

**Does Proportional Representation Foster
Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policymakers?**

**André Blais, Université de Montréal
Marc André Bodet, Université de Montréal**

**Does Proportional Representation Foster
Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policymakers?**

André Blais, Université de Montréal

Marc André Bodet, Université de Montréal

Abstract

The paper assesses the claim that proportional representation fosters a closer correspondence between the views of citizens and the positions of the government. The study uses the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data set, and compares respondents' self-placements on a left right scale with their perceptions of cabinet parties in 31 election studies. We argue that PR has two contradictory consequences. On the one hand, PR leads to more parties and more choice for voters; but these parties are less centrist, and this increases the overall distance between voters and parties. On the other hand, PR increases the likelihood of coalition governments; this pulls the government towards the center of the policy spectrum and reduces the distance between the government and voters. These two contradictory effects of PR wash out, and the net overall impact of PR on congruence is nil. The data support our interpretation.

Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers?

Advocates of proportional representation (PR) argue that a PR system is required to ensure close correspondence between citizens' wishes and what policymakers decide. In their view the objective in a democracy should be to have "an elected body reflecting the main trends of opinion within the electorate" (Lakeman 1974, 271). A PR system allows the diverse viewpoints to be represented in the legislature and Cabinet, and this should make the government more responsive to the demands of the population (Blais 1991).

The objective of this paper is to assess the validity of the claim that proportional systems foster a more responsive government, that is, it produces closer correspondence between the views of citizens and the positions of those who are supposed to represent them, the legislators and the government.

Why should we expect a better congruence between citizens and policymakers in a PR system? The reasoning is that a greater variety of viewpoints will be represented in the legislature and government. The existing literature on electoral systems supports such an assertion. There is strong evidence that the number of parties in the legislature increases with the proportionality of the electoral system. Though social cleavages also matter, we find more parties in PR than in non-PR systems, and more parties in systems with high district magnitude (and more proportional outcomes) than in those with small district magnitude (Lijphart 1994; Cox 1997; Katz 1997).

The quality of representation, at least from a theoretical standpoint, should increase with the number of parties. An individual voter is more likely to find a party that expresses views similar to her own if there are ten parties running in the election and actually represented in the legislature than if there are only two. From the voter's perspective, many options ought to be better than few.

PR systems should thus provide voters with at least some representatives whose views are congruent with their own. The more difficult question is whether PR produces a legislature and a government whose overall positions are more congruent with the general views of voters. There may be more perspectives represented under a PR system but in the end some views prevail in parliament or government and others do not. The question is whether the prevailing policymakers' view is more congruent with public opinion in PR systems.

Clearly, it is impossible for any government decision to be entirely congruent with voters' views if and when voters have different opinions about what should be done. The objective is rather to minimize the gap between policymakers and voters, and that objective is more likely to be achieved by "moderate" policymakers. As Cox (1997, 227) points out, "minimizing the average distance between voters' ideal positions and the government's policy requires choosing the median position" and thus "representation through enacted policy requires that policy be centrist".

Advocates of proportional representation believe that PR induces parties to work through a moderate compromise in the coalition forming process and that such moderation contributes to reducing the gap between public policy and public opinion (Finer 1975).

The question, then, is whether PR is more likely to induce the government to adopt a position that is close to that of the median voter. In order to address this question, we need to understand what would motivate parties to adopt a median position, in PR and in non-PR systems, or to use Cox's (1997) terminology, in more permissive and less permissive, or "weaker" and "stronger", electoral systems.

Let us start with the standard "strong" system with low proportionality, the single-member plurality system. Downs (1957) has shown that if there are only two parties, each party will maximize its votes by converging to the median voter. A problem may arise if and when there are many candidates. In such circumstances, there is no clear optimal position for the parties to take (Cox 1987; Osborne 1993), and "parties will strive to distinguish themselves ideologically from each other" (Downs 1957, 126). Then, "if the center fails to coordinate properly, relatively extreme candidates can win", and "a party composed of such extremists can pull national policy fairly far from the national median" (Cox 1997, 236). In a strong system, therefore, the government party may deviate from the median voter's position if there are more than two parties and if centrist voters fail to coordinate on one of the centrist parties. As demonstrated by Cox (1997, 232-233), if voters act strategically, centrist candidates will win over extremist ones. Thus the capacity of a strong system to produce convergence to the median voter depends on the existence of a two-party system and/or on voters' willingness and ability to strategically support the strongest centrist party.

