict Management in Liberal Democracies," in Kenneth McRae, ed., *Consociational Democracy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); and Jürg Steiner, "The Principles of Majority and Proportionality," *British Journal of Political Science* 1 (January 1971).

²⁴ Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); see also Dahl (fn. 2), chap. 11.

²⁵ In Lijphart's empirical analysis of "consensus" systems, the number of effective parties virtually defines one of his dimensions (fn. 24), 214.

²⁶ For an excellent review of the coalition formation literature, see Michael Laver and Norman Schofield, *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), chap. 5.

dimensional situation. Laver and Schofield and de Swann argue that the policy position of the median legislator will prevail, but Austen-Smith and Banks, in a model that integrates electoral competition and government formation, find that in equilibrium, final policy outcomes never correspond to the preferences of the median legislator.²⁷ More generally, in situations where a single party or coalition of parties forms a government and must maintain tight party discipline—which empirically is the case in almost all parliamentary systems—the government might be expected to make policies that correspond to its own internal median, not to the legislative median.

Thus, we have here a potential for connections—through inclusion of the median party in the coalition—without very close congruence. As in the concerns about the failure of party competition to produce at least one party at the median in the majoritarian vision, the processes that connect legislative bargaining to government policy may also lead to consistent policies off the median.

Up to this point, we have considered only the congruence between governments and citizen preferences. That is, we have assumed that the representation process ends with the formation of a government coalition. In practice all governments will probably be somewhat influenced by the issues raised by other parties in the legislature. Even in highly majoritarian systems such as Britain and Fifth Republic France, the ability of the opposition parties in the legislature to use their forum to arouse public interest gives them a nonnegligible influence potential.²⁸ In some other systems the institutional arrangements are designed to increase the influence of the opposition in policy-making. Most obviously, this is true where a system of strong committees plays a role in policy-making and the chairmanships of the committees are proportionately distributed to all parties, not just to those in the government.²⁹ Moving beyond the tenuous assumption that governments totally control policy, one finds different expectations from the two visions.

Under the Majority Control vision of congruence (especially in the “mandate” formulations), one would expect that the greater the opposition influence in policy-making, the less the congruence between poli-

²⁷ Ibid., 111; Abram de Swann, *Coalition Theory and Cabinet Government* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1973); and David Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, “Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes,” *American Political Science Review* 82 (June 1988).

²⁸ For a discussion of the Fifth Republic, see Frank Baumgartner, “Parliament’s Capacity to Expand Political Controversy in France,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 12 (March 1987); and idem, *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh University Press, 1989).

²⁹ See Kaare Strom, “Minority Governments in Parliamentary Democracies: The Rationality of Non-winning Cabinet Solutions,” *Comparative Political Studies* 17 (June 1984); and idem, *Minority Government and Majority Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

cymaker and citizens. In this vision, the selection of a governing party close to the citizen median should already have resulted in good congruence between final policies and the citizen majority. If all other parties have not converged to the median position, however, giving weight to the opposition after a government forms can only move the policymakers away from the median. Moreover, such influence will make it more difficult for voters to make clear retrospective judgments about government responsibility—a fact that decreases the incentives for parties to converge to the median in the first place.

In the Proportionate Influence vision, giving some weight to the opposition may pull policymakers back toward the median citizen if the government includes the median party but extends from it to the right or left. Hence, in contrast to what we would expect in ideal Majority Control systems, giving opposition parties significant weight in policy-making may improve congruence between what citizens want and what policies result in Proportionate Influence systems; but it also may not, depending on the specific positions of the government and the other parties.

Figure 1 summarizes our argument about what could lead to congruence under the two different visions. Each begins with quite different assumptions about electoral competition and follows these through quite different expectations about election outcomes, government formation, and postelection policy-making. Nevertheless, each leads us to expect relatively close congruence between the position of the median voter and the policymakers when their (somewhat conflicting) conditions are realized.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC CONTROL SYSTEMS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The two visions of democracy are founded in experience and custom as well as in theory. Figure 1 suggests that we can identify features of electoral competition, electoral outcomes, and legislative bargaining that will enable us to categorize empirically the different systems according to the extent to which they follow one vision or the other. Table 1 presents the data necessary to accomplish this task; the data are used to categorize the systems in twelve industrial democracies for the period 1968–87. Subsequently, we will use data from 1978 to 1985 in order to test congruence.³⁰

³⁰ It would be ideal to be able to analyze congruence for this entire twenty-year span, but since the Castles and Mair expert survey measured party positions in 1982, we have used only the 1978–85 period so that we can rely on the assumption that party positions have not changed much. There are thir-

<i>Process Stages</i>	<i>Majority Control Vision</i>	<i>Proportionate Influence Vision</i>
Electoral competition	identifiable alternative governments, one a responsible incumbent, one or both close to the median voter	wide range of party choice; absence of explicit coalition commitments
Election outcomes	party close to median voter wins majority	proportionate legislative representation of all parties and voters
Government formation	election winner forms majority government	bargaining: government coalition includes the median legislator
Policy-making between elections	government dominates all policy-making	coalitions may change but still include median; negotiation with opposition parties may help balance government parties right or left of median party
Congruence prediction	government is the policymaker and is close to the median voter	government includes median legislator, but average weight of all policymakers will be closer to the median voter

FIGURE 1
VISIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND PROCESSES THAT CREATE CONGRUENCE
BETWEEN VOTERS AND POLICYMAKERS

TABLE 1
SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS IN TWELVE DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES^a

	M.C.	M.C.	P.I.	M.C.	P.I.	M.C. & P.I.
Country	(1) <i>Identifiability of Future Govt.</i>	(2) <i>Past Govt. Status</i>	(3) <i>Effective No. of Parties</i>	(4) <i>Single Party or PEC Wins Majority</i>	(5) <i>Proportion- ality</i>	(6) <i>Opposition Com- mittee Influence</i>
Australia	100	.44	2.5	100	87	No
Belgium	0	0	6.1	14	91	Yes
Denmark	38	0	5.4	0	97	Yes
France	38	.125	3.5	75	79	No
West Germany	100	0	2.7	100	98	Yes
Ireland	33	.33	2.6	50	96	No
Italy	0	0	3.6	0	95	Yes
Netherlands	17	0	5.1	17	96	Yes
New Zealand	100	1.0	2.0	100	80	No
Spain	100	.33	2.6	43	83	Yes
Sweden	29	.125	3.3	83	98	Yes
United Kingdom	100	.67	2.2	67	85	No

^a See text for descriptions of the measures. Data for columns 1-4 are averages from the period 1968-87. Data for column 5 are from Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 3d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991), 509-10. Column 6 is based on the analysis by Strom (fn. 29, 1990), chap. 3; and Powell and Whitten (fn. 33).

