

Conditions of Positional Policy Congruence

*Kathrin Thomas,
University of Exeter
kt270@exeter.ac.uk*

*This is a draft paper. Comments most welcome.
Please do not cite without permission from the author.*

Paper prepared for the final ELECDEM conference, held at the European University Institute, 28-30 June 2012. Please do not cite without

Abstract

Positional policy congruence is one prominent way to test the quality of a democracy. Whether governments shift in the direction of the mean citizens has been investigated in numerous studies in the past. Scholars have found previously that the congruence of government and the mean citizens' ideology is conditioned by institutions, in particular, the electoral and party system. Thereby, recent findings challenge long standing hypotheses about the effect of the different kinds of electoral rules and party systems. In the dynamic study of policy responsiveness scholars find institutions as well political situations to affect the opinion policy linkage. Conditions that lead to more clarity in policy making enable governments to respond more frequently to citizens' preference.

In this paper I apply the idea of the impact of institutional and situational clarity to the study of positional policy congruence. There are other institutional arrangements and situational characteristics that impact the ideological congruence of citizens and governments. Thereby I argue, it is the nature of institutional clarity that impact long-standing ideological beliefs and not the short- and mid-term political situations. I test my hypotheses on the basis of the perceptions model of ideological congruence. I rely on data collected by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. The analyses are based on a sample of 25 countries spread across Europe, North America, and Austrasia and a total of 60 elections in the time period of 1996 to 2010. I find support for the institutional clarity as well as for the situational clarity hypothesis.

Conditions of Positional Policy Congruence

Positional policy congruence (Jones, Baumgartner 2004: 2) is the dominant approach to examine the congruence of citizens and governments. Ideology approaches are one way to test representation of agendas, but do not examine policy responsiveness. The ideology methods do not precisely examine the *responsiveness* of governments to their citizens in terms of the left-right position, but simply the *congruence* of those at the same point in time. For responsiveness to occur, a reaction to opinion expression at a different point in time is required. Responses occur after opinion has been expressed. Ideally, we would need continuous measures of citizens' and government ideology over time, so that we can explore whether governments shift towards citizens' ideology in the following year(s).

Positional policy congruence also has a slightly different angle on the opinion-policy linkage, it steps back to agenda setting. The ideology of citizens and policy makers is nothing that can be matched with actual outputs, it is rather some general issues or an agenda. Thus, policy makers cannot be evaluated on policy outputs by looking at an agenda, measured as ideology

Positional policy congruence does give us an indication though whether the people and policy makers have the same ideas about the direction of policy. It is thus not less important than other approaches to investigate the opinion-policy linkage. In this paper I am interested in the circumstances under which congruence between the mean citizen and governments' position on the left-right continuum occurs. In previous work I have looked at the conditions of issue responsiveness and have found short- and mid-term events or situations to have an impact on the opinion-policy link. As positional policy congruence is based on ideology I expect the relationship to be affected by fixed institutions rather than events and situations.

Issue priorities are "at heart, a forecast, and it seems reasonable to expect that these forecasts are established on a retrospective basis". (Enelow, Hinich 1982:493) They are, thus, more likely to be effected by short-and mid-term events than by long-standing institutions. By contrast, ideology is a collection of core issue beliefs to an ideological "super-issue" (Pierce 1999:30). Ideology is established, long-standing, and less likely to be affected by short- and mid-term events, but rather by as established, long-standing and fixed factors such as political institutions. This is what I intend to show here by investigating the impact of (fixed) institutional clarity and (time varying) situational clarity on the linkage between ideological beliefs and governments' position on the left-right continuum.

The paper is structured as follows: I begin by introducing the models of positional policy congruence and previous findings with regard to contextual effects. Subsequently, I set out my methodology and data employed to explore under what conditions ideological congruence occurs and how these differ from context effects on issue responsiveness models. Then I present my empirical analysis and what explain my results. I close by drawing conclusion on the main research question under what circumstances ideological congruence occurs.

6.1 Positional Policy Congruence

An extensive body of literature on positional policy congruence suggests that governments' ideology *responds* to citizens' ideological beliefs by shifting towards the mean or median citizen (see for instance, Huber, Powell 1994, Powell 2000, Powell 2009, Powell 2011, Blais, Bodet 2006, Golder, Stramski 2010). Strictly speaking, however, this literature does not examine the responsiveness of governments to citizens' ideological preferences, but rather whether or not the ideology of governments and citizens coincides at the same point in time. This is a question of congruence, the idea that the public is represented in the government at the same point in time. By contrast, responsiveness is a directional reaction to opinion expression and occurs with a delay in time.

The positional policy congruence model is based on the assumption that a shift in citizens' average left-right position leads to a shift towards their beliefs in government's ideology measured on the same scale. There are three major models of positional policy congruence: 1) the manifesto model, 2) the expert model, and 3) the perception model of ideological congruence. Their main difference lies in the measurement of government ideology, whereas public opinion is measured in the same way employing a self-assessment of where respondents would place themselves on the left-right continuum. The manifesto model uses quantitative content analysis to define the parties' stance on the left-right continuum, the expert model employs expert evaluations in order to place the political parties on the left-right scale, and the perception model asks citizens' to place the respective parties on the ideological scale.

The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) analyses the content of party manifestos in order to place the respective parties on an ideological continuum that ranges from 0 to 100. Thereby, quasi-sentences are coded into 56 categories that are associated with the left or the right.

“In practice, most scholars [...] seek a low-dimensional representation of party policy positions. It is very common practice, therefore, for scholars to use the composite “left-right” scale developed and tested by

the CMP. Based on subjective judgments about the meaning of particular categories, supplemented by exploratory factor analyses, this simple additive scale combines information from 26 CMP policy variables, 13 referring to left wing positions and 13 referring to right wing positions.” (Benoit, Laver, Mikhaylov 2007: 14)

Manifestos are published in the context of an election, which means that they are only available in election years, but usually not between elections. Recent work on the validity on the CMP data finds that it is inaccurate as the data contain measurement error and lack cross-coder validation (Benoit, Laver, Mikhaylov 2007). After all, there are doubts that the CMP serves reliable data on party positions and also lack continuous measurement.

Another way to capture parties ideologies is through expert surveys (see for example: Castles, Mair 1984, Huber, Inglehart 1996, Gabel, Huber 2000, Benoit, Laver 2004), where experts on political parties or party systems rate the respective parties in their countries according to their left-right stance. Data on parties ideologies from expert surveys are also limited with regard to the date the survey had been conducted. In addition, there are some doubts about the validity and reliability of the measures (Budge 2001, Whitefield, Vachudova, Steenbergen et al 2007). However in comparison with the CMP measure, Benoit and Laver find that:

“[T]he expert survey estimates are more accurate because they contain smaller measurement error. Due to the inherent structure of manifestos and the mathematically constrained nature of the saliency-based CMP left-right measure, CMP estimates, not only of left and right but also of specific policy dimensions, contain inherently more noise than summaries of expert placements” (Benoit, Laver 2007:93)

Finally, a new way to investigate ideological congruence is to employ a citizens’ perceptions measure. Here, survey respondents are asked to place the major political parties on the left-right continuum. The average across answers serves as the indicator of parties’ position from which the government’s stance can be derived. Scholars have found that citizens view on the position of parties on the ideological scale is fairly accurate with expert views and manifesto measures. (Blais, Bodet 2006, Powell 2009, Golder, Stramski 2010) However, the perception measure is a very new instrument employed in survey research, which means that data are limited to a short time series. In addition, the perception question is only employed in pre- and post election surveys, which additionally limits the data availability to election years. An perfectly accurate, continuous and over time measure of parties’ ideologies is to date not available.