What about a "permissive" PR system with high proportionality, and many parties? Because there are many parties and because each of them wants to distinguish itself from the others, most of them are not induced to move towards the median voter's

position. PR should thus produce less centrist parties. But a centripetal process does take place at the government formation stage. Typically, no party has a majority of seats in parliament, and a coalition government must be formed. Because parties prefer to form coalitions with groups whose platforms are not too distant from theirs, centrist parties are better positioned to enter the coalition since they can look on both their right and left sides. Furthermore, because parties wish to maximize not only their seats but also their government portfolios and because they anticipate that their chances of being in government increase if they take a centrist position, there is an incentive, even in the pre-election stage, not to move too far from the median voter's position (Schofield 1993). PR systems should thus produce a government that converges towards the median voter provided that centrist parties are well positioned in the coalition bargaining process.

Congruence between the median voter's position and that of the government is thus obtained through different routes in strong and permissive systems. In the former, extremist parties are prevented from winning seats by the strategic coordination of centrist voters around one centrist candidate. In the latter, extremist parties can more easily win votes but they are barred from entering the government by the most centrist parties. In both systems, coordination failures can happen.

The conclusion is that in PR and non PR systems alike there are pressures for the government to adopt positions that are close to those of the median voter, and thus to minimize the distance between voters' wishes and public policy. In both systems, however, there is no guarantee of congruence. The median voter theorem assumes that voters "evaluate candidates and public policy on the basis of some small number (usually one, two, or three) of generalized issues (ideological or otherwise" (Ordeshook 1997,

260), so centrist pressures are weaker when the issues are multidimensional. Furthermore, parties or voters may fail to coordinate, and these coordination failures may allow an “extremist” government to form. But we see no compelling reason why one system would systematically produce more or less congruence.

In short, “permissive” PR systems have two contradictory consequences as far as congruence is concerned. First PR leads to more parties, and because there are more parties, each party is induced to find a distinct niche for itself rather than to converge towards the median voter. This means that parties stake out different positions, the voters have more choice but the parties in general are less centrist. Parties move away from the center and the overall distance between parties and voters is not minimized (Cox 1997). We thus have the interesting paradox that by producing more diverse parties and greater choice for voters, PR weakens the overall congruence between voters and policymakers.

But PR has another consequence on congruence. That positive effect takes place at the government formation stage. Centrist parties are much more likely to take part in government than their more extreme counterparts, for the simple reason that parties tend to form coalitions with parties that are not too far ideologically from them. There is thus a strong pull towards the center at the coalition formation stage. PR is therefore “good” for congruence because it leads to the formation of coalition governments from which extremist parties are excluded. Our model can be summarized with the five following predictions.

(H1) PR produces less centrist parties and thus more choice for voters.

(H2) PR increases the number of parties in government.

(H3) The more centrist the party system, the stronger the congruence between government and voters.

(H4) The more parties in government, the stronger the congruence between government and voters.

(H5) PR has no net effect on congruence.

The Study

We use the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data set. The CSES data set comprises surveys conducted in 55 elections between 1996 and 2003. This data set covers a wide range of countries and electoral systems and it contains direct information about whether, from the voters' point of view, there is congruence between their own positions and those of the governing parties.

Previous work on this question has followed two approaches. The first approach, pioneered by Powell (Powell 2000; Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Vanberg 2000), consists in comparing citizens' self-placements on a left-right scale provided in a given survey at a given point in time with experts' assessments of party positions on the same scale provided at another point in time. This approach is based on two assumptions: that it is appropriate to ascertain congruence on a left-right scale, and that experts and citizens interpret the scale in the same way.

The first assumption is that the left-right scale is a meaningful indicator of citizens' overall policy preferences. Powell's justification is that while the scale may be more problematic in some situations, it is "not only the most widely available single

measure of the preferences of citizens in different countries but seems to meet reasonably well our need to capture comparably the general stances of citizens and the general policy orientations of the parties that compete for policy-making positions” (Powell 2000, 162; see also Converse and Pierce 1986; Dalton 1985; Huber 1989; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976). We believe that this is a valid justification and we follow the standard procedure of measuring congruence with respect to left-right positions.

The second assumption, according to which experts and citizens interpret the scale in the same way, seems to us more dubious, since the citizens’ and experts surveys utilized by Powell and his colleagues were conducted at different points in time. Furthermore, some surveys were based on a 0 to 10 scale and others on a 1 to 10 scale, so that the authors had to make adjustments to make them comparable. The CSES allows a more straightforward assessment of congruence, since the respondents were asked to place themselves and the parties at the same point in time and on the same 0 to 10 scale.