At the stage of electoral competition, the Majority Control vision stresses that the voters be able to identify future alternative governments and that responsibility for past policy-making by the incumbent government should be clear. The Proportionate Influence vision emphasizes a large number of parties offering a wide range of choices. In Table 1 we see the countries in our study followed, in columns 1–3, by features of their electoral competition.³¹

Columns 1 and 2 show features emphasized by the Majority Control vision. *Identifiability* of future governments, shown in column 1, is based on our reading of accounts of election campaigns (drawn largely from *Keesings Archives*).³² Our measure reports the extent to which it was believed that voters could identify the government that would form given the election outcome. If voters believed that a single party (as in Britain or New Zealand) or a set of parties that had formed an explicit coalition agreement (as in Germany and Australia) would form a government if they won a legislative majority, then the score is 100. If there was very little idea as to how election outcomes would shape postelection government formation, as in most elections in Belgium and Italy, then the score is 0. Intermediate scores reflect varying types of implicit or partial coalitions, or shifts from election to election, or both (for example, France). Identifiability is, we think, a critical defining feature of majoritarian politics. Without it, citizens cannot directly choose the

ty-eight governments in these twelve countries in this time period. Various readers have suggested that we extend our time period and bring in more cases, but we simply cannot locate a comparable survey of experts at another time period that asks the appropriate left-right question.

³¹ Some readers may be troubled by the absence of electoral laws from the analysis. Clearly the electoral law of a given political system shapes many features of electoral competition and government formation that are important to this study, including the effective number of parties, proportionality, identifiability, and the election of single-party majorities. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, it would be difficult—if not wrongheaded—to categorize a country as either a Majority Control or Proportionate Influence system on the basis of its electoral laws. One problem is the difficulty of developing an appropriate measure of electoral laws because each one has unique features, with important differences in aggregation rules and in districting. (For example, Spain and the Netherlands both have proportional representation [PR], but the proportionality of electoral outcomes in Spain is much lower than in the Netherlands, as shown in Table 1.) More important for analysis, the nature of electoral competition varies over time within systems having the same election law. In systems with single-member district pluralities, for example, if there is a minority government at the time of an election, clarity of responsibility for past policy-making will be low. In systems with PR, to take another example, there are often cases in which identifiability is high because of the formation of preselection coalitions. As our analysis focuses on election-specific characteristics of party competition, we do not use the election laws directly to classify the various political systems. However, analysis of the indirect impact of election laws on congruence under various conditions, through the features here examined, is an interesting topic for future research.

³² The measurement of this variable was suggested by the creative work of Strom (fn. 29, 1984, 1990). Unfortunately, we cannot validate our measures with Strom's because we measure identifiability at each election, whereas Strom measures it by decade. However, an impressionistic comparison suggests very similar assessments in countries in which the levels of identifiability were relatively stable over time.

future policymakers.

Past government status (column 2) measures a second feature of electoral competition that is emphasized by the Majority Control vision: the percentage of elections in which the incumbent government is a single party holding an absolute majority of the seats in the legislature. Single-party majority governments would seem to offer voters the most clear-cut ability to assess the responsibility of the incumbents for government policies, enabling them to reject governments whose policies they dislike and retain those they like. Some validation for interpreting the presence of single-party majority governments in this way is provided by Powell and Whitten, who find that incumbent governments are most likely to lose votes if they are majorities, rather than minorities, and if they have fewer parties in the government.³³ They also find that economic performance has a greater impact on election outcomes (both positive and negative) when responsibility for policies can be more clearly fixed.³⁴

Column 3 shows the *effective number of parties* who win legislative representation, a measure developed by Laasko and Taagepera.³⁵ Obviously, the larger the effective number of parties, the more desirable according to the Proportionate Influence vision. But if the parties do not actually win legislative representation, they cannot offer their voters influence in policy-making. Hence, the measure is based on the number of parties actually in the legislature after the election.

Columns 4 and 5 show two measures related to legislative outcomes. Column 4 shows the proportion of elections in which a *single party* or a *firm preelection coalition* wins a legislative majority. That is, the formation of governments does not depend on postelection bargaining or on the

³³ G. Bingham Powell, Jr., and Guy D. Whitten, "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context," *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (May 1993), 403. See also Richard Rose and Thomas Mackie, "Incumbency in Government: Asset or Liability," in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair, eds., *Western Party Systems: Continuity and Change* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1983); Martin Paldam, "How Robust Is the Vote Function? A Study of Seventeen Nations over Four Decades," in Helmut Norpoth, Michael Lewis-Beck, and Jean-Dominique Lafay, eds., *Economics and Politics: The Calculus of Support* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 23; Strom (fn. 29, 1990), 124 (on lower vote losses for minority governments); and Michael Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 108-9 (on lower vote losses for coalition governments).

³⁴ Powell and Whitten (fn. 33), 407. In our analysis, we have also examined a scale of the clarity of government responsibility for policy outcomes and considered separately the effects of multiple government parties and majority versus minority governments. However, the most consistent and robust effects are based on the simple distinction between incumbent single-party majority governments and all others. We have therefore used this measure in our subsequent analysis.

³⁵ See Markku Laasko and Rein Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 12 (April 1979). Although a party choice measure that specifically considers the ideological location of each party might be more theoretically appropriate, Powell (fn. 1) shows that such measures are closely related to the effective number of parties, which is more intuitively interpretable and widely used.

formation of a minority government. This feature is obviously desired by the Majority Control vision and is explicitly undesirable from the point of view of the Proportionate Influence vision. Column 5 gives the *proportionality* of legislative representation, a property that is desired by the Proportionate Influence vision. This measure sums the absolute values of the difference between votes and seats for each party, divides by 2, and subtracts from 100. Values in the high 90s, as in Germany and Sweden, show nearly perfect proportionality.