Positional policy congruence engages as well in entangling the effect of context on the opinion-policy linkage. Thereby, political institutions have been in focus of studies, in particular, legislative characteristics such as the electoral and party system (see for instance, Huber, Powell 1994, Powell 2000, Vanberg, Powell 2000, Powell 2009, Powell 2011, Blais, Bodet 2006, Golder,

Stramski 2010). The conclusions drawn about the impact of the electoral and party system are ambiguous though. Whereas earlier research testifies proportional and multiparty systems to outperform their counterparts (Huber, Powell 1994, Powell 2000, Vanberg, Powell 2000), more recent research finds only marginal differences across those institutional features (Powell 2009, Powell 2011, Blais, Bodet 2006, Golder, Stramski 2010). Yet, there is only little discussion about why findings on the contextual effects of institutions are inconsistent.¹

From the economic and performance voting literature we get a more precise insight to the division of context effects. For instance, with regard to the economic voting literature a more appealing differentiation of contextual factors looks at the clarity of responsibilities (Powell, Whitten 1993, Palmer, Whitten 1999). This has been further developed in a study on performance voting, that distinguished between institutional and government clarity (Hobolt, Tilley, Banducci 2010). Here I go even further and distinguish not alone across institutional clarity, but also take into account whether context varies over time. In accordance with this, I consider two sets of context factors that split alongside fixed institutions such as the electoral and party system, level of federalism, bicameralism and regime type, as well as time-varying factors in terms of situational clarity such as single party versus coalition governments, disproportionality, effective numbers of parties in the legislature and executive, minimum winning versus over- and undersized governments. I believe that such a classification of contextual factors allows me to clarify what impacts the relationship between public opinion and government ideology.

6.2 Research Question & Hypotheses

In this paper I explore the conditions of ideological congruence employing the perception model of positional policy congruence. The chapter is motivated by the overall research question: What are the conditions of ideological congruence? I have argued above that there are two kinds of conditions I am exploring in my thesis: Institutional and situational clarity, where institutional clarity refers to the fixed and long established institutional features of a country and situational clarity to characteristics that vary over time with regard to the political situation of the legislature and executive. From this classification I derive two sets of hypotheses that cluster around institutional and situational clarity and which I discuss in more detail in the following.

¹ In the meantime scholarship moves on to exploring other contextual effect such as globalisation. Ezrow and Hellwig find that economic globalisation has a significant impact on ideological representation, where in highly globalised countries congruence decreases (Ezrow, Hellwig 2011). Although it is necessary to mention where scholarship is going, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to also take into account globalisation or further context effects. Here I focus solely on the impact of political institutions and situations on the opinion-policy linkage.

6.2.1 The Institutional Clarity Hypothesis

The first major hypothesis I examine is the *Institutional Clarity Hypothesis*. Ideology I have argued is a long-established, general preference on a collection of issues. While preferences on specific issues may differ from the overall ideological beliefs and the stance on issue may change over time depending on the political climate and developments, it is more difficult to change and affect a person's general ideology. Thus, as a long-standing concept ideological congruence is expected to be conditioned by the fixed, time-invariant institutional design of a country. However, it is of particular importance to examine *how* the fixed institutions affect positional policy congruence, which is why I test a set of five sub-hypotheses to examine the overall Institutional Clarity Hypothesis. These are concerned with the uni- versus bicameral structure, federal versus unitary organisation, (semi-)presidential versus parliamentary executives, majoritarian versus proportional electoral rules and few versus multiparty representation.

H1a: *Bicameralism decreases the positional policy congruence of the mean citizen and her government*

A bicameral structure indicates that the legislature is divided into two chambers, where the first chamber represents the people as whole and the second chamber brings in minority interests in the wider sense. For instance the second chamber in the UNited States, the Senate, represents that interests of the US States, so does the Bundesrat in Germany with interests of the German Länder, the House of Lords in the Britain on the other hand brings in expertise knowledge and interests of its spiritual and temporal members. In any case, bicameralism means that a second chamber of some kind acts as an additional veto player for policy making, whereas unitary states do not have to negotiate with another body of legislation. More veto players, I have argued earlier, always means more compromise on issues and, thus, on ideology. Agreement is achieved by moving ideological beliefs towards a compromise. A bicameral structure makes it also more difficult for people to address their preferences as legislation may be dominated one or the other chamber. For these reasons, I expect bicameralism to decrease the congruence of policy makers and the mean citizen, whereas I believe governments in unicameral systems to be more congruence with the mean citizens beliefs.

H1b: *A federal state structure hampers the positional policy congruence of the mean citizen and her government*

Federalism has previously been found to have negative impact on public responsiveness to government action because the public is not clear about who to address their preferences to (Soroka, Wlezien 2010). Citizen may be unclear about who is responsible for the policy area concerned, in addition, political parties in federally organised countries often cluster around the federal structure. This also means that their ideological beliefs and position on the ideological continuum may be affected by the federal structure. In addition, governments in federal states can also be affected in policy making. For example, are the sub-entities represented in a second chamber and hence involved in the decision making process, this process may be slowed down or even blocked by consulting the sub-entities or the respective representative chamber. If a compromise is achieved, the negotiations may lead to concessions on both sides, which affects specific policies, but also ideological beliefs. Unitary states do not have another level of governance and less veto players in the decision making process than federal states. I expect a federal state structure to hamper the position policy congruence of the mean citizen and her government as it affects whether and how citizens express opinion as well as how fast and in what form policy making occurs.

H1c: *Presidential governments are more congruent with the mean citizen than parliamentary ones.*

The regime type has been looked at with regard to issue responsiveness of governments to public preferences before. Yet, it is likely that it also has an impact on ideological congruence of governments and citizens. A strong and decisive executive led by an independent figure such as the US president might be more successful to shift the ideological convictions of her party towards the mean citizen than an executive that is dependent on the legislature. Parliamentary executives are known to have strong links with the legislature, which often includes mechanisms to abolish the government if the legislature believes it is not acting on behalf of the people. A parliamentary government will thus take into account the overall ideological beliefs of the legislature and is thus more constrained than an independent president in shifting ideology towards the mean citizen.

H1d: *Majoritarian electoral rules lead to more congruence between the mean citizen and her government, than proportional electoral rules.*

The impact of the electoral rules on positional policy congruence has previously been explored by the literature. Early research on congruence finds governments in majoritarian systems to be more congruent than proportional ones, yet more recent studies find proportional electoral systems to

outperform majoritarian ones with regard to the ideological congruence of governments and citizens (Huber, Powell 1994, Powell Vanberg 2000, Powell 2000). However, current research suggest that there are only marginal differences across electoral systems (Blais, Bodet 2006, Powell 2009, Golder, Stramski 2011). From a veto-player-theory perspective, it makes sense to follow up upon the early findings. Majoritarian electoral rules usually lead to few parties in the legislature and strong and decisive governments. The parties position themselves around the mean citizens during the election campaigns and governments are thus fairly congruent with the electorate from beginning. In proportional electoral systems many parties compete over votes and need distinct priorities. These get pull back to the mean during the coalition bargaining process, yet negotiation usually ends in favour of the larger, senior partner, and not quite where one would expect the mean citizens. Hence, I expect majoritarian electoral rules to lead to more congruence between the mean citizen and her government, than proportional electoral systems.

H1e: *Governments in states with fewer parties are more congruent with the mean citizen than those in multiparty systems.*

A similar argument applies to the few parties versus multipartyism. The type of the party system is a direct consequence of the electoral rules. In short the same mechanisms for policy making apply. Fewer parties may position themselves around the mean before the election and stick to their ideologies throughout the electoral cycle when in government. Multipartyism is a characteristic of proportional electoral rules. The argument that parties pul each other back to the mean is conceivable, but again coalition bargaining processes may be dominated by the larger partner, who has more influence in the overall government ideology. I expect multipartyism to constrain congruence, whereas government in systems with a limited number of parties to be more congruent with the mean citizen. Overall, I assume the Institutional Clarity Hypothesis to be confirmed if I find support for all sub-hypothesis on institutional clarity.