The second approach is to develop measures of voter and government ideology (still on a left-right scale) based on party manifestos (Kim and Fording 1998, 2002, 2003; McDonald, Mendes and Budge 2004). The analysis is based on the relative frequency of categories of statements that are construed as reflecting left or right ideology in the manifestos of the different parties.¹ Median voter ideology is estimated through a series of steps that use the overall ideology score of all the parties but also takes into account the vote received by each party.

This approach assumes, like the first, that there is a left-right ideological dimension in most countries. But, more importantly, it also assumes that voters vote for the party that is closest to their own position on that dimension. That assumption is

dubious. While many studies have shown that voters do make up their mind partly on the basis of parties' positions, they also indicate that party ideology is only one determinant among others, that party identification, leader evaluations, and valence issues play an equally, if not more, important role. To that effect, the conclusion of the latest analysis of British elections is quite telling: "the strongest predictors of party choice are partisanship and images of leaders. Perceptions of parties' issue competence and relative closeness to the main parties on a left-right ideological continuum are also significant, although less important." (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley 2004, 316).

Furthermore, the approach is in some sense circular since the same information, party ideology as reflected in party manifestos, is utilized for each of the two dimensions that are being compared: voter and government ideology. Not surprisingly, this procedure usually finds congruence. This is at least partly a result of the fact that voter and government ideology are not measured independently.² Finally, this approach is bound to indicate better congruence in PR systems for the simple reason that government parties typically get more votes in PR countries.³

For all these reasons, we believe that our approach, which compares voters' own positions on the left-right scale with their perceptions of the parties on that same scale at the same point in time, is the most appropriate.

We focus on congruence between voters and governments in parliamentary systems, and so we exclude countries where the president plays more than a formal role. The reason is to assure a homogenous sample in which the formation of the cabinet is the direct product of the outcome of the election (one party has a majority of the seats in the legislature) or of a deal among the legislative parties. This leaves us with a total of 21

countries and 31 election studies, since we have two election studies in ten countries. We have, excluding missing values, 48,675 respondents in our sample with sub-samples going from 944 respondents in Israel to 3675 respondents in Belgium.

The CSES questionnaire asked respondents to place themselves on a 0 to 10 left-right scale and also to place up to six major parties on the same scale. This allows us to determine how close to their own views voters perceive each of the parties and more importantly the party or parties that form(s) the government.

Our main independent variable is the degree of disproportionality in the electoral system. There are four basic types of electoral systems: plurality, majority, PR, and mixed (Blais and Massicotte 2002). There is only one instance of majority system (Australia) in the data set, and only two cases of plurality rule (Britain and Canada). The great majority of countries included in our analysis are either proportional or mixed, and many of the mixed systems are corrective, which makes them similar to PR with respect to the seat/vote ratio. The practical solution is to use a scale to ascertain the overall degree of disproportionality of the electoral system. Gallagher's least-squares index of disproportionality (Gallagher 1991) allows us to distinguish the most and the least proportional systems on a continuous scale going from 0 for perfectly proportional systems to 1 for perfectly non-proportional systems.⁴

$$G = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{p=1}^n (\%vote_p - \%seat_p)^2}{2}}$$

Hypothesis 1: PR produces less centrist parties and more choice

The choice of an electoral system has a major impact on the survival of small parties. Traditional rational choice theory posits that voters tend to maximize their utility by voting for a party with significant chances of winning an election. They will thus desert small parties to support those that have a better chance of winning. Therefore, “strong” disproportional systems should produce fewer parties (Duverger 1954; Taagapera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994; Cox 1997; Katz 1997), and these parties should converge to the center to maximize their share of votes. More proportional systems should allow the presence of more parties and these parties should be induced to position themselves at different locations on the political spectrum. Thus, PR should bring about less centrist parties, and a wider range of options for voters.

The relationship between PR and the number of parties is well established (see the studies cited above) and will not be reexamined here. We focus on the link between proportional representation and the propensity of the parties to position themselves (or not) towards the center, a pattern that is often assumed in the literature but that has not been empirically established, as far as we can tell.

The starting point of our analysis is the median voter, because parties can minimize the distance between voters and themselves by choosing the median voter’s position. Table 1 shows that the median voter is exactly at the mid-point, at 5, on the 0-10 left-right scale, in every case except Germany, where the median voter is located slightly to the left of center and the 2003 Israel election, where the median voter is slightly to the right.