Finally, the last column shows legislative arrangements that guarantee some influence for opposition parties in policy-making between elections. A strong committee system and the distribution of chairmanships to the opposition as well as to the government parties are evidence that the government shares a degree of policy-making power with the opposition.³⁶ From the Majority Control point of view, opposition influence weakens the role of a government that has been chosen by the citizens and also makes retrospective accountability less clear. But from the Proportionate Influence point of view, opposition influence should pull a government whose average position is some distance from the median legislator toward the median.

In Table 2 we use the measures from Table 1 to classify our political systems into three categories: Majority Control, Mixed, and Proportionate Influence.³⁷ In the first category we place Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. These systems score high on each of the measures associated with Majority Control systems: voters almost always had a strong sense of the future governments, responsibility for policy was usually very clear (as measured both by past government single-party majorities and by the absence of committee arrangements guaranteeing a role for the opposition), and a single party or preelection coalition nearly always won a majority. At the same time, these systems did poorly on the measure associated with the Proportionate Influence vision: the effective number of parties was near two, proportionality of representation, was relatively poor, and the governments dominated policy-making.

At the other extreme, we place the systems of Belgium, Denmark, Italy, and the Netherlands as most closely approximating the Proportionate Influence systems. In these systems, the effective number of parties was high, giving the voters a wide range of party choice.

³⁶ This measure also owes a debt to Strom (fn. 29, 1984, 1990), although his work has been adapted and supplemented as described in Powell and Whitten (fn. 33), 400.

³⁷ Table 2 gives figures for both the larger time period (1968–87) and the narrower time period (1978–85). The data reassure us that system characteristics during the time period that we study below do not differ substantially from the system characteristics during the larger time period.

TABLE 2
CHARACTERISTICS FOR MAJORITY CONTROL, MIXED,
AND PROPORTIONATE INFLUENCE SYSTEMS
1968-87
(1978-85)^a

	<i>System Type</i>		
	<i>Majority Control: Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand</i>	<i>Mixed: France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Sweden</i>	<i>Proportionate Influence: Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands</i>
Electoral competition			
identifiability	100 (100)	80 (75)	36 (45)
past government status	.67 (.80)	.17 (.06)	0 (0)
effective no. of parties	2.2 (2.2)	3.1 (3.0)	5.1 (5.4)
Election outcomes			
percentage of elections won by a single party or a preelection coalition	95 (100)	66 (58)	7 (10)
proportionality	85 (83)	92 (93)	95 (96)
Legislative bargaining			
percentage of committee systems that permit opposition influence	0 (0)	60 (60)	80 (80)
Number of elections	29 (5)	29 (12)	27 (10)

^aThe top number in each cell is for the period 1968-87. The figure in parentheses is for the period 1978-85 (the period for which we analyze congruence). The top number in the "Proportionality" row is calculated using the figures in Mackie and Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 3d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991), 510, which are calculated using only the last election reported in their study.

Proportionality was also high in these systems, assuring many citizens or groups of representation in the legislature. Finally, the committee systems gave the opposition a strong role in three of the countries, while in Italy the incohesion of the Christian Democrats (DC) and decentralization in the legislature frequently gave the opposition a role in policy-making. Not surprisingly, these systems did poorly on most of the measures associated with the Majority Control vision.

In the middle we find the five cases of France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, and Sweden. A good case can be made for classifying each one way or another—France and Ireland have some notable majoritarian properties, and Sweden has some strong proportional influence properties—but each case also has some features that diminish the fit. France has multiple parties, and in both France and Ireland the key property of high identifiability shifts from election to election. Sweden, in the other direction, offered through preelection coalitions some tight voter-government connections. Germany is an almost perfect mix of the usually conflicting properties of the two approaches (except for substantial power sharing that weakens clarity).

The readers can, of course, use the data in Table 1 to determine their own classification. We shall in any case use multivariate regression analysis below to examine the effects of individual properties to get at which features are most significant. But we think that most analysts would find our classification strongly supported by the theory-based variables in Table 1.

CITIZENS, GOVERNMENTS, AND IDEOLOGICAL CONGRUENCE IN MAJORITARIAN AND PROPORTIONATE INFLUENCE SYSTEMS

We develop two measures, called Government Distance I and Government Distance II, of the congruence between the position of the government and the estimated position of the median voter.³⁸ For both measures if the government contains only a single party, the expert placement of that party becomes the placement of the government and the measure of congruence is the absolute distance between that party and the median citizen. In the case of multiparty coalition governments, we include all parties holding cabinet seats in the government. Government

³⁸ Since the left-right scales have discrete boundaries between the different cells, we approximate the location of the median voter using a technique described in Thomas H. Wonnacott and Ronald J. Wonnacott, *Introductory Statistics for Business and Economics*, 3d ed. (New York: John Wiley, 1984), 671.

Distance I takes the average position of all the parties in the government weighted by the size of the respective parties. This measure seems intuitively reasonable and is consistent with research by Browne and Franklin, Gamson, and Schofield and Laver, who show that the share of ministry portfolios received by a government party is generally proportional to its share of legislative seats among the parties in the government coalition.³⁹

Since the number of portfolios a party receives may not be a good measure of its influence in the coalition, we developed an alternative measure, Government Distance II. This second measure assumes that the left-right position of the government coalition is dominated by the placement of the median party within it. Hence, Government Distance II is simply the left-right position of the median party within the government. Which of these two measures is more appropriate depends, of course, on whatever theory we might have about how policy-making goes on within the government. As we shall see, however, the results for both measures are quite similar.⁴⁰

COMPARING CONGRUENCE BETWEEN CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENTS IN THE THREE TYPES OF SYSTEMS

Table 3 shows the average distance scores for the three types of systems using our two different measures of the position of the government. The data show that the two measures of distance work quite similarly. It is also clear that the Majority Control and Mixed systems have governments that are on average substantially farther from the median voter than are governments in the Proportionate Influence systems: the average government in the Majority Control and the Mixed system is over 1.5 points from the median; the average government in the Proportional Influence system is about 1 point away. Even with so few cases, the difference between the mean of the Proportionate Influence systems and the mean of the Majority Control systems is statistically significant at .05 (one-tailed test).