6.2.2 Situational Clarity Hypothesis

The second major hypothesis I explore here is the *Situational Clarity Hypothesis*. I have argued earlier in this chapter that ideology is a long-established, general preference on a collection of issues. Whereas specific issue preferences may vary across short- and mid-term political circumstances because they are not necessarily that established, ideological beliefs are. Whether I consider myself to be more leftist or rightist is less likely to be affected by short- and mid-term

events. I expect time-variant situational clarity to have less of an impact on positional policy congruence than institutional one. In fact, I suspect situations to have no significant effect on congruence after all. In order to explore this I rely on five sub-hypotheses, where I expect find indication of directions, but rather marginal and insignificant ones. The time-varying factors I regard here are the effective number of parties in the legislature (ENPP), the disproportionality of vote-seat translation, the number of parties in the government, single party versus coalition governments as well as minimum winning versus over-/undersized governments. I do not set out individual sub-hypothesis as I expect to find no significant effects of any situational event on ideological congruence. Coefficients may indicate directions that will coincide with the veto-player theory. Whenever more veto players are involved I expect the coefficient for congruence to be smaller than for situations characterised by few veto players. I assume the Situational Clarity Hypothesis to be confirmed if I find insignificant coefficients for the indicators of situational clarity in the regression analysis.

6.3 Methodology and Data

In order to examine the circumstances under which ideological congruence occurs, I rely on the perceptions model of positional policy congruence. It is based on the assumption that citizens' average left-right position on a 10-point scale causes a shift in the government's ideology towards the public average. Thereby, the measure of government ideology is based on how people perceive the respective political parties in their countries or in other words where survey respondents place the parties on the left-right scale.

Estimating the perceptions model of positional policy congruence has some advantages to other models of ideological congruence. One caveat is data availability. In order to examine the perceptions model of positional congruence superior data are required. While there is no long time series accessible, the data quality of the CSES is one argument in favour of this approach. The CSES combines measure in one single survey, so that there is no data merging of different sources and qualities necessary. In addition, the comparability of the left-right scale has been problematic in the past. Some measures are based on a 0 to 10 point scale others on a 1 to 10 continuum as Blais and Bodet point out (Blais, Bodet 2006: 1248). With the CSES this I overcome this issues. The perception model employs data from the same source, where respondents where asked to place themselves and the political parties at the same point in time on the same 0 to 10 point scale. Expert survey data on parties' ideological stances are only available for a few years and would also need

merging from different sources. CMP data is delivers a generally good time series of parties' position on the left-right continuum, however, the discussion about the reliability of the data and particularly the inter- and intra-coder validity indicate that these data are not the best accessible measure. Finally, scholars have shown that the perceptions model of ideological congruence is as accurate as other models of positional congruence. Hence it can be used interchangeably while predictions deliver solid results.

In order to investigate the perception model of positional policy congruence superior data are required for a larger cross-sectional sample. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) provides those data. The CSES is an on-going project that collects data in more than 50 countries over a time period from 1996 up to date. Only recently the latest module has been released for research. CSES has collected three modules of data (Module 1:1996-2001, Module 2: 2002-2006, Module 3: 2007-2011) which combine micro and macro level data. The main advantage for researcher is that the data allow conducting cross-national studies and incorporating contextual factors into their models such as institutional attributes. The project offers consistent data over a time period of henceforth fifteen years. Yet the data are not intended to be time series data and, amongst some regularly asked variables of interest, incorporate an individual survey module in each wave.

In this chapter I rely on these secondary data to indicate both, citizens' mean ideology as well as party governments' ideological stance. After concise exploration of the data, I end up with sample 25 countries spread across Europe, North America, and Austrasia and a total of 60 elections in the time period of 1996 to 2010. Table X presents the country sample and election years chosen to analyse. I include parliamentary elections only and have excluded those countries and elections, where sampling or data caused problems. In addition, I have dropped countries that used an alternative value scale to the left-right continuum such as Korea.

Table X: CSES country sample and election years

CSES Country	Years
Australia	1996, 2004, 2007
Austria	2008
Belgium	1999
Bulgaria	2001
Canada	1997, 2004
Czech Republic	1996, 2002, 2006
Denmark	1998, 2001
Finland	2003, 2007
France	2002, 2007
Germany	1998, 2002, 2005, 2009
Hungary	1998, 2002

Iceland	1999, 2003, 2007, 2009
Ireland	2002, 2007
Japan	2007
Netherlands	1998, 2002, 2006
Norway	1997, 2001, 2005
New Zealand	1996, 2002, 2008
Poland	1997, 2001, 2005, 2007
Portugal	2002, 2005, 2009
Slovenia	1996, 2004
Spain	1996, 2000, 2004
Sweden	1998, 2002, 2006
Switzerland	1999, 2003, 2007
United Kingdom	1997, 2005
United States	2004

In order to capture citizens' ideological beliefs the CSES has frequently asked respondents: *"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"* Furthermore, the CSES collects citizens' perceptions of where they see the main political parties in their countries on the left-right continuum. The question wording is as follows: *"Now, using the same scale, where would you place [PARTY A-F]?"*² Respondents' perceptions of political parties' left-right stance are a valid measure of their actual left-right position. Blais and Bodet (2006) as well as Powell (2009) have shown that citizens' perceptions of where the political parties stand on the continuum are consistent with expert placements of the parties on the same scale as well as the actual stance of parties according to the coding by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP).

I am interested in the congruence of governments with the mean citizen, which is why I average the ideology scores of citizens by election and country.³ Accordingly, I set up mean

² Please note that the order of these questions varies from module to module, the wording adjusts according to: *"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place Party A on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right? Using the same scale, where would you place, [PARTY B- F]?"* And: *"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"*

³ Macdonald, Rabinowitz, and Listhaug note that either "the mean or the median provides a good estimate of the electorate's view of a party's stand on the issues. Projection effects that push or pull individual party placements along the scale tend to cancel out across respondents and make the measures quite robust. Mean placements generally accord well with expert judgments [...] and have the advantage of locating the parties on the same scale as the respondents (Macdonald, Rabinowitz, Listhaug 1998:670). Huber and Powell state that their reason for using the median citizen instead of the mean citizens' ideology is theoretical. They argue that a majority will always prefer the median to the mean, because it is less likely to be biased by extreme positions at least in cases where the median and mean are not identical. The ideology scores of the median and mean citizens are largely identical, in case they differ these deviances are marginal (Huber, Powell 1994:296). Please note that I report both mean and median citizens' ideology scores in Appendix A. Minority opinion does not affect the average in any way, so it does not matter whether I rely on the mean or median measures, which is why I have picked the mean over the median. In addition, it appears that mean voter or mean citizens' ideology scores are also an established measure in responsiveness research. More recent work on the effects of globalisation on ideological congruence (Ezrow, Hellwig 2011) as well as on party responsiveness (Ezrow 2011) also rely on the mean ideology scores instead of employing median preferences on ideology. I calculate mean party and government scores accordingly.

perceived party scores to set up the governments' positions on the left-right continuum. In a single party government in office, the ideology score of that single party is identical with the government's stance. In countries with coalition governments I weight the ideology scores of coalition parties depending on whether they are a the senior or junior partner. The weight coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 depending on the vote shares of the parties. For example, in the German election 1998 the SPD has won 40.9% of the votes and the coalescing Green Party 6.7%. Thus, I have multiplied the SPD's ideology score (3.36) by 0.75 and the score for the Green party (2.91) by 0.25, which results in an overall government stance on the left-right continuum of 3.25.