What about the median party? We can compute for each voter her perception of the median party's position on the left right scale. For example, if we take voter #22 in the 2002 New Zealand election, we have her positioning of the six major parties on the 0 to 10 scale: Green Party (position 1), Labour (position 2), United Party (position 6), National Party (position 7), New Zealand First (position 8), and Act (position 9). The median party for that voter is at 6.5. We can also compute the perceived location of the median party for the whole electorate. To do so, we pool together respondents' perceptions of the parties' positions and we establish the median position.⁵ In the case of the New Zealand 2002 election, we have 6 parties and 1326 respondents, and we thus have 7956 party positions. We then take the median position of this pooled sample to find the median party (Ω_j) for each election. Table 1 shows that in most of the cases (22 cases out of 31), the median party is at 5. There are, however six elections in which the median party is on the center-right (6) and three in which it is on the center-left (4).

We expect parties to be less centrist in PR systems. Our indicator of how centrist parties are in a country is the average absolute distance of each party from the median voter position (Γ_j).⁶ The higher the distance, the less centrist parties are, and so our measure taps the centrifugal strength of the party system. For instance, in the 1997 Norwegian election, two parties was at a distance of 0.5 from the median (position 5.5), one at a distance of 1.5, one at a distance of 2.5, and two at a distance of 3.5, and the average distance is 2.

$$\Gamma_j = \sum_{p=1}^n |\bar{\alpha} - \bar{\alpha}_p| \text{ for } \forall \text{ country } \in j$$

Where the median pooled position of country j is $\bar{\alpha}$ and $\bar{\alpha}_p$ is the median position of party p . We observe (see Table 1) a smaller average distance, and thus more centrist parties, in Britain and Ireland, and greater distance, thus less centrist parties, in the Czech Republic, Hungary (2002) and Portugal.

(Table 1 about here)

H1 also predicts that proportional systems offer a greater range of choice. Our indicator of diversity is Alvarez and Nagler's party system vote-weighted compactness (Alvarez and Nagler 2004). This measure has the advantage of taking into account the parties' vote share and the dispersion of respondents on the left/right scale. A greater compactness means a narrower range of choice for voters. We use the same pooled data of party positions to measure compactness.

$$\Pi_j = \frac{\sigma_j}{\sum_{p=1}^n \kappa_p |\alpha_p - \tau_p|} \text{ for } \forall \text{ country } \in j$$

Where α is the respondents' dispersion on the scale, κ_p is p^{th} party's share of the vote and τ_p is the weighted mean of parties on the scale. The typical situation is to have a score around 1.20 (Table 2). Compactness is particularly high, and there is thus less diversity, in Ireland and Canada, and it is particularly low, meaning a wider range of choice, in the Czech Republic and Poland. As expected, there is a strong correlation (corr=-0.61) between compactness and the centrifugal strength of the party system.

(Table 2 about here)

To find out if there is a significant relation between the degree of disproportionality and the range of choice on the one hand and the centrifugal strength of the party system, we performed OLS regressions.⁷ The dependent variables are mean distance from the median voter and compactness. The main independent variable is Gallagher's index of disproportionality. We also include a dummy variable for countries that have been democratic for at least twenty years at the moment of the election. We argue that in mature democracies parties benefit from a more stable partisan structure and have a better knowledge of their optimum strategy to assure concordance with voters' positions.⁸ Consequently, old democracies should have a more compact party system and a better congruence between parties and citizens.

The findings are presented in Table 3. Older democracies produce more centrist parties and offer less political choice; they are, on average, half a point lower on the compactness score. But, more importantly diversity of choice is negatively correlated with the index of disproportionality, thus confirming our hypothesis that more proportional systems provide voters with a greater range of ideological options, and less centrist parties, than less proportional systems. The advocates of proportional representation are right: PR does foster greater choice through less centrist parties.

(Table 3 about here)

Hypothesis 2: PR increases the number of parties in government

In our model, the most crucial centripetal mechanism in a PR system occurs at the time of the formation of the cabinet. Because PR facilitates the entry and survival of many parties and because even small parties can obtain seats in the legislature, seldom does a party win a majority of the seats can then form a single-party majority government. PR thus usually leads to the formation of coalition governments, much more frequently than in “majoritarian” systems.

The link between PR and coalition governments has been examined in previous studies (Blais and Carty 1987; Lijphart 1994; Katz 1997; Persson and Tabellini 2003).⁹ The same relationship emerges in the countries included in this research.