In parentheses in Table 3 we show the percentage of voters between the government and the median citizen. This figure depends on both

³⁹ Eric Browne and Mark Franklin, "Aspects of Coalition Payoffs in European Parliamentary Democracies," *American Political Science Review* 67 (June 1973); Peter Gamson, "A Theory of Coalition Formation," *American Sociological Review* 26 (April 1961); Norman Schofield and Michael Laver, "Bargaining Theory and Portfolio Payoffs in European Coalition Government, 1945-83," *British Journal of Political Science* 15 (April 1985).

⁴⁰ The mean scores by country for Government Distance I (II) are Australia 1.35 (1.35), Belgium .74 (.74), Denmark 1.36 (1.46), France 1.96 (2.15), West Germany 1.55 (1.81), Ireland .47 (.84), Italy .92 (1.24), Netherlands .90 (.50), New Zealand .95 (.95), Sweden 1.28 (1.17), Great Britain 2.39 (2.39), and Spain 1.94 (1.94).

TABLE 3

CONGRUENCE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND
CITIZEN LEFT-RIGHT ORIENTATIONS^a

	<i>System Type</i>		
	<i>Majority Control</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Proportional Influence</i>
Government Distance I	1.61 (28%)	1.43 (23%)	.96 (20%)
Government Distance II	1.61 (28%)	1.55 (25%)	1.03 (20%)
N	5	16	17

^aGovernment Distance I measures the difference between the weighted mean left-right position of the government and the left-right position of the median voter. Government Distance II measures the difference between the left-right position of the median party in the government coalition and the left-right position of the median citizen. The numbers in parentheses give the percentage of voters between the government and the median citizen. Positions of the parties are taken from Castles and Mair (fn.10).

the absolute distance and the distribution of voters on the left-right scale. If the voters were more dispersed in the Majority Control systems, for example, a larger distance might affect the same number of voters as does a smaller distance in the Proportionate Influence systems. However, we see the same pattern as in the absolute distances. The Majority Control systems find, on average, 28 percent of the electorate between the government and the median, whereas the figures are 23–25 percent in Mixed systems and 20 percent in the Proportionate Influence systems.

The advantage of the Proportionate Influence systems in offering greater congruence between governments and voters is somewhat theoretically unexpected. We expected that governments in the Majority Control systems would be close to the median as the direct result of party competition and voter choices (under either Downsian theory or some of the nonstrategic or partially strategic alternatives). We also expected coalition bargaining in the Proportional Influence systems might result in governments that are often farther away from the median voter. But the converse is true. The reason for the poorer performance of the Majority Control systems is basically that the two main parties in Britain and Australia are far from the median (over 2 points) during the period of our study. The closer of the two large parties does

come to power, but it is still rather extreme.⁴¹ In New Zealand the Majority Control vision seems to work better; in fact both major parties are fairly close to the median (about 1 point).

A similar problem is evident in the Mixed systems, although it is less theoretically surprising in the multiparty situations. A common pattern here is the formation of formal or informal preelection coalitions that pit right against left. These coalitions frequently fail to converge, but the one that gets a majority forms a government without bargaining with the opposition. In France, especially, both major alternative governments are very far from the median voter. In 1978 the winning conservative coalition was 2.75 from the median—the farthest in our sample. In Germany, Spain, and Sweden, too, the alternatives are rather far apart, each around 1.5 points from the median. Only in Ireland are both of the two alternatives quite close to the median.

A REGRESSION ANALYSIS

While the results in Table 3 are interesting, it is troubling that we have only five cases of pure Majority Control elections. A regression analysis can help us go beyond the typology to illuminate the contribution of various properties of political systems to the degree of congruence. This is especially helpful for making better use of the information from the Mixed systems. The comments in the previous paragraph imply that it is just the key majoritarian property of identifiable future governments in the electoral competition that creates major difficulties for close congruence. A multiple regression analysis can offer a more systematic look at whether this is so. Of course, with only thirty-eight cases and a good deal of multicollinearity (in equations (3) and (6), where we consider both approaches simultaneously), we cannot expect too much in the way of statistically significant results. But, as we shall see, the results are remarkably consistent and do further buttress and clarify the findings.

Table 4 gives the results of six OLS regressions where the formation of a new government is the unit of analysis and the electoral and legislative characteristics described in Table 2 are the independent variables.⁴² In

⁴¹ In Britain the closest parties to the median voter were the Liberals in 1979 and the Alliance in 1983, but neither of these parties won as much as a quarter of the votes, and both were heavily penalized by the election laws. The Conservatives were somewhat closer to the median than was Labour, but both large parties were rather far away.

⁴² Our theoretical discussion does not suggest what the appropriate functional form should be, so we examined a wide variety of functional forms and a simple linear relationship turned out to be the most appropriate for each variable.

TABLE 4

PREDICTING DISTANCE BETWEEN THE MEDIAN VOTER AND THE
LEFT-RIGHT POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT
(OLS MODEL OF GOVERNMENT DISTANCE I AND II)

Independent Variables ^a	Dependent Variable: Government Distance I			Dependent Variable: Government Distance II		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Identifiability of future government	.010 (.003)	—	.009 (.003)	.009 (.003)	—	.0073 (.0036)
Past government status	-.52 (.40)	—	-.54 (.38)	-.58 (.42)	—	-.61 (.42)
Majority or PEC wins election	-.17 (.30)	—	-.29 (.29)	-.22 (.31)	—	-.34 (.32)
Effective number of parties	—	-.131 (.070)	-.05 (.07)	—	-.14 (.07)	-.08 (.08)
Proportionality of electoral outcome	—	-.047 (.021)	-.041 (.020)	—	-.038 (.021)	-.036 (.021)
Opposition influence in committees	-.27 (.33)	.44 (.33)	.07 (.37)	-.46 (.36)	.28 (.35)	-.12 (.40)
Intercept	.95 (.36)	5.79 (1.80)	4.83 (1.88)	1.27 (.38)	5.19 (1.87)	4.78 (2.03)
N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Adjusted R ²	.20	.14	.26	.15	.11	.18
Standard error of the regression	.65	.68	.63	.69	.71	.68

^aThe independent variables are described in the text.

data columns 1–3 Government Distance I is the dependent variable; in data columns 4–6 Government Distance II is the dependent variable. The coefficients are quite similar for the two dependent variables, so for simplicity we discuss only Government Distance I in detail.