In order to capture context effects I divide between factors according to their institutional and situational clarity. The group of moderators of institutional clarity consists of five dummy variables that capture the fixed system characteristics: The regime type (presidential/semi-presidential versus parliamentary governments), federalism (unitary versus federal countries), bicameralism (unicameralism versus bicameralism), the electoral system (majoritarian versus proportional electoral rules), and the party system (two-and-a-half party versus multiparty systems). The group of factors that vary over time are summarised under situational clarity and include three continuous variables (effective number of parties in parliament, effective number of parties in government, disproportionality of the legislature) and two dummy variables (single versus coalition governments, minimum winning versus over-/undersized governments). I derive the codings for institutional and governmental clarity from the ParlGov and Parline database as well as the Gallagher index of disproportionality and the number of political parties in the legislature.

The modelling strategy applied is transparent, efficient, yet simple. I rely on clustered ordinary least square (OLS) regression analyses with interactive terms. Thereby, my dependent variable is the position of governments on the left-right ideological continuum. One key assumption is that public opinion in particular explains government ideology, which is why the mean citizens' ideology is the main major explanatory variable. Furthermore I am interested in the impact of a country's institutional and situational clarity on the opinion-policy linkage. As argued above (Chapter 3) I abstain from using indexes for institutional and situation clarity, but work with interactive effects instead as Brambor, Clark and Golder suggest (Brambor, Clark, Golder 2006: 65), where the main predictor, public opinion, is interacted with the conditioning variables. I include the constitutive as well as the interaction terms in the model. The equation I am estimating is as follows:

$$GI = \alpha + \beta_1 * PO + \beta_2 * IC/SC + \beta_3 PO * IC/SC + \epsilon,$$

where GI stands for the dependent variable, which is governments' ideology. α is the intercept, β_1 the estimate for slope of citizens' mean ideology, β_2 the estimate of the slopes for the institutions tested in institutional clarity (IC) or the short-term characteristics tested in situational clarity (SC). The estimate for β_3 accompanies the interaction term, ε is the unobserved error.

The important estimates for me are the coefficients for the baseline model β_1 and the interaction term β_3 . Most of the institutions and situations I interact opinion with are dummy variables, where the baseline gives an estimate for opinion times the dummy variable when it equals 0, and the interactive effect tells the estimate for opinion times the dummy variable when it equals 1. For example, I look at the difference between presidential and parliamentary systems, where the regime type is a dummy variable (presidential systems equal 0 and parliamentary one 1). In this case, the coefficient b_1 indicates the impact of publics' mean ideological preferences on government ideology in presidential systems and b_3 the impact of mean citizens' preferences in parliamentary ones.

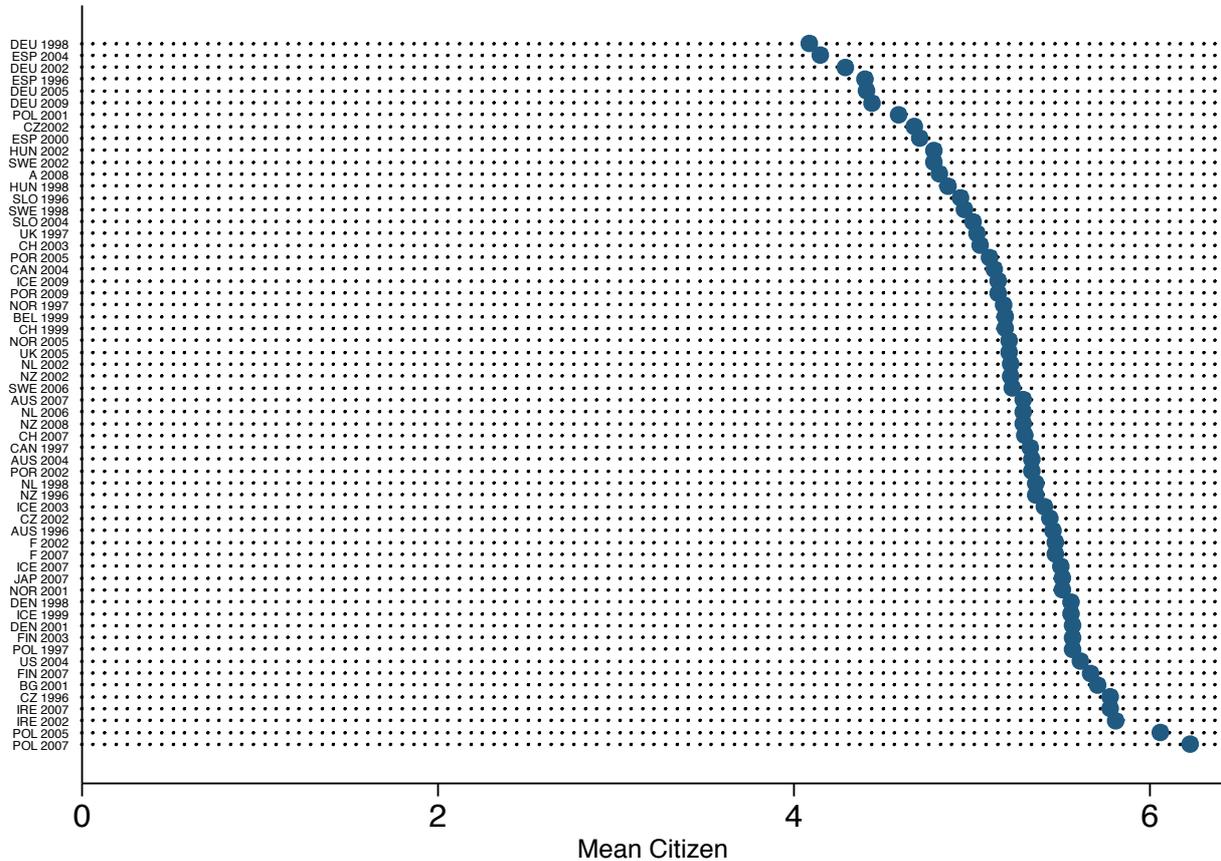
6.5 The Mean Citizen, Governments and Absolute Ideological Distances

I begin my analysis by presenting some descriptive results. Figure X shows citizens' mean ideological preferences by country and election. It is remarkable that there appears to be only little variation.

The ideology scores vary between 4.09 and 6.23, but do not range across the whole 0 to 10 continuum. This is may be explained by a phenomenon in survey research called social desirability bias. There is a "basic human tendency to present oneself in the best possible light" (Fisher 1993: 303), which leads to inaccurate answers about sensitive issues. The left-right self-placement is a question about people's political beliefs. It neither desirable to report that one is extremely leftist, nor extremely rightist. Extreme left and right positions are socially unaccepted and viewed as problematic. Even if there are some outliers on the individual level, these cancel out on the aggregate by country and election. I do not find any extreme opinions on the ideological scale here, in fact citizens in all countries and elections cluster around the centre-left and centre-right. The little variance in public opinion can be a challenge for further analysis. Although the variability on this question is small, it is enough variation to examine responsiveness to the mean citizen. The results

of the statistical analysis and conclusions drawn from it should yet account for this and be recognised with a pinch of salt.⁴