Table 2 presents the number of parties in the government that was formed after the election. Single-party governments were formed in Australia¹⁰, Britain, Canada, Spain and Sweden (two elections each). More frequently the government consisted of two or three parties. Israel emerges as an outlier, with a government made out of six parties.

Table 4 shows the link between the numbers of parties in government, the disproportionality index. Our old democracy dummy is not significant. Table 4 supports hypothesis 2: more proportional systems produce more parties in government.

(Table 4 about here)

Hypotheses 3 and 4: Compactness and more parties in government foster congruence

We now look at the outcome of the election and at the congruence between voters' views and the government's position. We ascertain congruence from the perspective of individual voters, that is, how close or distant they see the government's position from their own. We do not have a direct measure of voters' perceptions of the ideological stance of the government but we know where they place each of the main parties and we know the relative weight of these parties in the government, that is, how many seats they have in the cabinet.

We measure the weighted perceived position of the government, using parties' placement on the left-right scale and their share of cabinet seats.¹¹

$$\Psi_i = \sum_{p=1}^n \omega_p * \alpha_{pi}$$

Where w is the relative weight in terms of cabinet seat share by party p , and α is the perceived position of party p given by voter i . We then compute the absolute distance between voter i and her perceived position of the cabinet. Let us take for example respondent #10 in Denmark, a voter who placed herself at 9 on the left-right scale. The government that was formed after the 1998 election included 16 members of the Social Democrats and 4 Socialists, and this voter located the Social Democrats at 5 and the Socialists at 1. Consequently, the weighted cabinet position for that respondent is $= | (16/20)*5 - (4/20)*1 | = 4.2$, and her distance from the Cabinet is $|9 - 4.2| = 4.8$. We then measure the average distance, per country, between voters and the cabinet (Φ_j).

$$\Phi_j = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{|\theta_i - \Psi_i|}{n} \text{ for } \forall \text{ country } \in j$$

Where θ is the voter's position, n represents the number of observations and Ψ_j is the cabinet's perceived position.

As Table 2 indicates, cabinets are not always centrist. Only in seven cases is the median cabinet position between 4.5 and 5.5. We have two cabinets very much to the right, Spain in 1996 and Iceland, and one cabinet very much to the left, Hungary in 2002. As a consequence, we observe sometimes substantial distance between voters and cabinets, especially in those instances where the cabinet is located far from the center.

According to hypotheses 3 and 4, the average distance between voters and governments should be lower when the party system is compact¹² and when there are more parties in government. In the latter case, we expect the relationship to be non-linear. Congruence should increase when we move from one to two or three parties but congruence might be reduced with the incorporation of too many parties closer to both extremes. Table 5 shows that these two hypotheses are confirmed. The data also indicate that convergence between citizens and governments is not systematically higher or lower in mature democracies.

(Table 5 about here)

Hypothesis 5: PR has no net effect on congruence

The very last hypothesis states that proportionality has no net effect on congruence. In fact, our expectation is that PR has contradictory consequences that cancel out in the aggregate. On the one hand, PR leads to more parties and to less centrist parties, as the incentive is weaker for each party to converge towards the center. This, in

turn, produces less centrist governments, which hinders overall congruence with citizens. On the other hand, PR increases the number of parties in government, and this tends to produce a more centrist government, one that is closer to citizens' positions. Our prediction is that these two opposite effects wash out and that the net impact is nil.

Table 6 tests and confirms that proposition. All in all, disproportionality has no net effect on congruence.¹³

(Table 6 about here)

These findings are consistent with the theoretical perspective presented at the outset of this paper. Congruence is achieved through different routes in more and less proportional systems. In the former, the bargaining that takes place at the time of the government formation is crucial. In the latter, the decisive element is that it is difficult for “extremist” parties to win seats. In both cases, coordination failures may occur, and so there is no guarantee of congruence. The bottom line, however, is that proportional representation does not produce more representative governments, when representativeness is defined as the minimization of the distance between the positions of voters and the position of the cabinet.

Conclusion

We have shown that proportional representation does contribute to a greater range of choice for voters, that is, voters can choose among parties that are more ideologically dispersed. But we have also shown that PR does not bring about a better representation of

citizens' overall ideological orientations, that is, the prevailing position in government is not closer to voters' positions, on average.

Better representation entails that the government converges towards the position of the median voter, because that minimizes the total (and mean) distance between the government's and voters' positions. But that goal can be achieved in different ways, and this is why no electoral system is clearly superior on that front.