Equation (1) uses the variables from the Majority Control vision to predict the distance of the government from the median voter on the left-right scale. In the regression equation we see clearly the failure of majoritarian electoral competition to produce governments close to the median: the coefficient for identifiability is large, positive, and highly statistically significant. The positive coefficient implies that the difference in identifiability between Britain and Italy would lead to an increase of 1 full unit of distance between the government and the median voter. The kind of electoral competition in which voters can identify the alternative future governments is related to poorer congruence. This variable is extremely robust across various models and specifications in our analysis.

The coefficients for past government status (a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if there was a single-party majority incumbent) and majority wins (a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if a single party or preelection coalition wins the election) are both negative, providing some comfort to the Majority Control vision. The government status variable is fairly substantial, implying that, on average, governments forming after an election in which the incumbent was a single-party majority will be about half a point closer to the median citizen. However, the coefficient is only slightly larger than its standard error and thus is not statistically significant. Even if we ignore the large standard error, the coefficient for status is far too small to compensate for the undesirable effect of identifiability on congruence. The coefficient for majority wins is much smaller with a larger standard error (relative to its size). The same is true for the committee influence variable. Thus, the only statistically significant result from the regression is that high levels of identifiability lead to low levels of congruence.

The second column shows the variables identified by the Proportionate Influence vision. The number of effective parties produces negative coefficients that are near or at statistical significance in equations (2) and (5). The effects are fairly substantial; the difference between a two-party and six- or seven-party system (Belgium) would be worth three-quarters of a point in greater congruence for the latter. Proportionality of election outcomes is also helpful for congruence. Again, the difference between worst (New Zealand) and best (Sweden) proportionality is worth over three-quarters of a point and the coefficient

is statistically significant at .05. Thus, the two main electoral variables associated with the Proportionate Influence vision are both helpful to congruence. The opposition influence variable, however, reverses direction in these models and is associated with less congruent governments; the effects are fairly substantial, although not statistically significant and not as large as the other two Proportionate Influence variables.

The general conclusions from the first two regressions are clear: Majority Control characteristics have mixed effects, which have the net result of moving the government away from the median voter; Proportionate Influence characteristics move the government closer to the median voter.

Equations (3) and (6) show how all the different properties relate to congruence when entered into the same equation. Once again, the results are similar using the two dependent variables. The directional effects of the main variables remain the same, although the magnitudes of some coefficients are reduced, most likely because of the multicollinearity. The key property of identifiability retains a strong and significant effect (greater distance). Past government status and elected majority governments continue to reduce distance, although neither coefficient is statistically significant. If we take these latter two insignificant coefficients as fair (if unstable) estimates, the three majoritarian properties cancel each other out. The effective number of parties continues to reduce distance, although the coefficient is substantially smaller and about the size of the standard error. Proportionality continues to reduce distance significantly. This combination of effective number of parties and proportionality creates a substantial net advantage, about three-quarters of a distance unit, for the Proportionate Influence model, as we expected from Table 3. The committee influence variable is insignificant and trivial in size in these joint equations.

Interestingly, the strong effect of identifiability helps us to understand some "failures" in Mixed and Proportionate Influence systems through the relationship between high identifiability and the formation of minority governments. In the Mixed and Proportionate Influence systems, congruence is much better during majority government than it is during minority government: the average for Government Distance I (II) during majority government is 1.03 (1.13), whereas the average for Government Distance I (II) during minority government is 1.45 (1.54). If we divide our thirty-three governments in the Mixed and Proportionate Influence systems into those in which future government identifiability during the election was less than 50 ($N = 16$) and more than 50 ($N = 17$), we find minority governments were much more like-

ly to form under the latter condition! Of the sixteen governments formed under conditions of low identifiability and postelection bargaining, only three resulted in minority governments. All the governments in Belgium and the Netherlands and all but one in Italy were bargained majority governments. But of the seventeen governments formed under conditions of high identifiability, nine were minority governments. These were almost all situations where, as in the four Danish cases, preelection agreements were honored and although no coalition won a majority, the plurality coalition formed a minority government. In a slightly different variant, in Sweden when the preelection coalition broke up, two of the remaining parties in it formed a minority government rather than bringing in a party outside the initial coalition.

To sum up, when all the variables are entered into the model, the main variables from the Majority Control vision have a mixed effect with identifiability of future governments harmful to congruence; the variables from the Proportionate Influence vision are helpful to congruence.⁴³ The regression analysis therefore supports and clarifies the simple comparison of system types. Despite the plausibility of Downsian theory and some of the other formulations of majoritarian democracy that predict congruence, when there exist clearly identifiable future governments at election time, the elected governments tend to be far from the median voter. And despite concerns about government formation processes, as the effective number of parties and proportionality of electoral outcomes increase, congruence increases. In fact, this congruence is best when parties do not undertake preelection commitments that may lead to the formation of minority governments. To put the comparison between the two types of systems another way, on average the *failures of electoral competition* in the Majority Control (and Mixed) systems seem more serious for congruence than does the *failure of government formation* in the Proportionate Influence systems.

COALITION GOVERNMENT RECONSIDERED

Thus far our empirical analysis of the congruence between the positions of governments and the median voter has strongly favored the

⁴³ Our findings regarding the Proportionate Influence variables are interesting when compared with empirical studies of budget deficits by political economists; for a recent review of this literature, see Alberto Alesina and Guido Tabellini, "Positive and Normative Theories of Public Debt and Inflation in Historical Perspective," *European Economic Review* 36 (April 1992). Roubini and Sachs, for example, find that systems with a high incidence of coalition and minority governments have relatively large levels of public debt; Roubini and Sachs, "Political and Economic Determinants of Budget Deficits in the Industrial Democracies," *European Economic Review* 33 (May 1989). Since the central characteristics of

Proportionate Influence model. Within the limits of the time period and countries we investigated, we think that the results are relatively robust and even plausible. We need to raise a cautionary flag, however. Our results are based on the assumption that when multiple parties are involved in a coalition government, the outcome of the interparty bargaining process will correspond either to the weighted average of the parties in the coalition or to the position of the median member of the coalition. We have not considered the possibility that coalition bargaining might create a package of policies that favors one party on one issue and another on a different issue. One reason for making this assumption is that when parties form a coalition government, they obviously must distribute ministry portfolios to particular parties. Thus, some scholars interested in coalition formation argue that it is reasonable to assume that when a party controls a particular cabinet ministry, that party controls outcomes on all policies that are in the jurisdiction of that ministry.⁴⁴

Considering the possibility that particular parties have dictatorial control over policy outcomes on particular dimensions leads to a very different method of calculating the positions of governments. Instead of calculating either the weighted mean position of the government parties or the position of the median government party, it is necessary to calculate the weighted mean of the absolute distances between each party and the median voter. If all the bargaining parties are on the same side of the median, it will of course make no difference which method is used to calculate the left-right position of the government. But if the government parties straddle the median, it may make a large difference. In the procedures used to calculate Government Distance I, for example, a coalition that straddles the median will get a good congruence score because the distances on the two sides of the median cancel each other out. If we use the absolute distances independently, however, the scores will not cancel each other out.