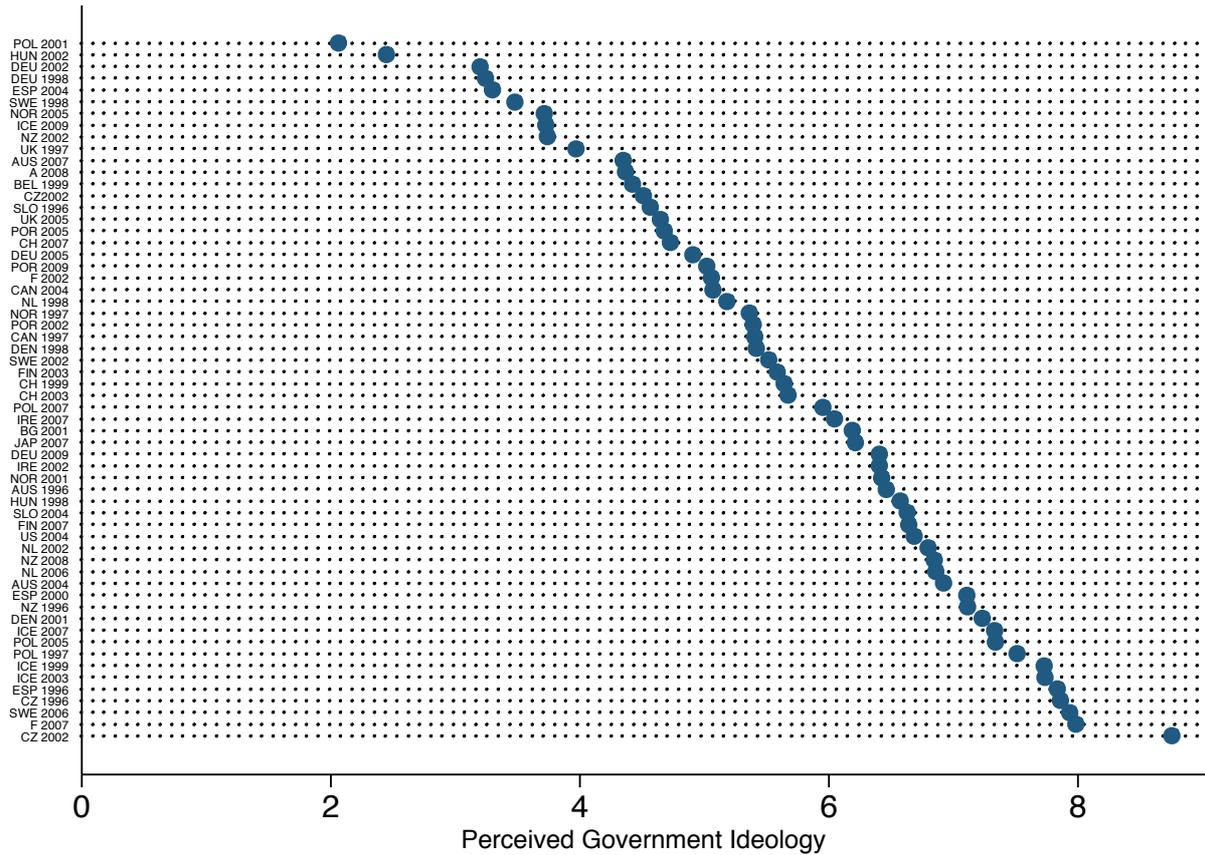
Figure X: Mean Citizens' Ideology



The three most leftist citizens' positions on the ideological scale are Germany in 1998 (4.09), Spain in 2004 (4.15) and Germany in 2002 (4.29). The three countries and elections with the most rightist citizens' beliefs are Polish people in the 2007 (6.23) and 2005 (6.06) general elections as well as the Irish citizens in 2002 national elections (5.81). The Dutch and British people in the general elections held in both countries in the year 2005 represent the average of the sample, which lies at the centre-right with an an ideology score of 5.21.

⁴ The impact of social desirability bias on analyses of social and political science phenomena has been discussed elsewhere. However, a more detailed discussion with regard to measuring ideological preferences would contribute to the study of positional policy congruence. Yet, this cannot be achieved by this thesis and will be subject of future research.

Figure X2: Citizens' Perception of Governments' Mean Ideology

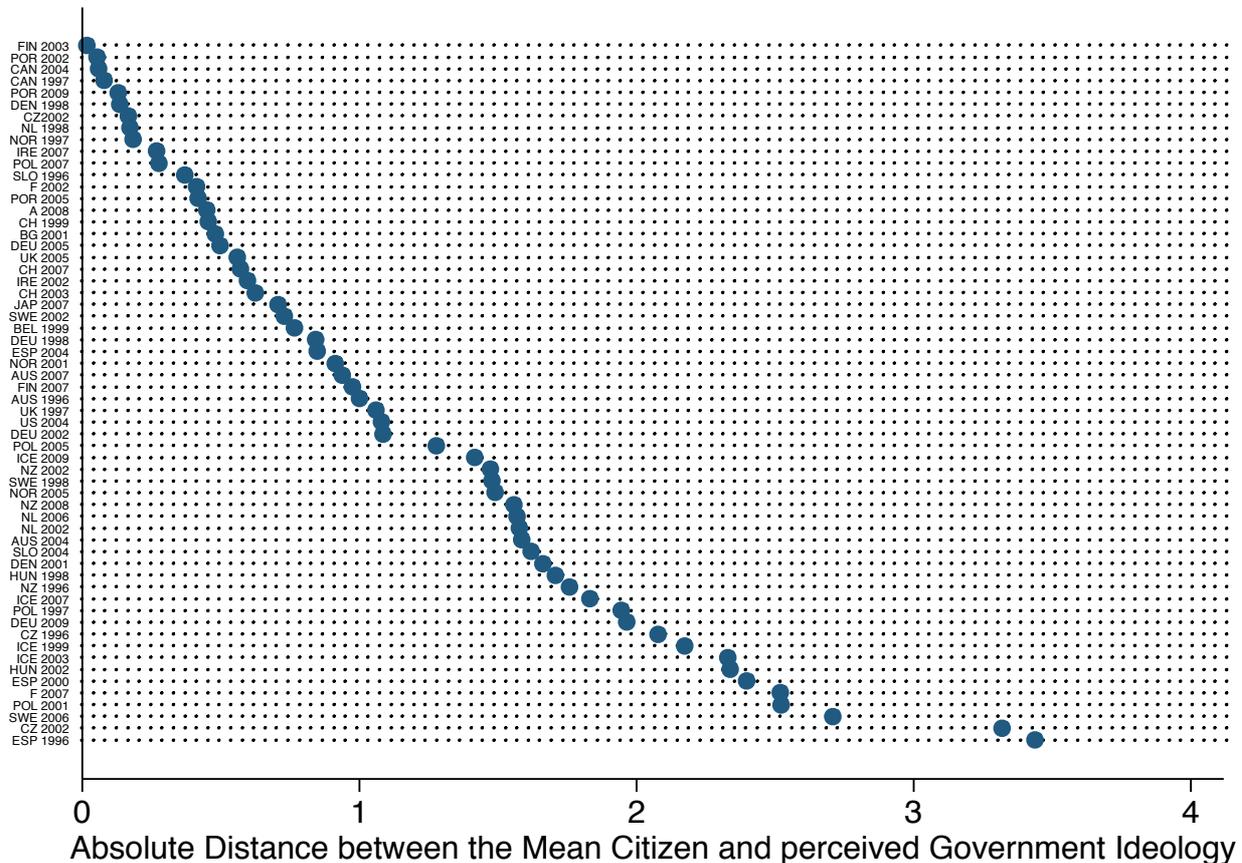


The mean governments' ideologies vary a lot more across the left-right continuum. The three most leftist governments are the Polish government in 2001 (2.07) and the Hungarian (2.45) and German (3.2) governments in 2002. The most rightist governments can be found in the Czech Republic in 2002 (8.76), France 2007 (7.99) and Sweden 2006 (7.94). On average, governments achieve an ideology score of 5.7, which means that governments are at the centre-right. The average ideology score can be found in Sweden in the year 2003.