In proportional systems, voters tend to be spread all over the political spectrum supporting small parties that survive due to their good chances of being represented in Parliament. Then, centrist parties serve as lubricant in the coalition formation process and bring the government closer to the median voter. In less proportional systems, the government is usually a single-party government, and there is thus some risk that the government party will be far off from the median voter. That risk is reduced, however, by the greater incentive for all parties to be centrist in such systems. It takes more votes to win any seats in "strong" systems, and there is stronger pressure on each party to adopt positions as close as possible to those of the median voter. Convergence towards the center occurs before the vote or at the time of the vote when voters coordinate to support the strongest centrist party, in less proportional systems, while it occurs mostly after the vote, when the coalition government is formed, in more proportional systems. The bottom line is that there is a push towards the center in both systems. There is no theoretical reason to suppose that the push is stronger in one system than in the other. The moment of congruence is different but the result is the same.

References

- Alvarez, Michael R., and Jonathan Nagler. 2004. "Party System Compactness: Measurement and Consequences." *Political Analysis* 12: 46-62
- Blais, André, and Ken Carty. 1987. "The Impact of Electoral Formulae on the Creation of Majority Governments." *Electoral Studies* 5: 109-218.
- Blais, André. 1991. "The Debate over Electoral Systems." *International Political Science Review* 12: 239-60.
- Blais, André, and Louis Massicotte. 2002. "Electoral Systems." *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris (dir.), London, Sage.
- Clarke, Harold, David Sanders, Marianne Stewart, and, Whiteley, P. 2004. *Political Choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Converse, Philip E., and Roy Pierce. 1986. *Political Representation in France*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalton, Russell. 1985. "Political Parties and Political Representation: Party Supporters and Party Elites in Nine Nations." *Comparative Political Studies* 18: 267-299.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.
- Duverger, Maurice. 1954. *Political Parties*. New York: Wiley.

Finer, Samuel E. 1975. *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform*. London: Wigram.

Gallagher, Michael. 1991. "Proportionality, Disproportionality, and Electoral Systems." *Electoral Studies* 10: 33-51.

Huber, John D. 1989. "Values and Partisanship in Left-Right Orientations: Measuring Ideology." *European Journal of Political Research* 17:

Huber, John D., and Bingham Powell Jr. 1994. "Congruence Between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy." *World Politics* 46: 291-326

Inglehart, Ronald, and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 1976. "Party Identification, Ideological Preference and the Left-right Dimension among Western Mass Publics" In *Party Identification and Beyond*, Ian Budge et al. (ed.). London: John Wiley.

Katz, Richard S. 1997. *Democracy and Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kim, Heemin, and Richard C. Fording. 1998. "Voter Ideology in Western Democracies." *European Journal of Political Science* 33: 73-97.

Kim, Heemin, and Richard C. Fording. 2002. "Government Partisanship in Western Democracies, 1945-1998." *European Journal of Political Science* 41: 187-206.

Kim, Heemin, and Richard C. Fording. 2003. "Voter Ideology in Western Democracies: An Update." *European Journal of Political Science* 42: 95-105.

Lakeman, Enid. 1974. *How Democracies Vote: A Study of Electoral Systems*. London: Faber and Faber.

Lijphart, Arend. 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laver Michael, and Ian Budge (eds). 1993. *Party Policy and Coalition Government in Western Europe*. London: Macmillan.

Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*, Vol 7 of Advanced Quantitative Techniques in Social Sciences. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

McDonald, Michael D., Silvia M. Mendes, and Ian Budge. 2004. "What Are Elections For? Conferring the Median Mandate." *British Journal of Political Science* 34: 1-26.

Ordeshook, Peter C. 1997. "The Spatial Analysis of Elections and Committees: Four Decades of Research." In *Perspectives on Public Choice: A Handbook*, Dennis C. Mueller (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Osborne, Martin J. 1993. "Candidate Positioning and Entry in a Political Competition." *Games and Economic Behavior* 5: 133-151.

Persson, Torsten, and Guido Tabellini. 2003. *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Powell, G. Bingham Jr. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Powell, G. Bingham Jr., and Georg S. Vanberg. 2000. "Election Laws, Disproportionality and Left-Right Dimension." *British Journal of Political Science* 30:383-411.

Schofield, Norman. 1993. "Political Competition and Multiparty Coalition Government." *European Journal of Political Research* 23: 575-594.

Sharman, C., A.M. Sayers, and N. Miragliotta. 2002. "Trading Party Preferences: The Australian Experience of Preferential Voting." *Electoral Studies* 21: 543-560.