Using the weighted mean of the absolute differences between the government parties and the median voter, we obtain average government distance scores of 1.53 for the Majority Control systems, 1.63 for the Mixed systems, and 1.32 for the Proportionate Influence systems. Comparing these distances with those in Table 3, it is immediately apparent that this procedure makes no difference at all for Majority

Proportionate Influence systems lead to coalition and minority governments, it appears that system characteristics which improve congruence between governments and citizens may also be associated with large budget deficits. We are grateful to Bill Keech for pointing this out to us.

⁴⁴ See David Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, "Stable Governments and the Allocation of Portfolios," *American Political Science Review* 84 (September 1990); and Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Coalitions and Cabinet Government," *American Political Science Review* 84 (September 1990).

Control systems—these are single-party governments anyway. It hurts the Mixed systems slightly, but most of these governments are either single party or composed of multiple parties on the same side of the median. However, the Proportionate Influence system scores are notably increased (from .98 to 1.32) by taking the absolute distances. Much of the advantage of these systems has come from multiparty governments that straddle the median voter. Using the absolute differences, their advantage is reduced by 60 percent (from half a point to only .2)

Although we report these results, it is not because we think that taking the absolute distances is the correct way to estimate policy positions: we do not think that it is. Ministries may be divided between parties in a lumpy fashion; major policy directions for the most part are not. Rather, we mention the results because they remind us that measures of congruence ultimately depend on the assumptions that we make about interparty bargaining processes, and these processes are worthy of more serious study by political scientists.

CITIZENS, POLICYMAKERS, AND IDEOLOGICAL CONGRUENCE

Governments in parliamentary systems are not totally uninfluenced by the opposition in making policy, and the Majority Control and Proportionate Influence visions make different predictions about how the role of opposition parties should affect congruence. Consequently, an exploration of the effectiveness of the two visions in linking policy-making and voters must look beyond the parties that formally share government responsibility. The problem here is that it is much more difficult to measure the relative importance of government and opposition in policy-making than it is to identify the parties of the government. However, we have adopted a plausible weighting scheme (which is in principle subject to detailed empirical research that could test its accuracy) as a first cut at moving beyond the level of governments alone.

Our approach is to create weighted policymaker measures of the left-right position of all the parties in the legislature. We do this two ways.⁴⁵ In Policymaker Distance I we compute the position of the government parties by taking the weighted average of the left-right positions of the government parties (as in Government Distance I). In Policymaker Distance II we compute the position of the government by taking the position of the median party within the government coalition (as in Government Distance II). In both measures the net government posi-

⁴⁵ This approach is adopted from G. Bingham Powell, "Constitutional Design and Citizen Electoral Control," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1 (April 1989).

tion receives a weight of 1.0.

The weights of the opposition parties are calculated the same way for Policymaker Distance I and Policymaker Distance II. The weight of an opposition party in the policymaker measures depends on the proportion of the party's parliamentary seats, the majority status of the government, and the extent to which the opposition can influence legislation in committees. The main idea behind the measures is that the opposition parties have some influence in all situations, especially under conditions of minority government and when the institutional arrangements are conducive to influence in committees. If the government has a majority, then we take the weighted average left-right position of all the opposition parties and multiply it by $.1 + CI$, where CI is a measure of the extent to which legislative institutional arrangements permit opposition influence in committees (and CI ranges from 0 to .25). We assume that the opposition's weight is always at least .1 because of the opposition's ability to use the legislature as a forum to stimulate public debate.

If the government is of minority status, then the opposition parties are split into three groups: formal support parties, opposition parties with bargaining power, and opposition parties without bargaining power. If there are formal support parties, their average left-right position is weighted by $.75 + CI$ and the rest of the opposition parties are weighted by $.1 + CI$. If there are no formal support parties, we assume that a minority government has to bargain with the parties that are ideologically proximate and that together with the government can form a majority.⁴⁶

For example, if the government has 45 percent of the seats and there are two parties to its left, Party A and Party B, each with 10 percent of the seats, then only the party that is closest to the government will have bargaining power. So opposition Party A has bargaining power only if A is between the government and Party B. If this is not the case, then Party A does not have bargaining power. We weight opposition parties with bargaining power by $.5 + CI$ and we weight opposition parties without bargaining power by $.1 + CI$. The precise formula for calculating the measures is given in the appendix.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ If we relax our assumption of unidimensionality, we might expect the governing parties to bargain with all the other legislative parties, increasing the weight of all the oppositions. We think that in practice some minority governments bargain only with ideologically proximate parties whereas others face a more open situation. However, our reading is that the former situation is more common and, of course, is the situation that makes the concept of congruence more interpretable.

⁴⁷ The mean scores by country for Policymaker I (II) are Australia .65 (.65), Belgium .45 (.63), Denmark .57 (.64), France 1.59 (1.76), West Germany .94 (1.14), Ireland .43 (.72), Italy .49 (.63), Netherlands .51 (.19), New Zealand .73 (.73), Sweden .95 (.95), Great Britain 1.88 (1.88), and Spain 1.28 (1.28).

COMPARING CONGRUENCE BETWEEN CITIZENS AND POLICYMAKERS
IN THE THREE TYPES OF SYSTEMS

Table 5 compares the distance between policymakers and the citizen median in the three types of systems. Before analyzing these results, it is useful to recall the predictions that each of the visions of democracy would make about the effect of upweighting the opposition. According to the connections to citizen preferences emphasized by the Majority Control vision of congruence, upweighting the opposition should decrease congruence because Majority Control systems are designed directly to elect a government party at the median. By contrast, according to the Proportionate Influence vision, upweighting the opposition might increase congruence because the government formation process often does not result in a government that is at the median.