In order for congruence to occur the distance between citizens' and governments ideologies needs to be as small as possible. In order to get a first insight to this, I have calculated the absolute distance between the mean citizen and governments for each election and country. The results suggest that there is quite some variation across countries and elections. Considering that I am dealing with a 0 to 10 point scale, I get some smaller distances of less than 0.1, but also some large distances of almost 3.5 points. Ideological distances between citizens and government are smallest in in Finland 2003 (0.02), Portugal 2002 (0.06), and Canada 2004 (0.06) and largest in Spain 1996

(3.44), the Czech Republic 2002 (3.32) and Sweden 2006 (2.71). The average distance across all countries and elections is 1.16 points.⁵

Figure X3: Absolute Ideological Distance between the Mean Citizen and Perceived Governments' Positions



The bivariate relationship between government ideology and the mean citizen already suggests that ideological congruence occurs. I find a highly significant and positive impact of the mean citizen on government ideology (+1.75) indicating that whenever the mean citizen moves to right, government ideology does too. This is demonstrated by Figure X4.

The descriptive results suggest that there is already positional policy congruence between the mean citizen and governments. However, this needs further investigation. There is some variation in the ideological distances across countries, which suggests that the congruence is moderated. In particular, it may be affected by the institutional setup and situational clarity within a country. I explore this in the following section.

⁵ Please note that the ideology scores for the mean citizen, governments as well as the absolute distance between them broken down by country and election can be found in Table XX in the Appendix.

linkage. I discuss my findings for each institution in the following order: The impact of bicameralism, federalism, the regime type, the electoral and the party system. The regression results are presented in Table X2.

I have argued that a bicameral nation state structure leads to a more unclear distribution of responsibilities. Depending on what kind of bicameralism is implemented this can have negative effects on the congruence of public opinion and government ideology. I expected a bicameral structure to have a strong negative impact on congruence and this is exactly what I find. While governments in unicameral states move to right whenever the mean citizen shifts to the right (+3.248), this effect is depressed by -1.693 units when bicameral structures are concerned. The interaction term between the mean citizen and bicameralism, which suggests this, is significant at least at the 90% confidence interval.

The second institutional feature I have looked at is whether a country is structure as a federal or unitary state. In some countries this ties in with a bicameral state organisation such as in the United States or Germany, where the states and Länder are also the representatives in the second chamber. I argued that a federal structure decrease congruence, which is what the regression results indicate. Whereas I find a positive relationship between the mean citizen and governments in unitary systems (+2.69), congruence decreases by -1.52 units in federal systems. The interaction term that suggests this, is also significant within the 95% confidence interval.

In order for congruence to occur, I have argued that a decisive executive is expected to be more likely to shift towards citizens' ideological beliefs than parliamentary executive. Parliamentary systems are after all dependent on the legislature and thus have to compromise on issue, which also effects the ideological retrospective of parties in government. Whereas (semi-) presidential government indeed move towards the mean citizen (+2.69), parliamentary executives are less likely to do so. The coefficient is significantly (95% confidence) smaller for the interaction term (-1.02) than for the baseline model.

The electoral and the party system have previously been examined with regard to their impact on ideological congruence. While early research finds that majoritarian and 2.5 party systems lead to increased congruence, more recent research has found proportional and multiparty systems to perform better than their counterparts. However, a handful of current studies suggests that differences in the type of the electoral and party system are marginal and conclude that systems perform equally well. My regression results surprisingly support the early findings. While both majoritarian electoral rules (+4.65) and a smaller number of parties (+3.41) lead to a positive relationship between the mean citizen and governments, proportionality and multipartyism appear

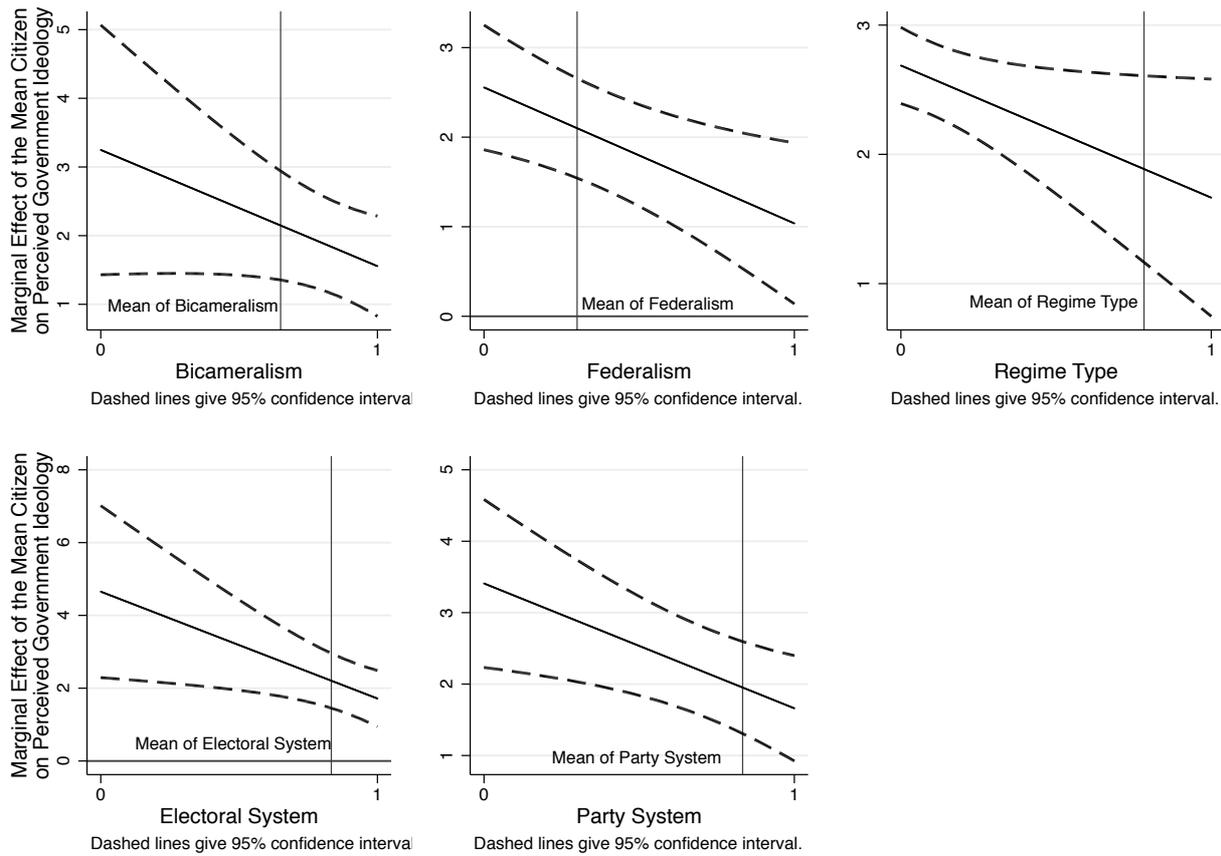
to decrease congruence by -2.93 and -1.75 units. All results lie within the 95% and 99% confidence intervals.

Table X2: The Impact of Institutional Clarity on Ideological Congruence

	Perceived Government Ideology				
Mean Citizen	3.248***	2.556***	2.687***	4.652***	3.409***
	-0.874	-0.335	-0.142	-1.135	-0.565
Bicameralism	9.089*				
	-4.914				
Mean Citizen*Bicameralism	-1.693*				
	-0.942				
Federalism		8.015***			
		-2.839			
Mean Citizen*Federalism		-1.519**			
		-0.546			
Parliamentary System			5.920**		
			-2.377		
Mean Citizen*Parliamentary System			-1.022**		
			-0.463		
Proportionality				15.81**	
				-6.295	
Mean Citizen*Proportionality				-2.937**	
				-1.194	
Multipartyism					9.636**
					-3.605
Mean Citizen*Multipartyism					-1.748**
					-0.667
Constant	-11.42**	-7.775***	-8.807***	-19.02***	-12.49***
	-4.534	-1.729	-0.603	-5.977	-3.065
Observations	60	60	60	60	60
R-squared	0.286	0.300	0.280	0.268	0.286

The most important coefficients in the regression table are the baseline model as well as the interactive terms. For all institutional features β_1 , the coefficient for the baseline model, is significant within the 99% confidence interval. The coefficient for the interactive terms, β_2 , also achieves significance within the 90% and 95% confidence intervals. In order to ensure that the interactions really give significant results, Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006: 76) suggest to plot the marginal effects of the main explanatory variable on the dependent under the moderating condition. Figure X5 plots the marginal effects of the mean citizen on perceived government ideology under the five institutional conditions regarded in this section.