Strøm, Kaare. 1990. *Minority Government and Majority Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taagepera, Rein, Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1989. *Seats and Votes: The Effects of Determinants of electoral Systems*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Table 1: The Range of Choice Among Parties

Country	Year	Gallagher (G)	Median Voter	Median Party (Ω_j)	Party Distance (Γ_j)	Compactness (Π_j)
Great Britain	1997	0.1642	5	5	1.00	1.3761
Canada	1997	0.1323	5	5	1.40	1.8411
Australia	1996	0.1035	5	5	1.25	1.4038
Poland	1997	0.0979	5	5	2.40	0.9046
Hungary	1998	0.0770	5	6	2.20	0.9209
Hungary	2002	0.0739	5	5	3.00	0.9553
Ireland	2002	0.0649	5	5	1.25	2.7371
Spain	2000	0.0604	5	5	1.75	1.2822
Bulgaria	2001	0.0586	5	5	2.50	1.1341
Spain	1996	0.0555	5	5	2.00	1.0663
Portugal	2002	0.0540	5	4	2.75	1.5534
Czech Rep.	2002	0.0505	5	5	2.80	0.8310
Poland	2001	0.0441	5	5	2.00	0.9299
Czech Rep.	1996	0.0436	5	6	2.33	0.8948
Slovenia	1996	0.0386	5	5	1.20	1.8108
Germany	2002	0.0375	4	4	1.60	1.4294
Norway	1997	0.0347	5	5	2.00	1.3281
Norway	2001	0.0301	5	5	1.67	1.1984
New Zealand	1996	0.0288	5	6	2.50	1.0463
Belgium	1999	0.0285	5	5	1.41	1.5160
Germany	1998	0.0281	4	4	2.00	1.3496
Switzerland	1999	0.0272	5	5	1.60	1.3857
Switzerland	2002	0.0215	5	5	2.00	0.9965
New Zealand	2002	0.0213	5	5	1.83	1.4280
Israel	2003	0.0208	6	5	2.50	1.3611
Israel	1996	0.0158	5	5	2.40	1.2607
Sweden	2002	0.0122	5	6	1.50	1.4059
Netherlands	1998	0.0110	5	5	1.70	1.1761
Iceland	1999	0.0099	5	5	2.00	0.9878
Sweden	1998	0.0098	5	6	2.70	0.8854
Denmark	1998	0.0067	5	6	2.50	1.0381

Table 2: The Composition of Cabinet and Congruence With Voters

Country	Year	Gallagher	# of Parties in Government	Median Cabinet (Ψ_j)	Cabinet Distance (Φ_j)
Great Britain	1997	0.1642	1	4.0	2.1928
Canada	1997	0.1323	1	5.0	1.9429
Australia	1996	0.1035	1	7.0	1.9705
Poland	1997	0.0979	2	7.8	2.7913
Hungary	1998	0.0770	4	7.0	2.3917
Hungary	2002	0.0739	2	1.5	3.2089
Ireland	2002	0.0649	2	6.0	1.6019
Spain	2000	0.0604	1	7.0	2.6223
Bulgaria	2001	0.0586	2	5.5	1.7995
Spain	1996	0.0555	1	8.0	3.7261
Portugal	2002	0.0540	2	7.2	2.5649
Czech Rep.	2002	0.0505	3	3.7	2.3969
Poland	2001	0.0441	2	4.3	3.5572
Czech Rep.	1996	0.0436	3	5.0	2.2259
Slovenia	1996	0.0386	3	4.8	1.8040
Germany	2002	0.0375	2	3.0	2.0703
Norway	1997	0.0347	3	5.2	1.9407
Norway	2001	0.0301	3	7.3	2.2232
New Zealand	1996	0.0288	2	7.3	2.5867
Belgium	1999	0.0285	4	4.7	1.8389
Germany	1998	0.0281	2	3.0	1.9561
Switzerland	1999	0.0272	4	5.3	1.8268
Switzerland	2002	0.0215	4	5.6	2.0525
New Zealand	2002	0.0213	2	4.1	2.2991
Israel	2003	0.0208	3	7.2	2.8456
Israel	1996	0.0158	6	7.3	3.0710
Sweden	2002	0.0122	1	3.0	2.4939
Netherlands	1998	0.0110	3	5.7	1.6344
Iceland	1999	0.0099	2	8.7	3.0016
Sweden	1998	0.0098	1	3.0	2.4938
Denmark	1998	0.0067	2	3.8	2.4557

Table 3: Disproportionality, Compactness and Party Distance from the Median Voter