Given these expectations, the results in Table 5 are very interesting. Most strikingly, congruence improves in *all* three types of systems.⁴⁸ Across all thirty-eight governments, the average distance between the median voter and the government was about 1.3; the average distance between the median voter and the weighted policymakers was about .85. This decrease was of approximately the same magnitude for all three types of systems. This does not mean, however, that oppositions are closer to the voters than are the governments. They are not. Rather, it means that as long as we continue to weight the governments more heavily than the oppositions in our estimate of policy-making, more congruence is created by giving the oppositions *some* weight than by leaving them out of the process.

Table 5 also shows in parentheses the proportion of voters between the average weighted policymaker position and the position of the median voter. Here, again, we see substantial reductions from the corresponding figures in Table 3, and as our analysis would predict, this reduction is largest in the Proportionate Influence systems, where the number of voters between government and median is cut in half from 20 to 10 percent. We of course expected the improved congruence in these Proportionate Influence systems, but we did not initially expect the policymaker measures to be so helpful to the Majority Control and Mixed systems. Given our analyses in the previous section showing that the winning parties in the Majority Control systems are often not very close to the median, these results are, however, less surprising. When the two

⁴⁸ Congruence of policymakers was not greater than that of governments in every case, however. It is not a tautology. In eight of the thirty-eight cases the congruence was less for policymakers on at least one of the two measures, although the differences are usually not very large.

TABLE 5

CONGRUENCE BETWEEN POLICYMAKERS AND
CITIZEN LEFT-RIGHT ORIENTATIONS^a

	<i>System Type</i>		
	<i>Majority Control</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Proportionate Influence</i>
Policymaker Distance I	1.17 (22%)	1.03 (18%)	.50 (10%)
Policymaker Distance II	1.17 (22%)	1.15 (20%)	.59 (12%)

^aFor Policymaker Distance I and Policymaker Distance II, a party's weight is determined by whether it is a government party, a support party, or an opposition party. Policymaker Distance I uses the same measure as Government Distance I to calculate the position of the government. Policymaker Distance II uses the same measure as Government Distance II to calculate the position of the government. Further details are in the text and the appendix. The numbers in parentheses give the percentage of citizens between the Policymakers and the median citizens.

main parties are on opposite sides of the median and at some distance from it, giving some (but not too much) policy-making weight to the opposition will typically increase congruence.

Indeed, the reduction in distance would be even greater in the Majority Control systems if they gave somewhat more weight to the opposition. Many of the governments are quite far away in these systems and have, on average, a good deal to gain in congruence from forces pulling them toward the center. But of course such involvement of the opposition comes at the cost of blurring the responsibility for policy-making (and perhaps even future policymaker identifiability), thus diminishing what are often viewed as among the other (noncongruence) advantages of majoritarian systems.

We should also note that the "failure" of minority governments discussed in the previous section on governments takes on a somewhat different cast when we examine the policymaker results. In the Mixed and Proportionate Influence systems, the average for Policymaker I(II) is .66 (.79) during majority governments and .98 (.79) during minority governments. The difference in congruence between majority and minority governments is therefore smaller for these systems than was the case when comparing the congruence of governments. In Denmark, for example, where virtually all governments were minority governments and where the committee system further helped the opposition, the policymaker scores are only about half of the government scores. We think this is a realistic impression of the policy-making under minority gov-

ernments. Minority governments must find support from other parties, and if these governments are well off the median, the search for this support is likely to move policy outcomes toward the center. Hence, although the formation of minority governments may seem like a failure in the Mixed and Proportionate Influence systems, the magnitude of this failure is much reduced when we keep in mind that parties outside the government can influence final policy outcomes.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Since the results from Table 5 are interesting and somewhat unexpected, it is useful to analyze further the relationship between the system characteristics and the policymaker variables using multivariate regressions. We can replicate the regression analysis of individual variables from Table 4 using the policymaker distances as the dependent variable. We expect that the results from the Government Distance regressions will not be reproduced in as striking a fashion. For one thing, the estimates of all the variables should have smaller coefficients and larger standard errors because the Policymaker Distances are smaller and have less variance than the Government Distances. Moreover, opposition-influencing committee systems and minority government are taken into consideration in the construction of the dependent variable.

The data in Table 6 reproduce the results from Table 4, using Policymaker Distance I and Policymaker Distance II instead of Government Distances I and II as the dependent variables. The two measures give roughly similar results, although the coefficients are generally somewhat weaker (except for opposition influence in committees) and the percentage of variance explained (adjusted R-square) is substantially less with Policymaker Distance II. As expected, most of the coefficients are smaller and less likely to be statistically significant than in the Government Distance analysis. However, we do see the same general pattern appearing: (1) greater identifiability is associated (usually significantly) with larger distances between the median voter and the policymaker position; (2) single-party majority-party incumbents and elected majority governments decrease the distance, although not statistically significantly; (3) more effective parties and, especially, greater proportionality of outcomes are associated with smaller distances. Opposition influence in committees is clearly associated with less distance between policymakers and the median voter, as we expect from our operationalization, although the coefficients are rarely statistically significant.