Figure X5: Marginal Effects of Mean Citizen on Perceived Government Ideology under institutional conditions



The interactive term is significant when both dashed lines, which give the 95% confidence interval, are below or above 0. The graphs show a negative impact of the dummy variable when it equals 1 on positional congruence. This means a bicameral structure, federal organisation, parliamentary executive, proportionality and multipartyism have a decrease congruence, which correspond with the results in Table X2. More importantly, in all graphs the dashed line are above zero on x-axis, which suggests that they are significant. I can thus back up my regression results with the marginal effects graphs.

6.6.2 Situational clarity

In order to examine the impact of situational clarity on positional policy congruence between the mean citizen and her government, I follow the same procedure as for the impact of institutions. Situational clarity refers to time-varying factors that characterise the executive and legislature, for example, whether a single party or coalition government is in office. Here I look at five moderators. The effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP), the disproportionality of the legislature, whether a minimum winning government is in charge or an over- or undersized one,

the effective number of parties in government (ENPG) and whether it is a single party or coalition government.

I expect to find no significant impact of situations on ideological congruence. Yet I expect to see an indication that the larger the number of parties in the parliament as well as in government is, the less congruence occurs, the more disproportional the legislature is, the more congruent the mean citizen and government are, and minimum winning and single party governments to be more congruent with the mean citizen than over- or undersized and coalition governments. The results mostly confirm these expectations. Overall, situations occur to have no significant impact on the positional congruence between the mean citizen and her government, with the exception of disproportionality. I discuss this in more detail later in this section and proceed with the presentation of the results in the following order: The impact of the ENPP, disproportionality, minimum winning versus over-/undersized governments, the ENPG, and coalition versus single party governments. The regression results are presented in Table X3.

I have argued that the smaller the number of parties in the legislature is, the more congruence there should be with regard to the mean citizen and the government. The baseline model suggests that ideological congruence occurs in countries with few parties. When citizens move to right, governments follow (+1.69). It appears that there is also congruence in countries with a larger number of parties in the legislature. The coefficient even increases by 0.02 units to 1.89. However, the difference in the coefficients between few and many parties in the legislature is very small. In addition, neither of the coefficients reaches statistical significance. A final statement about the impact of the time-varying ENPP cannot be made relying on these numbers.

With regard to the disproportionality of the legislature, I argued that proportionality may enhance congruence. I find some indications to support this hypothesis here. The more proportional a legislature is, the more congruence appears to occur. The baseline model suggests some ideological congruence between the mean citizen and the government (+0.77). The more proportional a legislature is, appears to lead to higher congruence as the interaction term suggests (+0.95). While the coefficient in the baseline does not fall in any confidence interval, the interaction coefficient is also significant at the 95% confidence level.

With regard to the time varying government characteristics I have argues that minimum winning governments should lead to increasing congruence between the government and the mean citizen. Indeed I find some indication for this hypothesis. While congruence between over- and undersized governments and the mean citizen is demonstrated by the regression results, the the coefficient for the baseline model, β_1 , is positive (+1.58) and also significant on the 90%

confidence level, congruence is enhanced when a minimum winning government concerned. The interaction term is positive (+0.29), yet not significant. The differences between government types seem to be marginal though.

Table X3: The Impact of Situational Clarity on Ideological Congruence

	Mean Government Ideology				
Mean Citizen	1.689	0.769	1.576**	1.423	0.857
	-2.174	-0.546	-0.602	-1.510	-0.873
ENPP	-0.117				
	-3.138				
Mean Citizen*ENPP	0.0178				
	-0.585				
Proportionality		-0.994***			
		-0.355			
Mean Citizen*Proportionality		0.181**			
		-0.0680			
Minimum Winning Government			-1.475		
			-3.763		
Mean Citizen*Minimum Winning Government			0.294		
			-0.703		
ENPG				-0.823	
				-3.261	
Mean Citizen*ENPG				0.154	
				-0.615	
Coalition					-5.957
					-4.420
Mean Citizen*Coalition					1.144
					-0.872
Constant	-3.000	1.984	-2.532	-1.665	1.195
	-11.71	-2.837	-3.238	-8.001	-4.373
Observations	60	60	60	60	60
R-squared	0.257	0.307	0.258	0.258	0.274

Surprisingly, higher numbers of parties in government appear to increase congruence. Contrary to the initial expectations that fewer parties in the executive lead to more congruence, the regression results suggest that a larger number of parties in government enhance congruence by 0.15 units. However, the effect is very small and the results do not reach any significance level, which suggests that results are not ensured.

Finally, I have argued that coalition governments may be more congruent with the mean citizen than single party ones. The results indeed indicate that both types of governments are congruent with the mean citizen, but that coalition governments increase congruence by 1.14 units.

Yet neither the coefficient for the baseline model, nor for the interactive term reach statistical significance.

The statistical analysis leaves me with some support for my argument as well as some new puzzles. First of all, the results suggest that time-invariant institutional characteristics moderate the relationship between ideological preferences and the position of the government on the ideological scale, but time-varying situations do not. This supports my argument. As ideology is a longstanding and established preferences on a collection of issue preference to a more general super-issue, I had expected the ideological congruence between the mean citizen and government to be affected by something as longstanding, such as the fixed political institutions. This is what I find for bicameralism, federalism, the regime type, the electoral and the party system. These institutions are fixed and normally written in one way or another in a constitution. All five institutions showed an moderating effect on the opinion-policy relations. The more veto players these institutions allow it seems, the less congruent a government is with the ideological preferences of the mean citizen based on these characteristics. A bicameral structure, federal organisation, parliamentary executives, proportional electoral rules and multipartyism appear to lead to significant less congruence between the government and the mean citizen, than their counterparts.

With regard to time-varying political situations that may lead to more or less clarity in policy making, I do not find a significant impact of any situation, despite disproportionality. The situations looked at here vary over time usually with the beginning of a new legislative period. They should have a short term effects on preference expression and policy making. Yet, as ideology is long established, I did not expect short and mid term effects on congruence. The results generally support this. All but one of the characteristics looked at under situational clarity suggested that congruence occurred, but the results were not ensured as statistical significance has not been achieved. The exception is the disproportionality of the legislature. Whether votes are translated into seats in a (dis-)proportional way, varies across time, but it is also linked strongly to the electoral rules applied and the type of the party system. A more proportional translation of votes into seats would theoretically lead to a multiparty structure. Yet, the effect of this, in accordance with the impact of the electoral and party system on congruence should, thus, be negative. Here it is not. While the proportional electoral rules and multipartyism occur to significantly dampen congruence, the proportional translation of votes into seats appears to enhance congruence.

6.7 Discussion

The analyses indicates that fixed institutions affect the positional congruence of the mean citizen and governments, whereas short- and mid-term situations do not. In addition, it suggests that there are also other conditions of ideological congruence than the electoral and party system. I find evidence that in particular federalism, bicameralism and the regime type impact the ideological opinion-policy linkage. Thereby, those institutions that support a clear structure in decision making process appear to be more successful to foster congruence. Political situations that change over time appear to have no impact on the positional policy congruence of governments and the mean citizen. This is not surprising, as ideology is something that is long-standing and established in people as well as political parties.