Independent Variables	Compactness (Π_j)		Party Distance (Γ_j)	
	Coefficients	Robust S.E.	Coefficients	Robust S.E.
Disproportionality	2.9919*	(1.6916)	-5.6407**	(1.5207)
Old Democracy	0.3672**	(0.1539)	-0.4941**	(0.2093)
Constant	0.8703**	(0.1682)	2.6087**	(0.2262)
R ²	0.2257		0.2621	
N	31		31	

** Significant at 5%, * Significant at 10%

Table 4: Disproportionality and Number of Parties in Government

Independent Variables	Number of Parties in Government	
	Coefficients	Robust S.E.
Disproportionality	-13.1343**	(4.6477)
Old Democracy	-0.3173	(0.3424)
Constant	3.2322**	(0.3757)
R ²	0.1638	
N	31	

** Significant at 5%, * Significant at 10%

Table 5: Congruence, Compactness and Number of Parties in Government

Independent Variables	Non-Congruence Between Voters and Government (Φ_j)	
	Coefficients	Robust S.E.
Compactness	-0.6136**	(0.1738)
# of parties in coalition	-0.6338**	(0.2307)
# of parties in coalition ²	0.0961**	(0.0321)
Old democracy	-0.3215	(0.2253)
Constant	4.2085**	(0.4965)
R ²	0.4217	
N	31	

** Significant at 5%, * Significant at 10%

Table 6: Disproportionality and Congruence

Independent Variables	Non-Congruence Between Voters and Government (Φ_j)	
	Coefficients	Robust S.E.
Disproportionality	-1.8203	(1.6401)
Old Democracy	-0.4458*	(0.2619)
Constant	2.7649**	(0.2871)
R ²	0.1388	
N	31	

** Significant at 5%, * Significant at 10%

Note

¹ The left and right categories have been shown to load together in a series of factor analyses (Laver and Budge 1993).

² The problem is acknowledged by McDonald, Mendes and Budge (2004, page 23, note 42).

³ The reason is that in single-member countries the government is typically made of one single party whose majority of the seats in the legislature is “manufactured” by the electoral system (Blais and Carty 1987, 1988) while in PR systems the most frequent outcome is a coalition government made of two or three parties that have the support of the majority of the voters (Katz 1997, 164).

⁴ We also performed analyses with a dummy variable that equals 1 for the three countries without any element of proportionality (Australia, Britain, Canada). The substantive findings were similar.

⁵ Respondents were asked to place five parties in 12 election studies and six in 19 studies.

⁶ We have excluded parties who received less than 5% of the vote from this measure to control for artificial dispersion caused by one or two small parties.

⁷ Since we have a small sample badly suited for maximum-likelihood estimation and our dependent variables are relatively continuously distributed with kurtosis between two and three and skewness between 0 and 1, we consider that OLS estimation is the most appropriate option. The literature in econometrics suggests that maximum-likelihood estimation is strongly dependent on the number of observations and that estimation with less than 100 observations is risky (Long 1997). We also treat for correlations of errors between observations (due to the presence of two election studies in ten countries) using the cluster option in Stata 8.

⁸ It could also be argued that more democratic countries should exhibit the greatest range of choice, but the hypothesis cannot be tested because all the countries included in our analysis except Bulgaria had a score of 1 on Freedom House political rights.

⁹ PR may also lead to the formation of single-party minority governments (Strom 1990). Because we have only two such cases in our data set, we are not able to determine whether such governments behave differently.

¹⁰ Technically, Australia had a coalition government made up of two parties, National and Liberal, which had one Cabinet member but because the alliance has been maintained over a period of 80 years it does not fit the standard conception of a coalition (email exchange with Ian McAllister; see also Sharman, Sayers, and Miragliotta 2002), and we thus treat that government as a single-party one. We have also performed analyses in which Australia is considered as a coalition government, and the substantive conclusions are not affected.

¹¹ In seven cases, we do not have voters’ perceptions of all the parties that formed the government. Our measure of the cabinet’s position thus had to exclude those parties that were not included in the CSES questionnaire.

¹² We have decided to focus on compactness, an indicator of diversity or choice, rather than on mean party distance from the median voter, an indicator of centrifugal strength. The two variables are strongly correlated and the findings are similar when we use the latter. The advantages of compactness as a measure of diversity have been elegantly demonstrated by Alvarez and Nagler (2004).

¹³ We also performed an analysis which included disproportionality, an old democracy dummy, compactness, and the number of parties in government (and its square value). Disproportionality remains not significant. We also tested the robustness of the model by dropping one country after another and the results were not significantly affected.