It is notable that the proportionality effects are nearly as strong for policymakers as for governments and above or near statistical signifi-

TABLE 6

PREDICTING DISTANCE BETWEEN THE MEDIAN VOTER AND THE LEFT-RIGHT
POSITION OF THE POLICYMAKER
(OLS MODEL OF POLICYMAKER DISTANCE I AND II)

<i>Independent Variables^a</i>	<i>Dependent Variable: Policymaker Distance I</i>			<i>Dependent Variable: Policymaker Distance II</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Identifiability of future government	.0065 (.0025)	—	.0052 (.0026)	.0047 (.0027)	—	.0038 (.0029)
Past government status	-.48 (.32)	—	-.51 (.30)	-.55 (.34)	—	-.56 (.34)
Majority or PEC wins election	-.17 (.24)	—	-.29 (.23)	-.11 (.25)	—	-.21 (.25)
Effective number of parties	—	-.095 (.053)	-.06 (.06)	—	-.06 (.06)	-.04 (.07)
Proportionality of electoral outcome	—	-.038 (.016)	-.037 (.016)	—	-.033 (.017)	-.032 (.017)
Opposition influence in committees	-.53 (.27)	.12 (.26)	-.21 (.29)	-.63 (.29)	-.04 (.28)	-.37 (.32)
Intercept	.92 (.29)	4.62 (1.37)	4.50 (1.48)	1.17 (.31)	4.18 (1.48)	4.19 (1.64)
N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Adjusted R ²	.19	.21	.28	.14	.15	.18
Standard error of the regression	.52	.52	.49	.56	.56	.55

^aThe independent variables are described in the text.

cance at .05. An additional piece of analysis sheds light on the consistent and impressive power of the proportionality variable. If we examine the distance between the left-right position of the *median voter* and the left-right position of the *median party* in the legislature, we find substantial variation across our systems, from less than half a point in all the Danish, German, and Irish cases to over 2 points in Britain, Spain, and a few assorted governments elsewhere. Proportionality is the strongest and most significant predictor of that distance from median voter to median party: the predicted effect of the range from our least to most proportional systems is about 1.1 scale points. The distortion in party representation affects the location of the median legislative party, to the detriment of congruence.

The most notable difference between Tables 4 and 6 is that the detrimental effects of identifiability are reduced by 40 to 50 percent when we use policymakers as the dependent variable. This reduction presumably follows because of the way that the weighted policymaker positions are pulled to the center by taking some account of the opposition. However, even these lesser effects are still above or near significance for Policymaker I: the Italy-Britain comparison costs about half a scale point for the more identifiable electoral competition.

The regression results help interpret and support the results of the simple comparison of system types. The policymaker measures show reduced distances in all types of systems. However, the Proportionate Influence systems still show a substantial advantage. Identifiability in electoral competition remains costly, although the cost is not as great in absolute terms after we upweight opposition influence on policy-making. Poor proportionality in representation remains highly costly. Single-party majority incumbents before the election seem to be helpful. Yet multiparty systems also remain somewhat helpful, as does opposition influence. The net congruence advantage is to the Proportionate Influence vision.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

We have attempted to bring into more precise focus two general visions of the processes that link citizens and policymakers in contemporary democracies. We should stress that the generality of our results is constrained by our research design: it may be that a different slice of time would reveal majoritarian electoral competition in which the parties are not so extreme and proportionate influence bargaining is less centrist. Moreover, we are well aware that the "commitments" of governments and their actual policy outcomes are not necessarily the same. This dif-

ference would be especially troubling for our results if policies diverged further from promises in the Proportionate Influence systems than in the Majoritarian ones. The difficulty of identifying clear responsibility for policy in the former creates *prima facie* grounds for concern.

With these caveats said, the results of our analysis seem clear and consistent. In the simple comparison, contrary to our expectations from the theoretical arguments about creating congruence connections in each approach, the governments in the Proportionate Influence systems are on average significantly closer to their median voter than are governments in the Majority Control and Mixed systems. The regression analysis reassures us on this point. If voters are presented with two clear alternatives (parties or preelection coalitions), these alternatives—and resulting governments—tend to be rather distant from the median voter. If voters are presented with a wide range of choices and electoral outcomes are proportional, governments tend to be closer to the median. It is reassuring that the regression results are supportive because they allow us to take advantage of the mixture of properties in the Mixed systems, rather than relying solely on the number of pure Majority Control cases.

Our analysis of policymakers, although necessarily more speculative because of the weighting problem, is also illuminating because the results in part run counter to our initial theoretical expectations. Taking some account of opposition influence helped congruence with voters in virtually all the systems, with surprisingly large effects in the Majority Control and Mixed systems. However, the net advantage remained with the Proportionate Influence systems, which gained congruence, especially because of the strong weighting of the opposition parties during minority government and because these systems usually permit more opposition influence in committees.

The results with respect to Majority Control, and more generally with respect to high identifiability, raise an important additional question about policy-making. We examine congruence on a government-by-government basis, and do not have a long enough time span to take averages of the governments over several decades. Hence, although each government in Britain and Australia may be quite distant from the median voter, the *average* position over time might be much closer to the center. Of course, the long predominance of such governments as the Conservatives in Britain from 1979 to the present (or the conservative coalition in France from 1958 to 1981) may imply that this oscillation does not redress the balance very quickly (or at all).

The appropriate time frame for congruence is an important issue for future research. The relationships between congruence and other fea-

tures of democratic government frequently proposed as desirable (stability, efficiency, responsibility) remain another rich area for exploration. The consideration of these questions reminds us again of the challenging empirical, theoretical, and normative issues associated with the study of congruence. For this reason, we see the current results as a contribution, not a conclusion, to our understanding of the fascinating problem of the electoral connection between citizens and policymakers.

APPENDIX

Government Distance I is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Government Distance I} = M - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N P_i \cdot w_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N w_i}$$

where:

N is the number of parties in the government.

p_i is the left-right position of party i .

w_i is the parliamentary weight of party i .

M is the position of the median voter.

The Policymaker Distance measures (I and II) are calculated as follows:

$$\text{Policymaker Distance} = M - \frac{(G \cdot GWT) + ((.75 + CI) \cdot SP \cdot SPWT) + ((.5 + CI) \cdot BP \cdot BPWT) + ((.1 + CI) \cdot NP \cdot NPWT)}{GWT + ((.75 + CI) \cdot SPWT) + ((.5 + CI) \cdot BPWT) + ((.1 + CI) \cdot NPWT)}$$

where:

M is the position of the median voter.

G is the weighted left-right position of the government in Policymaker Distance I and G is the position of the median party in the government in Policymaker Distance II.

GWT is the proportion of parliamentary seats held by all government parties.

CI is the index of opposition influence in committees (and ranges from 0 to .25).

SP is the weighted left-right position of formal support parties.

SPWT is the proportion of parliamentary seats held by all support parties.

BP is the weighted left-right position of opposition parties with bargaining power.

BPWT is the proportion of parliamentary seats held by all opposition parties with bargaining power.

NP is the weighted left-right position of opposition parties without bargaining power.

NPWT is the proportion of parliamentary seats held by all opposition parties without bargaining power.