Models of positional policy congruence have one disadvantage, they do not allow for dynamic representation. Ideological congruence suggest a relationship between the mean citizen and government at the same point in time, the election year. Policy responsiveness and dynamic representation of the mean citizen cannot be explored using these models and data. Pioneering research on moving positional models forward to dynamic representation have already been made Hakhverdian (2010) and Warwick (2012) and it is important to conduct further research on this in the future.

There is also leeway for future research on the impact of institutions. Here I look at the influence of the individual institutions on positional policy congruence. However, this does not take into account the interplay of those institutions in a country. Obviously, more than one institutional characteristic applies to the sample regarded and it is important to explore if congruence occurs under combined conditions.

References

- Macdonald, S. E., Rabinowitz, G., and Listhaug, O. (1998). On attempting to rehabilitate the proximity model: Sometimes the patient just can't be helped. *Journal of Politics* (60, x). 653-690.
- Enelow, James M. and Melvin J. Hinich (1982) Ideology, Issues, and the Spatial Theory of Elections. *American Journal of Political Science* (76, 3). 493-501.
- Benoit, Kenneth, Michael Laver, and Slava Mikhaylov (2009) Treating Words as Data with Error: Uncertainty in Text Statements of Policy Positions. *American Journal of Political Science* (53, 2) 495-513.
- Benoit, Kenneth and Michael Laver (2007) Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis. *Electoral Studies* (26, 1) 90-107.
- Whitfield, Stephan, Milada Anna Vachudova, Marco R. Steenbergen, Robert Rohrschneider, Gary Marks, Matthew P. Loveless, Liesbet Hooghe (2007) Do expert surveys produce consistent estimates of party stances on European integration? Comparing expert surveys in the difficult case of Central and Eastern Europe. *Electoral Studies* (26, 1). 50-61.
- Budge, Ian (2001) Validating Party Policy Placements. *British Journal of Political Science* (31, 1) 210-223.
- Fisher, Robert J. (1993) Social Desirability Bias and the Validity of Indirect Questioning. *Journal of Consumer Research* (20, 2) 303-315.
- Huber, John D. and G. Bingham Powell (1994) Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in two Visions of Liberal Democracy. *World Politics* (46, 3). 291-326.
- Powell, G. Bingham (2009) The Ideological Congruence Controversy: The Impact of Alternative Measures, Data and Time Periods on the Effects of Election Rules. *Comparative Political Studies* (42, 12). 1475-1497.
- Powell, G. Bingham (2006) Election Laws and Representative Governments: Beyond Votes and Seats. *British Journal of Political Science* (36, 2). 291-315.
- Powell, G. Bingham (2000) Elections as Instruments of Democracy. Majoritarian and Proportional Visions. Yale University Press.
- Powell, G. Bingham and Georg S. Vanberg (2000) Election Laws, Disproportionality and Median Correspondence: Implications for Two Visions of Democracy. *British Journal of Political Science* (30, 3). 383-411.
- Pierce, Roy (1999) Mass-Elite Issue Linkages and the Responsible Party Model of Representation. Miller, Warren E. et al. (Ed.). *Policy Representation in Western Democracies*. Oxford University Press. 3-32.
- Blais, Andre and Marc Andre Bodet (2006) Does Proportional Representation foster closer Congruence between Citizens and Policy Makers? *Comparative Political Studies* (39, 10). 1243-1262.
- Golder, Matt and Jacek Stramski (2010) Ideological Congruence and Electoral Institutions. *American Journal of Political Science* (54, 1) 90-106.
- Powell, G. Bingham and Guy Whitten (1993) A cross-national analysis of economic voting: TAKing account fo the political context. *American Journal of Political Science* (37, x). 391-414.
- Whitten, Guy D. and Harvey D. Palmer (1999) Cross-national analyses of economic voting. *Electoral Studies* (18, x) 49-67.
- Holbolt, Sarah B., James Tilley and Susan A. Banducci (2010) Electoral Accountability in Context: HOw Political Institutions conditions Performance Voting. Paper presented at the 2nd Political Science and Political Economy Conference, LSE, 13-14 May 2010.
- Brambor, Thomas, William R. Clark, and Matt Golder (2005) Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses. *Political Analysis* (14, xx) 63-82.
- Jones, Bryan D. and Frank R. Baumgartner (2004) Representation and Agenda Setting. *The Policy Studies Journal* (32, 1) 1-24.
- Hakhverdian, Armen. (2010) Political Representation and its Mechanisms: A Dynamic Left-Right Approach for the United Kingdom, 1976-2006. *British Journal of Political Science* (40, 4) 835-856.

Warwick, Paul (2012) Policy responsiveness in Parliamentary Systems: The Evidence from Annual Government Speeches. Paper presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the Midwest POLitical Science Association, 12-15 April 2012, Palmer House, Chicago.

APPENDIX

Country	Year	Government Ideology	Mean Citizen	Absolute Distance
AUS	1996	6.4625	5.46	1.0025
AUS	2004	6.9275	5.34	1.5875
AUS	2007	4.35	5.29	0.94
A	2008	4.37	4.82	0.45
BEL	1999	4.424	5.19	0.766
BG	2001	6.1925	5.71	0.4825
CAN	1997	5.41	5.33	0.08
CAN	2004	5.07	5.13	0.06
CZ	1996	7.86	5.78	2.08
CZ	2002	4.5125	4.68	0.1675
CZ	2006	8.76	5.44	3.32
DEN	1998	5.4225	5.56	0.1375
DEN	2001	7.2325	5.57	1.6625
FIN	2003	5.588	5.57	0.018
FIN	2007	6.6465	5.67	0.9765
F	2002	5.0575	5.47	0.4125
F	2007	7.99	5.47	2.52
DEU	1998	3.2475	4.09	0.8425
DEU	2002	3.2025	4.29	1.0875
DEU	2005	4.909	4.41	0.499
DEU	2009	6.4075	4.44	1.9675
HUN	1998	6.5775	4.87	1.7075
HUN	2002	2.45	4.79	2.34
ICE	1999	7.735	5.56	2.175
ICE	2003	7.74	5.41	2.33
ICE	2007	7.3325	5.5	1.8325
ICE	2009	3.7325	5.15	1.4175
IRE	2002	6.4075	5.81	0.5975
IRE	2007	6.05	5.78	0.27
JAP	2007	6.2175	5.51	0.7075
NL	1998	5.1875	5.36	0.1725
NL	2002	6.7975	5.22	1.5775
NL	2006	6.86	5.29	1.57
NOR	1997	5.365	5.18	0.185
NOR	2001	6.425	5.51	0.915
NOR	2005	3.72	5.21	1.49
NZ	1996	7.12	5.36	1.76
NZ	2002	3.745	5.22	1.475
NZ	2008	6.85	5.29	1.56
POL	1997	7.515	5.57	1.945
POL	2001	2.0675	4.59	2.5225
POL	2005	7.34	6.06	1.28
POL	2007	5.9525	6.23	0.2775
POR	2002	5.395	5.34	0.055
POR	2005	4.68	5.1	0.42
POR	2009	5.02	5.15	0.13
SLO	1996	4.5675	4.94	0.3725

Country	Year	Government Ideology	Mean Citizen	Absolute Distance
SLO	2004	6.631	5.01	1.621
ESP	1996	7.84	4.4	3.44
ESP	2000	7.11	4.71	2.4
ESP	2004	3.3	4.15	0.85
SWE	1998	3.48	4.96	1.48
SWE	2002	5.52	4.79	0.73
SWE	2006	7.939	5.23	2.709
CH	1999	5.6475	5.19	0.4575
CH	2003	5.675	5.05	0.625
CH	2007	4.7289	5.3	0.5711
UK	1997	3.97	5.03	1.06
UK	2005	4.65	5.21	0.56
US	2004	6.69	5.61	1.08